

NAVIGATING PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCES

A GUIDE FROM THE GROUND

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Why This Report?	4
-------------------------	----------

DEFINITIONS

What Are Public Safety Task Forces?	6
--	----------

BEGINNINGS

To Task Force or Not To Task Force?	8
--	----------

NAVIGATING THE TERRAIN

Engaging With A Public Safety Task Force	16
---	-----------

Key Elements and Considerations	16
---------------------------------	----

Cautions, Challenges, and Opportunities	28
---	----

Public Safety Task Force Case Studies	35
---------------------------------------	----

CONCLUSION

The Path Ahead	48
-----------------------	-----------

APPENDIX A

A Facilitator's Perspective: Additional Lessons from Oakland	49
---	-----------

APPENDIX B

Refund • Restore • Reimagine: Defund Oakland Police Coalition Priority Recommendations	54
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INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS REPORT?

It has been over a year since the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and the 2020 uprisings against police violence.

Since George Floyd’s murder, as of May 25, 2021, over 1,068 people had been killed by police. Over the past year, communities across the country have continued to rise up in outrage, demanding divestment from the violence of policing and investment in community safety and a just recovery from the pandemic.¹

Tens of thousands of people called and wrote in to budget hearings across the country to demand cuts to police budgets and increased funding for programs that would meet individual and community needs for survival, such as income support, housing and protection from an impending eviction and foreclosure crisis, health care, education, and employment,

violence prevention and interruption programs, and healing and transformative justice. In response, a number of cities and municipalities created task forces to “reimagine public safety.”

This guide from the ground gathers lessons and victories from organizers who called for and engaged with public safety task forces over the past year — and the past decade. It is intended to support communities navigating the following questions, taking into account the particular conditions of their own communities:

→ **Should we call for the creation of a city, county or state task force to address questions of public safety as part of a larger campaign**

[1] For more information on movements to divest from policing and invest in community safety, please see our January 2021 report *The Demand is Still #DefundthePolice, #FundthePeople, #DefendBlackLives*, available at bit.ly/DefundPoliceUpdate. For more information on demands focused on a just recovery from the COVID19 pandemic, please visit the Community Resource Hub’s COVID19 Policing Project final report, *Divesting from Pandemic Policing, Investing in a Just Recovery*, May 2020, available at: https://communityresourcehub.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Unmasked_Update.pdf.

to defund police and invest in communities?

- Should we engage with task forces created by policymakers independent of community demands?
- If we decide to engage with a task force, what conditions should we insist on?
- If we decide not to officially engage with a task force, how should we relate to its existence?

Public safety task forces are key sites of struggle as communities across the country work to redirect the flow of funds and resources from systems of policing and punishment into resourcing communities' basic needs and the health, education, and physical infrastructure needed to create genuine and lasting safety.

Regardless of our perspectives on the legitimacy of public safety task forces, or the politicians who create them, the approach

we take to them — demand, engage, ignore, or delegitimize — should serve our longer term campaign goals.

In this guide, we offer key questions, considerations, and lessons from organizers who have called for, engaged, and refused public safety task forces. It is based on conversations with organizers and facilitators in 7 cities: **Atlanta, GA, Dallas, TX, Durham, NC, Los Angeles, CA, New York City, NY, Oakland, CA, and Seattle, WA**, and publicly available information about **Austin, TX**. We are deeply grateful to all of the people and communities on the ground who contributed to this report, and who continue to grow movements and campaigns to build another world.

DEFINITIONS

WHAT ARE PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCES?

“TASK FORCE” is a military term first used by the United States Navy in the 1940s to describe a unit or formation of work on a single defined task or activity. The usage of “task force” spread to other military formations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and eventually became part of the common vernacular of corporate culture and practice.

The everyday operation of city and county governments throughout the U.S. generally takes place through permanent elected legislative councils and boards, as well as through executive agencies and departments. Any of these bodies can create a commission, advisory board, work group, or task force to guide their work. These bodies have no legislative power, but can make wide-ranging policy recommendations to elected officials or executive agencies that may become policy or law.

Task forces are temporary advisory bodies designed to collect data and information and provide recommendations to elected officials and executive policymakers

around a specific topic or charge — such as increasing public safety. To date, public safety task forces have addressed issues related to the police and criminal-juvenile systems such as reforming state criminal codes, bail reform, jail closures and reducing jail populations, establishing diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration, and mental health crisis response, among others.

More recently, municipalities have established public safety task forces charged with exploring police reform as well as potential reductions to police budgets and investments in non-police community safety strategies under the rubric of “reimagining public safety.” While generally policymakers’ visions of “reimagining public safety” involve preserving policing and punishment at the core, with cosmetic or minimal changes to their operation, communities across the country are advancing a broader, more radical vision of what public safety looks like through municipal task forces and beyond.

Municipal or state public safety task forces are generally established or authorized by a governmental resolution, motion, law or ordinance, or by agency policy, for a specific purpose and a limited time. The establishing

“TASK FORCES ARE NOT THE REVOLUTION — AT BEST THEY REPRESENT TERRAIN FOR MOVEMENT BUILDING, IN WHICH TO CREATE BETTER CONDITIONS TO FIGHT FOR WHAT WE WANT.”

document will generally explicitly spell out the mission, function, membership, scope, duration, budget, and powers of a task force.² Task force members can be directly appointed in the establishing document, or chosen through a process described in it. Task force members may include politicians, agency employees, law enforcement, or community members, or a combination of “stakeholders” — meaning people who have a stake in the outcome of the task force’s work. Participants may be volunteers or compensated. Task forces can also be a collaboration between multiple levels of government — like joint anti-terrorism task forces made up of federal, state and local law enforcement.

As Amanda Alexander of the Detroit Justice Center, former member of the Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pre-trial Detention put it, “task forces are not the revolution — at best they represent terrain for movement building, in which to create better conditions

to fight for what we want.” At worst, as Critical Resistance Communications Director Woods Ervin reminds us, “task forces are where dreams go to die.”

A public safety task force is a tool, not an end goal. It represents one potential vehicle to move community demands forward. It may not be the best vehicle to achieve a community’s aims, depending on local conditions.

The remainder of this report offers some questions and considerations for organizers weighing whether or how to engage with a public safety task force.

[2] See, e.g., Executive Order establishing Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pre-trial Incarceration, EO 2019-10, available at: [https://courts.michigan.gov/News-Events/Resource%20Documents/EO%202019-10%20Michigan%20Joint%20Task%20Force%20on%20Jail%20and%20Pretrial%20Incarceration%20\(signed\).pdf](https://courts.michigan.gov/News-Events/Resource%20Documents/EO%202019-10%20Michigan%20Joint%20Task%20Force%20on%20Jail%20and%20Pretrial%20Incarceration%20(signed).pdf). Accessed July 23, 2021; Durham City Ordinance establishing the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force: City of Durham. *Bylaws of Durham Community Safety & Wellness Task Force*. 20 Dec. 2020, https://cityordinances.durhamnc.gov/OnBaseAgendaOnline/Documents/ViewDocument/Final-Published%20Attachment%20-%2013824%20-%20OTHER%20-%20DURHAM%20COMMUNITY%20SAFETY%20_%20WELLNES.pdf?meetingId=369&documentType=Agenda&itemId=15078&publishId=64805&isSection=false. Accessed July 1, 2021.

BEGINNINGS TO TASK FORCE OR NOT TO TASK FORCE?

When deciding whether to call for, participate or engage with, oppose, or ignore a public safety task force in the context of campaigns to divest from policing and invest in community safety, there are a number of questions to consider.

At the most basic level, the question of whether or how to engage with a task force — whether by participating, supporting, or opposing it — should focus on **whether it will be a movement building opportunity or a distraction** from the work we need to do to get to where we want to go. Even if we don't win our demands, **will we be able to shape the conversation, build power, bring more people into movement, train folks for future fights?** Can we shape the structure so that these outcomes are more likely? Is there potential for real change? Are there people accountable to communities directly impacted by violence and criminalization who are willing to serve with a mandate to make that change possible? What impacts might the task force and its recommendations have beyond your community?

You may also want to ask yourself if there is a cost to not participating or opposing a task force — will your group lose political power — voice, opportunities to make change, ability to influence outcomes, shape narratives, etc. — by not having a seat at the table? Will the group miss out on opportunities to engage their targets, potential allies or champions, or even opposition? Could the task force make recommendations that will ultimately prove very harmful that you might be able to avert or minimize through engagement?

If you choose not to engage, **how will you publicly note your group's objection to or non-participation in the taskforce** so that your position is clear? How much power and agency do you have to use your declaration of your decision to oppose or not participate to diminish the power and legitimacy of the task force? Even if you decide not to participate or oppose the task force, you may still need to engage in some form of monitoring of the task force's work to ensure that further harm is averted.

If you do decide to engage or support a task force, these questions also point to where potential opportunities and blocks

might exist. They invite us to **imagine what our ideal outcomes might be** — and what bottom lines will bring us as close as possible to our goals. They also invite us to **weigh the opportunity costs** — what could we be doing instead? Would that bring us closer to our goal? Would endorsing or participating in a task force make other campaign objectives — like holding elected officials accountable, or making abolitionist demands — more difficult? Is there another way other than through a task force?

Support for or participation in a public safety task force should never be a given — it should always be a strategic decision based on which course of action will move community demands forward.

Organizers should be prepared to shape the process — and to leave it if certain minimum conditions are not met. No matter which approach you take, it will require deep engagement with — and accountability to — affected communities, and to your values and principles. It will also require ongoing strategizing and organizing to build power to influence the outcomes and implementation of any favorable recommendations. You will need to have an inside-outside organizing strategy — seeking to influence (or limit the harms of) what happens inside the task force, while keeping up the external pressure to ensure that the outcomes are consistent with your goals for the process.

KEY QUESTIONS

ASSESSING THE LANDSCAPE

- **WHO** is calling for a public safety task force and why? Who is opposing it and why? What are their interests?
- **WHAT LEVERAGE POINTS** can you use to make sure that the task force moves in the direction of your demands?
- **WHAT FORCES CAN YOU MARSHAL** to support your objectives for the task force? Do you have champions and allies within the task force? Are there people inside government agencies you can count on who are willing to move the task force recommendations forward?
- **WHAT POWER WILL THE TASKFORCE HAVE?** Will it be able to shape or influence if and how its recommendations are implemented, shape the conversation about public safety in the media, for policymakers, or for the public?
- **HOW LIKELY** is it that the recommendations of the task force will be adopted and implemented?

KEY QUESTIONS

ELECTED OFFICIALS

- **HOW EDUCATED ARE YOUR CITY OR COUNTY OFFICIALS ON THE ISSUES?** What are their positions on issues of public safety?
- **WHO IS THEIR BASE** of support?
- **WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE TASK FORCE?** Are they calling for it? Represented on it? Final decisionmakers on implementation of recommendations?
- **WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE POLICE CHIEF?** Police fraternal associations?
- **HOW MUCH POWER DO THEY HAVE** to make task force recommendations you want a reality?
- **HOW RISK AVERSE ARE THEY?** How much do they want to be seen as leaders or innovators?
- **WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT?** Who has the most power to move recommendations to reality or to block them? What is their relationship to the task force?
- **HOW DOES FUNDING FLOW** in your city and county?

PREVIOUS TASK FORCES

- **HAVE PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCES PREVIOUSLY BEEN CREATED** in your community?
- **WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE?** What government agencies were involved? How were directly impacted communities involved?
- **WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS?** For example, in 2019 **Phoenix** organizers reviewed the recommendations of all previous public safety task forces and assessed whether and how they had been implemented, and what their impacts have been in terms of material changes to people's experiences of policing and safety.

KEY QUESTIONS

SHAPING THE STRUCTURE

- **CAN YOU SHAPE** the mission, membership, function, goals and rules of the task force before it is established?
- **IF A FACILITATOR HAS ALREADY BEEN CHOSEN, DO YOU KNOW THEIR WORK?** Do you trust them? How will they likely shape the process?
- **WILL THERE BE A FACILITATOR?** How much input does the community have on who facilitates or guides the process?
- **WHAT STRUCTURES ARE ALREADY IN PLACE** to ensure meaningful engagement of organizations and individuals who are accountable to directly impacted and criminalized communities?

MEMBERSHIP

- **WHO WILL MAKE UP THE TASK FORCE?** Do they have sufficient power and influence to make their recommendations a reality?
- **WILL LAW ENFORCEMENT BE INVOLVED?** How much formal power will they hold (to facilitate, vote, shape agendas & recommendations, etc.)? How much informal power will they hold? Will others defer to their opinions?
- **IS THERE AN OPPORTUNITY** to place members of your organization or base on the task force? Allies who can be counted on to move your agenda and be accountable to you and your constituents? Are there people recognized as “experts” who can support your demands in the context of the task force?

YOUR ALLIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- **CAN YOU HAVE A CONVERSATION** with a broad range of stakeholders at the beginning about using the task force as a strategy?
- **CAN YOU DEVELOP STRUCTURES AND METHODS** for community engagement before the taskforce is created?

KEY QUESTIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

- **DOES CALLING FOR OR PARTICIPATING** in a public safety task force align with your organizational values and campaign goals?
- **HOW MUCH POWER AND CAPACITY** does your organization have to move a campaign to call for establishment of a task force or engage with an established task force during the timeframe of its existence? Do you have capacity to move an inside/outside strategy to participate in a task force and maintain external pressure on it? If not, are there other organizations you can partner with such that some run the inside game, some run the outside game, and the groups come together regularly to strategize and ensure alignment on goals?
- **CAN YOU KEEP UP THE PRESSURE DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE?** What other demands on your organizational resources will there be during the lifetime of the task force?
- **IS YOUR ORGANIZATION WELL POSITIONED** to call for or engage with a public task force? Why?

OPPORTUNITIES

- **WHAT OPPORTUNITIES** might calling for or participating in a public safety task force create to:
 - Shape the conversation
 - Access data or other insider information
 - Highlight the visions, experiences, and needs of a particular population
 - Redistribute resources and meet material needs

KEY QUESTIONS

ADVERSE IMPACTS

- **DOES THIS TASK FORCE LEGITIMIZE, REINFORCE, MAINTAIN, OR INCREASE FUNDING FOR CRIMINAL INSTITUTIONS?** Will it reinforce reformist objectives or will it create opportunities to move demands that bring us closer to abolition by diverting resources, power and legitimacy away from police?
- **WILL THE RECOMMENDATIONS INCREASE AND/OR STRENGTHEN** systems of policing? Or will they weaken them?
- **WHAT WILL BE THE LIKELY IMPACT** on criminalized communities?

IMPLEMENTATION

- **WHAT POWER DO YOU HAVE** to make the recommendations a reality?
- **IS THERE A CLEAR PATH** from task force recommendations to implementation?
- **WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES** and accountability mechanisms if they are not implemented?

LEGISLATION IN YOUR CITY OR COUNTY

- **HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO MOVE A PIECE OF LOCAL LEGISLATION** through the process? Have you been able to get an ordinance, motion, and/or resolution that you drafted or supported passed?
- **IF NOT, WHAT KINDS OF LEGISLATION HAVE GENERALLY MOVED** on public safety issues? What are the blocks to passing legislation consistent with your community demands?

WHEN IT MAY OR MAY NOT MAKE SENSE TO CALL FOR OR SUPPORT A PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE

OPPOSING LARGER SETBACKS

Sometimes local lawmakers are considering building a new jail or increasing the number of police officers on the streets, and it may feel like calling for or participating in a task force is the best option to intervene and attempt to prevent or reduce harm. For example, in Durham, NC, the city was considering hiring 72 new police officers in 2019. Groups, including Durham Beyond Policing, ran an opposition campaign calling for those funds to be used for affordable housing and eviction defense instead. Calling for the creation of a task force that would explore ways of increasing public safety that do not expand police presence was an important strategy within the larger campaign to block the police hires.

USING TASK FORCES AS A CONTAINER TO ADVANCE EXISTING COMMUNITY-BASED DEMANDS

Many organizers we interviewed for this report had already been engaged in multi-year campaigns in their communities to stop jail expansion and/or close jails, and to build what they wanted instead through prevention, alternatives to 911, diversion, and/or reentry. These coalitions and efforts were resourced and strong. They had a history of engagement with municipal government and holding city and county governments accountable. Additionally, some had already developed or won baselines to guide health and justice policy decisions and operationalize

racial equity across agencies, or processes to support implementation of community-based demands such as participatory budgeting implementation of community-based demands such as participatory budgeting practices and community-led integration of criminalized communities in decision-making through prior fights on budget advocacy, public education, community engagement, and policy development. These experiences and existing structures for community engagement put them in a good position to use a public safety task force as a way to further advance their community visions of safety.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNISTIC DECISION MAKERS TAKING POLITICAL COVER

Across the country elected officials felt pressure during the 2020 uprisings to do something, anything about police violence. Creating a public safety task force was sometimes an attempt to use smoke and mirrors to make it look like something was being done and provide them with political cover. This still provided community groups an opportunity to elevate demands to defund the police, fund non-police community-based safety strategies, and collectively reimagine public safety.

STARTING A CONVERSATION FROM SCRATCH

Maybe policing hasn't gotten a lot of critical attention or pushback in your community, or

maybe there is an aspect of it or a particular criminalized community that hasn't been highlighted. Sometimes organizers call for or participate in a task force **to educate city and county officials on an issue, to access previously unavailable data, to uplift local directly impacted people's leadership while centering their humanity, and to start to put new pressure on the city or county to do business differently.**

For instance, many organizations participated in or supported the New York City Young Women's Initiative task force because it represented the first time the city had examined issues of policing, criminalization, violence, health, education and safety exclusively through the lens of young women's experiences. Organizers ensured that there was an opportunity to lift up and build young women's leadership and relationships with elected officials and policymakers, and redirect resources to them, through a Young Women's Advisory Council to the task force. They also secured previously unavailable information about policing, criminalization, and school-based arrests and discipline broken down by both gender and race, which they later used in organizing campaigns. Similarly, Interrupting Criminalization co-founder Andrea Ritchie organized submissions to President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing focusing on women and LGBTQ people's experiences of policing in an effort to elevate them in the national dialogue around the violence of policing.

ALL FLUFF AND NO BITE

Sometimes the formation of a task force adds nothing to your campaign to divest from policing and invest in community safety. The data being collected, the membership of the task force, and the direction of any

recommendations you may win all point out to a set of ideas that will simply increase funds and legitimacy of local police departments through things like body cameras, more training for police officers, or more "oversight" of the department. The makeup of the task force will not include community members, or community members will not have power to push community demands into the final recommendations. Or you may make an assessment that that none of the community-driven demands will be adopted or implemented given the political position of the elected officials. Or, the task force may simply retread old ground that has been covered by many previous task forces — like the policing task force President Biden proposed that was widely opposed as a waste of time given how many previous federal policing task forces have studied the issue. **Under these circumstances you may actively oppose the creation of a task force, work to undermine its legitimacy, or simply ignore because there are many better uses of your time.** You may nevertheless decide to have one or more constituents or allies participate to monitor the situation and block harmful recommendations to the extent possible.

GETTING YOUR NAME ON THE THING

Sometimes advocates and organizations join a task force because they are flattered by the invitation or feel powerless to say no, to increase visibility and burnish their individual or organizational reputation, to access resources for themselves, or in exchange for some unseen benefit. You can still put pressure on these advocates by publicly holding them accountable to community demands and to redistributing resources.

NAVIGATING THE TERRAIN

ENGAGING WITH A PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE

Calling for or engaging with a public safety task force involves several key steps as you navigate toward your intended goals.

Some of the most important steps are at the beginning, or even before the call for a task force becomes public, when the goals, scope, membership, powers and functioning of a task force are envisioned and negotiated. Of course, every aspect of this process will be

contested — your opposition is also working to use the task force to their advantage. It is also important to keep in mind that things may not go as planned or take a problematic turn. So, at each stage you will need to decide whether to continue to engage, try to turn the tide, jump ship, or actively call out a task force whose goals and operations are harmful.

Below are key components, questions and considerations to weigh in making that call.

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

INITIATION OF THE TASK FORCE

Who calls for a task force can determine its objectives, scope, makeup, structure and power, and the power of directly impacted communities to shape its recommendations. It can also indicate how likely recommendations are to become reality. For instance, task forces created by elected officials are more likely to result in legislative change than task forces created by agencies with limited power. Conversely, task forces created by legislative officials may be more limited in scope or less likely to result in substantive systemic change

if re-election is a primary concern. Task forces created in response to community organizations are more likely to create opportunities for public engagement than those called by public officials.

No matter who calls for establishment of a public safety task force, it is critical to get involved at the ground floor, and to have as much influence as possible over scope, structure, selection of task force members, operations, community engagement and creating a path for implementation of recommendations.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **WHO INITIATED THE TASK FORCE?**
- **WAS THE TASK FORCE CREATED BY ELECTED OFFICIALS** like the mayor or legislators, or by unelected officials at an agency?
- **WAS THE IDEA OF A TASK FORCE INITIATED** or backed by a community organization?
- **WHAT EVENTS OR CIRCUMSTANCES MOTIVATED THE CREATION** of the task force? What are the explicit goals?

- **DO THE GOALS OR SCOPE OF THE TASK FORCE INEVITABLY LEAD TO RECOMMENDATIONS** that are inconsistent with your demands such that participation will do nothing to advance your campaign and may deflate the community's momentum?

For example, participation or support for a task force whose exclusive goal is to rewrite a police use of force policy will probably not create opportunities to advance demands related to divesting from policing altogether, and may demobilize organizing toward reducing police contact and power.

LOCAL AND STATE LAWS

It is important to know your city's municipal code and charter, as well as any county, state, or federal laws that may govern your task force or issues related to the subjects the task force will address.

This can help you strategize around the limitations or lean on the opportunities to achieve your particular community-driven demands.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **WHAT DOES YOUR CITY OR COUNTY CHARTER OR MUNICIPAL CODE SAY** about commissions, work groups or task forces? What powers can they have, and what limits are there on what they can do or recommend?

- **READ ANY ORIGINAL MOTIONS OR RESOLUTIONS** related to the creation of the task force or the issues the task force will explore carefully.

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

GOALS,³ OBJECTIVES, & FUNCTIONS⁴

Each task force should have a clear set of goals or objectives. The task force may focus on one specific issue like pretrial diversion or exploring bail reform — or reducing jail populations more broadly.

These are usually laid out in the agency document, motion, resolution or law establishing the task force.

KEY QUESTIONS

● **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS TASK FORCE?** What are its marching orders?

● **ARE THESE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN LINE** with interrupting the expansion and strength of policing systems in your city and county? Are they in line with community demands for investment in community safety?

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES⁵

The task force itself should identify clear principles and values that guide its operation. Ideally these should prioritize increasing safety for all community members and reducing harms of policing and criminalization. They should also seek to minimize or offset the operation of dynamics of power and privilege in task force operations.

For example, the New York City Young Women’s Initiative’s expressed values and principles prioritized the voices of women and trans youth under the age of 25 in decision-making.

Additionally, establishing clear principles and values for your own engagement in the task force can help ensure that organizational decisions align with community demands every step of the way.

[3] See, e.g. “Resolution Adopting a ‘Care First, Jails Last’ Resolution in Alameda County.” County of Alameda. 2021. http://www.acgov.org/board/bos_calendar/documents/DocsAgendaReg_5_10_21/HEALTH%20CARE%20SERVICES/Regular%20Calendar/item_2_Care_First_%20Jails_Last_reso_5_10_21.pdf.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] See Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Task Force. *Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce Report and Recommendations*. 29 Apr. 2021, pp. 3, <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Oakland-RPSTF-Report-Final-4-29-21.pdf>.

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

KEY QUESTIONS

- **ARE THE PRINCIPLES, VALUES, AND OPERATING PROCEDURES OF THE TASK FORCE CLEARLY LAID OUT?** Do they align with your organization's? Do they limit the operation of power and privilege within task force proceedings?
- **IS THERE BUY IN** to these principles, values and operating procedures from the people with power to move the task force recommendations?
- **DOES YOUR COALITION OR ORGANIZATION HAVE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PRINCIPLES,** values, and/or demands that can guide your participation in the task force?⁶
- **CAN THEY GROUND YOU AND THE GROUP BACK TO THE VISION?** Do they keep criminalized communities at the center of the process?

MEMBERSHIP,⁷ RECRUITMENT, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Task forces in communities we focused on ranged in size from 12 people to 65. They can be made up of legislators, county/city agency representatives, community organizations and leaders, governmental staff, philanthropic advisors, academics, and/or appointed “experts.”

Participation of law enforcement agencies and officers (and former law enforcement officers) is a particular point of contention for public safety task forces, with many community organizers seeking to bar or limit participation of current and former law enforcement officers.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **WHO DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE A MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE?**
What qualifications do you think should be in place?
- **WHO SHOULDN'T BE A MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE?**

[6] See report from Our City Our Future (OCOF) in Dallas, TX: Our City Our Future (OCOF). *Report of the Working Group on 10 New Directions for Public Safety & Positive Community Change*. 15 Aug. 2020, pp. 39-42, <https://interactive.wfaa.com/pdfs/10-New-Directions-Working-Group-FINAL-REPORT-15-August-2020.pdf>

[7] “Developing the Los Angeles County Roadmap for Expanding Alternatives to Custody and Diversion.” Los Angeles County. 2019, pp. 4, <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Revised-Item-11-Developing-the-Los-Angeles-County-Roadmap-for-Expanding-Alternatives-to-Custody-and-Diversion-002.pdf>.

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

● **IS THE MEMBERSHIP HEAVILY SKEWED TOWARD ELECTED OFFICIALS AND CITY OR COUNTY AGENCIES?** Is there substantial representation of community-based organizations, people directly impacted by criminalization, and care workers? Are the majority of task force members pro-police?

● **IS THERE A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?** Does it create opportunities for two-way communication and feedback?

● **HOW ARE ACCESS NEEDS MET?** Where and how are task force meetings held? Is the space accessible? Is there language and ASL interpretation? Child care?

CHAIR(S)

Sometimes a chair or co-chairs are appointed by legislation, the Mayor, an elected official, or the head of an agency, or a process to appoint a chair is approved at the outset.

The chair may serve as the facilitator of both public and private meetings, setting the agenda and directing the tone and workflow of the body.

KEY QUESTIONS

● **HAS THE CHAIR(S) ALREADY BEEN CHOSEN** by elected or agency officials? Who is/are they? Does your group have connections to them?

● **WHAT IS THEIR EXPERIENCE OR EXPERTISE?**

● **WHAT POWER DO THEY HAVE** to ensure that task force recommendations result in concrete changes?

● **WHAT IS THEIR POSITION ON YOUR DEMANDS?** What is their commitment to community engagement and involvement of directly impacted communities?

● **CAN YOU INFLUENCE THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS?** How can you advocate for community leaders and organizations to chair the task force?

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

HIRING AND WORKING WITH FACILITATOR(S)

Sometimes a facilitator or facilitators may be hired to oversee, coordinate, or staff the task force, who will then set the agenda, bring all parties together, and move the work plan and process forward. (See Appendix A for a facilitator’s perspective on public safety task forces). Facilitators will shape and influence the

scope of the task force, agendas, expert testimony, reports, and recommendations.

Because their participation represents a conflict of interest, current or former law enforcement officers or pro-law enforcement academics should not serve as public safety task force facilitators.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **GET CLEAR ON THE FUNCTION** of a facilitator or facilitator(s).
- **WHO ARE THEY PAID BY?**
- **CAN YOU HEAVILY INFLUENCE WHO GETS HIRED** or appointed to facilitate the task force?
- **IF NOT, ASSESS WHAT TACTICS OR METHODS OF INFLUENCE YOU MAY HAVE** over the ways in which facilitators do the work?
- **DO THEY HAVE A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF OPPRESSION AND EQUITY**, are they conscious of ableism, race, class, trans, and queer issues? Are they open to feedback/training from community members?

EXPERTS & DATA COLLECTION⁸

Task forces often collect and analyze data and information to inform their recommendations. They may consult or even hire “experts” to perform this function. Data and expert opinions often shape the outcome of any final

recommendations. Generally, the definition of “experts” does not include directly impacted and criminalized people, and the data consulted excludes community-based or driven research.

[8] “Care First LA: Tracking Jail Decarceration.” Vera Institute of Justice. 2021. <https://www.vera.org/care-first-la-tracking-jail-decarceration>.

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

KEY QUESTIONS

- **WHICH EXPERTS ARE BEING CALLED ON AND CONSULTED** as part of the task force proceedings?
- **WHO WILL BE EFFECTIVE MESSENGERS FOR YOUR POSITION?**
- **HOW CAN YOU ORGANIZE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH** and the expertise of directly impacted people to carry the same weight and inform the findings and recommendations?
- **HOW CAN CRIMINALIZED PEOPLE AND SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE BE UNDERSTOOD** as experts and their analysis be integrated into the operations of the task force or data collection rather than being tokenized for their stories?
- **ON A GEOGRAPHIC SCALE, HOW CAN DATA COLLECTION AND EXPERT TESTIMONY CENTER** the most impacted neighborhoods and communities within the region? Can meetings be held in multiple areas of your community?
- **HOW CAN WE DECENTER COUNTY AGENCIES AND POLICE AS EXPERTS** on public safety and uplift the work of people building safety on the ground by serving communities daily, often in an unpaid and unprofessional capacity?

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

COUNTY/CITY AGENCIES

Cities and counties operate through departments, agencies, and/or programs that provide some kind of public good, service, or resource. Depending on the

objective of the task force, agency and departmental representatives will likely be asked to participate in the task force.

KEY QUESTIONS

● **HOW ARE CITY OR COUNTY AGENCIES INVOLVED IN THE TASK FORCE** — are representatives present or invited to provide information and data as needed, or are they full decision-makers in the process?

● **IS THERE AN EXPLICIT OR IMPLICIT RULE THAT THE TASK FORCE NEEDS TO HAVE “BUY-IN”** from agency leadership and staff for recommendations in order to ensure that they are implemented?

● **HOW MANY COUNTY OR CITY AGENCIES ARE REPRESENTED?** Do they make up the majority or a substantial portion of task force membership? Does this limit the voice and power of community leaders and organizations?

● **DO YOU HAVE ANY RELATIONSHIPS TO THE DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES** that will be a part of the task force? Are they part of or accountable to particular communities or organizations?

GOVERNMENT STAFF

Sometimes an elected official’s aide or city consultant staffs the task force as an advisor, or to oversee the proceedings and make sure requested resources are provided. They are not a facilitator

or a chair but are there to take notes, observe the process, and/or push a certain agenda. Sometimes they share resources throughout the process.

KEY QUESTIONS

● **HOW MUCH POWER — EXPLICIT OR IMPLICIT DOES THE STAFFER HAVE?** Who are they accountable to?

What agenda are they there to push? Whose interests are they protecting?

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

- **CAN YOU INFLUENCE WHO PLAYS THIS ROLE?**
- **DO ANY OF THE PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP HAVE STRONG TIES** to the staff person or the official(s) they are representing?

- **HOW DOES THE PERSON IN THIS ROLE RELATE** to your outside/inside organizing strategy?

RECOMMENDATIONS⁹

Task forces are advisory bodies, charged with gathering information and making

recommendations for action to legislators and policymakers.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **HOW CAN YOU SHAPE THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS?** Does your organization and coalition have a clear list of community-driven demands that you can submit for adoption as formal recommendations for action?
- **ARE YOU CLEAR WHAT POSITIONS YOU MAY TAKE ON PARTICULAR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS?**
- **CAN YOU BUILD CONSENSUS ACROSS A BROAD COALITION** about which recommendations you will push, remain neutral on, or eliminate?

AGENDA SETTING¹⁰ & PLANNING MEETINGS

Generally speaking, task forces will have a series of planning meetings, host information gathering sessions where they might receive testimony from city or county agencies, experts, or members of the public, or update the public on their progress. They will then

meet to discuss, debate, adopt and present recommendations.

Participation in planning meetings is critical as they set the tone, direction, and activities the task force will undertake.

[9] Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Task Force. *Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce Report and Recommendations*. 29 Apr. 2021. <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Oakland-RPSTE-Report-Final-4-29-21.pdf>, p.13 and Appendix G.

[10] See examples of task force agendas here: City of Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Meeting Notes and Agenda: https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Reimagining-Public-Safety-Task-Force_Feb03_Meeting-Agenda.pdf.

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

KEY QUESTIONS

● WHEN DO PUBLIC MEETINGS AND PRIVATE PLANNING AND DRAFTING SESSIONS TAKE PLACE?

Are they accessible to all members of the task force and, where public, directly impacted individuals? For instance, organizers who were part of the Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pre-trial Detention insisted that one of the task force meetings take place inside a jail to receive testimony from incarcerated people.

● WHO CREATES THE AGENDA FOR MEETINGS AND PLANNING SESSIONS?

● WHO GETS TO SPEAK AND WHEN? Who is listened to and not listened to? Does the agenda create opportunities for community leaders to have input? Does it make space for information and data that shows that policing makes communities less safe?

FUNDING

Generally speaking public safety task forces are funded by the city or county. While city staff, elected officials, academics and non-profit employees are paid for their participation, community members

are often expected to volunteer their time to participate or provide information to public safety task forces, limiting the degree to which many can be involved in all aspects of task force operations.

KEY QUESTIONS

● WHO IS PAID OR UNPAID TO PARTICIPATE?

● CAN YOU ORGANIZE STIPENDS for community taskforce members to compensate them for their time, preparation, and work conducted on behalf of the task force.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Because task forces are an extension of local government, many of the meetings are open to the public, although members of the public may not have an opportunity to participate or comment.

Planning meetings and deliberations about recommendations before they are made public may be private and inaccessible to people who are not members of the task force.

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

KEY QUESTIONS

- **IS THERE A LAW IN YOUR LOCALITY THAT REQUIRES THE TASK FORCE TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS?** How is it enforced?
- **HOW ARE PUBLIC MEETINGS ANNOUNCED?**
- **WHERE ARE PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD?** Is the location accessible? Are interpreters and childcare provided?
- **HOW ARE COMMUNITY GROUPS AND MEMBERS ABLE TO PARTICIPATE?**
- **IS THERE A MECHANISM FOR PARTICIPATION** even if they are unable to attend in person? Are the meetings broadcast? Recorded? Can people provide input later?
- **WHAT HAPPENS TO PUBLIC COMMENT?**
- **WHO FACILITATES THE MEETINGS?**
- **CONSIDER HAVING COMMUNITY NOTE-TAKERS** even if official notes are being taken to ensure that community voices are heard and captured.

REPORTS¹¹ & DOCUMENTS¹²

Public safety task forces produce several documents, including meeting minutes, memoranda gathering information, legal briefs outlining policy options, draft recommendations, and final reports memorializing findings and final recommendations.

Your community group or coalition may decide to draft your own report and recommendations to influence the task force report, or if you disagree with the official report and recommendations.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **WHO IS MEMORIALIZING** all the actions, decisions, and information gathered by the task force?
- **WHO IS DRAFTING FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS?** Who will draft the final report?

[11] Our City Our Future (OCOF) in Dallas, TX: Our City Our Future (OCOF). *Report of the Working Group on 10 New Directions for Public Safety & Positive Community Change*. 15 Aug. 2020. <https://interactive.wfaa.com/pdfs/10-New-Directions-Working-Group-FINAL-REPORT-15-August-2020.pdf>

[12] See, e.g., Durham Beyond Policing Coalition, Purifoy, Danielle, et.al. *Durham Beyond Policing Coalition: Proposal for a Community-Led Safety and Wellness Task Force*; Smith, Ryan. *Proposed Community Safety Department & 911 Calls for Service Initiative*. 09 June 2021. <https://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/38894/911-Calls-for-Service-Presentation?bidId=>

KEY ELEMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

● **HOW CAN COMMUNITY GROUPS SUBMIT INFORMATION?** Review and provide critical feedback on draft policy recommendations of the task force?

recommendations and reports in order to ensure important or critical points are included in the notes & shape the content of other important docs.

● **CAPACITY PERMITTING, COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING IN TASK FORCES SHOULD VOLUNTEER TO TAKE OFFICIAL NOTES**, collect and gather information, draft memos,

FOUNDATIONS

Foundations can initiate, support, fund, or be members of task forces, or they may support participation by community organizations, and other people directly impacted by the subject matter of the task force. They may also serve as facilitators or

support staff for the task force. Sometimes elected officials are working hand in hand with foundations, and foundation staff see themselves as extension of the elected officials' staff in overseeing the work of the task force.

KEY QUESTIONS

● **WHAT AGENDA DOES THE FOUNDATION AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES HAVE?**

● **ARE THEY AN IMPEDIMENT TO YOUR OBJECTIVES** or can they work with the community to achieve defund/invest objectives?

● **ARE THEY ALIGNED WITH COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEMANDS** or other interests?

● **HOW CAN YOU PUT PRESSURE ON FOUNDATIONS** or hold them accountable for the role they play on a public safety task force?

CAUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Below are some key lessons from organizers who have navigated public safety task forces throughout the U.S. as they advanced campaigns to divest from policing and punishment and invest in community safety.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INSIDE/OUTSIDE STRATEGY

It is essential to organize internally within the task force — who are your allies? Which staffers are sympathetic to your goals and positions? How can you move other task force members over to your position? How can you build power within the task force to ensure that your recommendations are incorporated in the final report and implemented? Be clear on who and what you are representing, and be sure to enter each meeting with extremely clear goals and bottom lines — think “this is my opportunity to get x or y, this is something I need to block at all costs.”

It is equally important to continue organizing outside of the task force to advance your public narrative around the issues addressed by the task force, and to build power and pressure on task force members and elected officials to take action that advance your demands. Both organizing in the streets and inside the task force are critical and can have a synergistic effect in moving your agenda.¹³

It is important to ensure that people building power and putting external pressure on decision-makers are afforded equal power and respect within your organization or campaign as the people working on the inside as part of the task force in your organizing efforts. There can be a tendency to privilege the voices and strategic opinions of leaders on the “inside” of the process, and to only call on the “outside strategy” organizers to turn up the pressure when necessary. Everyone is essential to the process, and “outside” organizers should have equal voice and power with respect to overall campaign strategy.

MANAGE CONFLICTS AND NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS

Disagreements, conflicts, and divergent opinions are par for the course when working in coalition or partnership, and can be highlighted or intensified in the high pressure context of engaging with a public safety task force. **Develop and come back regularly to clear agreements on values, principles, goals, objectives, and practices that ensure clear and direct communication, inclusive decision-making, and conflict resolution.** This can help your forces work through the tough moments when there are difficult decisions to make, competing perspectives on particular policies, funding issues, desire to receive credit, or when the opposition tries to divide and conquer.

[13] “Defund Coalition Statement to the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force.” Anti Police Terror Project. 2020. <https://www.antipoliceterrorproject.org/reimagining-task-force-statement-2020>.

CAUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

PROTECT EACH OTHER

Leaders often become targets when communities disrupt the system, especially when it comes to law enforcement. Harassment and efforts to delegitimize leaders come in the form of personal attacks on social media, public information requests and disclosures, criminal prosecutions, and investigations. Friendly government employees or consultants may also be investigated, fired or black listed. The state can and will create unsafe circumstances for organizers and community members who present a real challenge to police power.

Safety planning, rest and respite, and rapid response are essential to support and protect one another, humanize our struggles, create real community safety, and stay true to the vision. Know you are going into battle, and do what you need to do to prepare and heal from the process.

SHAPE THE PROCESS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES

Efforts to influence the shape and outcomes of a public safety task force should begin long before it is officially announced. As soon as you decide to call for or support a public safety task force, make a clear and detailed plan for how you would like the process to unfold. Work with allies to identify an elected or agency official friendly to your cause, and enlist them in authoring or

shaping the legislation, order, or policy that establishes the task force.

Advocate for inclusion of values, structures, and procedures that will facilitate community participation, engagement, and accountability and close the gap between decision-makers and people affected by the decisions. It is essential to get clarity on the process up front, and to know how much is up for decision-making, how decisions will be made, and what the path is for recommendations to become realities.

Beyond shaping the process, you can shape task force recommendations and outcomes by showing up to the meetings with pre-drafted documents for discussion such as value statements, plans for community engagement, process design and recommendations, and by vetting and proposing your own consultants and teams of people to do the work.

Additionally, it is important to leverage local or state laws that would allow for the process to be accessible to the public, such as California's Brown Act, which allows for public accessibility to government meetings.¹⁴ Where no such laws exist, you may need to give more attention to ensuring the transparency and accessibility of your task force. Even when public meeting laws exist, they may create barriers you'll need to figure out how to surmount. For instance, the Brown Act also creates barriers to participation in public meetings by limiting public comment, requiring that documents to be discussed be provided to the public only two

[14] Ralph M. Brown Act. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?division=2.&chapter=9.&part=1.&lawCode=GOV&title=5.

CAUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

days before a meeting, and providing that a certain number of decision-makers can meet without opening the meeting up to the public.

SHAPE THE NARRATIVE

Get ahead of official communications about the task force — release your own statements before and after meetings describing what’s on the agenda, what’s at stake, what happened, and what’s next.

Keep community members informed, involved and engaged through social media and ongoing outreach.

Think about how you want to land the conversation at the end of the process — how do you want to tell the story of what happened, instead of letting the city bureaucracy speak for you? If you can, produce your own statement, op-ed or report to release ahead of the official report making your findings and recommendations clear, creating a framework for understanding the official task force report, and lifting up what community voices contributed to the process. For instance, the Defund Oakland Coalition released a comprehensive assessment of the information and data gathered by the Oakland Reimagining Safety Task Force ahead of the final report which shaped both the contents and conversation about the official report.

BEWARE OF DIVIDE AND CONQUER TACTICS

Your opposition will seek to exploit any tensions, rifts, and disagreements among task force members, including those fueled

by anti-Blackness, class, gender, aspirations to fame, and access to resources. Sometimes other task force members will deliberately stall the process and seek to dilute the recommendations in service of their own agendas and interests, including current or former members of law enforcement and task force members appointed by decision makers who are pro-police or who want to move cautiously because they have an eye on the next election cycle. Opposition to your agenda may come from Black, Brown, and Indigenous people who are more aligned with the system, want to maintain the *status quo*, and are pro-police. No matter the source of disagreement or dissent, you will need to organize other task force members to support your demands, respond with data and clear communication, and maintain patience and vision within these conversations.

BRING YOUR PEOPLE TO THE TABLE

It is essential to build space for people and communities impacted by policing, criminalization, and state violence to feel capable, confident, comfortable, capacitated, supported, and protected throughout the process. Do as much as you can to create a safe space and uplift the voices of youth, women, migrants, disabled, queer, trans, and undocumented people, and other community members who are often ignored or silenced. Involvement in a task force as a member or participant can serve as a vehicle for leaders to share their expertise, experiences, demands, and visions. Organizers should envision

CAUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

engagement in a task force as base building and leadership development opportunities, and utilize creative tools and events to engage community members and organizations across neighborhoods through town halls, surveys, or participatory budgeting processes. You can reach out to philanthropic partners to access funding to support community engagement and integration into the process.

INFLUENCE THE COMPOSITION OF THE TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

Selection of task force members will often depend on which “experts” are perceived to be best positioned, qualified, and/or most credible.

Current or former law enforcement officers are generally perceived to be the pre-eminent “experts” on public safety, along with academics and bureaucrats. If you choose to call for or engage with a public safety task force, you will need to fight to maximize the number of spots occupied by community members directly impacted by policing and criminalization, and people who create safety without police, both formally and informally, and ensure that they are treated on equal footing.

You will also need to strategize around protecting your constituents and allies on the task force, setting up lines of communication and accountability, ongoing coaching to build awareness of community expectations and ensure that leaders don’t get “bought off” by the system and learn how to navigate the prestige surrounding elected officials.

And, even with all the right people on a task force, there is no guarantee that change will come.

Lastly, if you choose to oppose or ignore a task force, it is important to strategize around how to ensure that members of your community and allies do not legitimize it by accepting an invitation to serve on it.

POLICE ON YOUR TASK FORCE

Organize to bar or remove law enforcement from membership or facilitation of public safety task forces because they have a conflict of interest, as final recommendations could affect police budgets, power or legitimacy. And, even if you are successful in removing them from a facilitation or task force membership position, monitor and prepare for police efforts to influence the task force recommendations and outcomes through public testimony and private communications with public officials and task force members.

INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITIONAL SUB COMMITTEES, AD HOC COMMITTEES, AND/OR ADVISORY BOARDS

The structure of a task force can follow a flat or hierarchical structure, in which smaller decision-making bodies or subcommittees are created to do the bulk of the work of researching and drafting agendas and recommendations for review by the larger task force. These subcommittees may assign, elect, and/or appoint co-chairs. Organizers can work to make subcommittees a space where greater community engagement

CAUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

and integration can take place, and where people with lived experience of violence and criminalization, Black, Brown, Indigenous, young people, LGBTQ+ people, women, service providers, and/or people from particular highly impacted communities are be prioritized and where community engagement work can be memorialized. Subcommittees and advisory boards are also spaces that law enforcement can push to prioritize their efforts. For instance, the Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Task Force had a Police Department Organization and Culture Advisory Board, and Los Angeles had a Justice System Reform Ad Hoc Committee made up in whole or in part of law enforcement officers. Organizers should push for subcommittees and advisory bodies to public safety task forces that focus on non-police community safety solutions.

ENSURE STRONG SYSTEM-INDEPENDENT, COMMUNITY-CENTERED FACILITATION

It is important to have a team of independent facilitators and process experts who can generate and facilitate a process that is inclusive of the community, especially people directly impacted by violence and criminalization. Disruption of top-down decision making can lead to better, non-police outcomes. The process should establish clear goals for each aspect of the task force, generate concrete timelines, and ensure that all meetings are open to the public.

INFLUENCE THE DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

Attempt to influence the decision making structure toward consensus building or more democratic voting processes to redistribute power away from system players and towards community members, leaders and representatives. Be mindful that harmful and traumatic decision making processes develop if organizers aren't clear about advocating for a power sharing process and/or independent facilitators who are skilled at creating non-hierarchical decision making structures and processes, such as modified consensus processes, gradients of agreement tools, democratic voting, and/or others that community organizations have been using for decades.

BE AWARE OF CO-OPTATION OF LANGUAGE AND IDEAS

Decision makers and system actors and even opponents will begin co-opting defund and divest/invest language and community ideas without taking any concrete actions to move defund demands forward. Similarly, institutions are sophisticated at absorbing and repackaging community demands to appear as if they are reimagining the system with people when they are in fact working to preserve it. Opposition research on task force members and players mapping out their web of interests and support can be a helpful tool in navigating these dynamics.

CAUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

USE THE TASK FORCE TO EXPOSE DATA AND SYSTEMS

Police control information about public safety, and rely on lack of public access to this information to shape the narrative and protect their power. **A task force can offer opportunities to access data that is otherwise unavailable, and to point to information that law enforcement cannot produce.** Organizers, particularly if they are also task force members or in relationship with them, can request call for service data, information about arrests and jail populations, or audits of police practices. Even if taskforce outcomes don't meet community demands, data collected through task forces can be used to support ongoing campaigns. And, beware of the data trap – police control crime data and information about their operations, and can manipulate it to serve their purposes. In the end, data will not prove to be a magic bullet, but it provides key information for organizers.

ASSESS AND ORGANIZE YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Elected officials are constantly shifting in and out of office — and shifting positions depending on the way the political winds blow. It is helpful to identify an elected official to champion your efforts: maybe they want to be seen as reform-minded, on the side of the Black community, or are directly impacted themselves. Maybe they are aspiring to higher office or looking to leave a legacy. Building relationships with supportive or sympathetic elected officials,

government staff, and fellow task force members is important as you navigate a task force and push back internally and externally against opponents. They may support your demands by writing letters of support or opposition, internally pushing individuals who hold power, or sharing information. They may also provide valuable insights into the operation of government agencies, their staff and leadership, and into positions are on particular policies that you can leverage to shift perspectives, practices, or protocols. **And, be careful not to mistake relationships with power — you still need to build external power to push allied elected officials and staff to meet your demands, and to hold them accountable to implementation.**

CONSIDER THE CREATION OF A NEW AGENCY TO ADVANCE NON-POLICE APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY SAFETY

For example, organizers in some cities have called for the creation of an Office of Violence Prevention, a Department of Community Safety & Welfare, or a Department of Transportation staffed by unarmed civilian employees charged with traffic and parking enforcement. These departments may redistribute funds previously spent on policing to community organizations like violence intervention and prevention programs, or community-based mental health services. Ensuring that these new departments don't replicate policing in the same or new forms, and aren't led or staffed by current or former law enforcement, is essential.

CAUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

A NOTE ABOUT PRIVATE FOUNDATION CONSULTANTS

Some city and county governments work with private foundation consultants to guide them on specific issues, like Pew Charitable Trusts or the MacArthur Foundation. These consultants are paid by the foundation but they work closely with city or county elected officials, operating almost like staff-lobbyists. Get to know who they are and what their involvement is, and find ways to influence them. Sometimes they will be there as a guiding force, reporting back to elected officials even though they are not official members of the task force. Sometimes they may try to play a role as a “bridge” with the community, or position themselves as champions of reform, or both. See if you can leverage their presence to get more information and create better recommendations, but remember their loyalties may or may not be with the community.

BE CLEAR ON WHEN TO JOIN OR JUMP SHIP

Engage in a thorough assessment of conditions and pros and cons before deciding to call for or join a task force, and develop a clear set of ideal outcomes and bottom lines. Based on these, decide ahead of time the conditions under which you would stop participating, or criticize the task force publicly, and build broad consensus among your campaign and allies around this. That way if those conditions come to pass,

you already have consensus around the criteria to assess whether to stay or go, and what you want to communicate as you leave.

LEGISLATIVE BACKLASH

And finally, a note of caution as you achieve transformative policy wins reducing police budgets and investing those funds into the hands of community. Track and expect state and federal legislative efforts to undermine those wins. For instance, Texas, Florida, and Georgia have all passed legislation penalizing cities that reduce police budgets. At the federal level, Representative Brian K. Fitzpatrick (R-PA) introduced H.R. 7632 “Defund Cities that Defund the Police Act of 2020”¹⁵ that would bar state or local governments that abolish or reduce funding to police departments from receiving certain Economic Development Administration grants or Community Development Block Grant funds, and return any Community Development Block Grant funds they have already received. This legislation has not been reintroduced to date in the current legislative session.

[15] United States, Congress, House. Defund Cities that Defund the Police Act of 2020. Congress.gov, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-116th-congress/house-bill/7632>, Introduced 16 Jul. 2020. bill/7632/actions?r=5&s=1

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

ATLANTA PRE-ARREST DIVERSION & REIMAGINING ACDC TASK FORCES (COMMUNITY INITIATED & LED)

The Pre-Arrest Diversion (now Policing Alternatives and Diversion)¹⁶ and the Reimagining ACDC (jail closure)¹⁷ task forces were initiated by The Racial Justice Action Center, which incubated the grassroots projects of Women on the Rise and the Solutions Not Punishment Collaborative (SNaPCo). Together with over 50 allied and member organizations, these groups organized and succeeded in laying the groundwork for further engagement with the city. Their work focused on ending police misconduct and violence against trans people, passing “ban the box” legislation, storming the courthouse and police department when transphobic prosecutors and cops demeaned and endangered trans people, passing city-wide bail reform, reclassifying marijuana possession as a non-jailable offense, and winning community seats on the police civilian review board.

Their two biggest and most impactful campaigns began with design teams — a version of a task force — created by city resolutions and laying out the framework for a collective group process to create

and guide the development of a not-yet-existing alternative to the traditional criminal punishment system. While the Policing Alternatives and Diversion (formerly known as Pre-Arrest Diversion or PAD) Design Team (Taskforce) was fully successful in that all its recommendations were implemented and funded, and the PAD program is now experiencing expansion and larger investments, the Reimagining ACDC jail closure task force recommendations remain in limbo.

The Reimagine ACDC Jail Closure Task Force was run, led, and facilitated by community organizations and directly impacted people who set the agenda, planned for and facilitated meetings, led the work, designed the questions, and set the overall direction of the task force from the outset. They successfully worked collaboratively with broad cross-section of communities to move community demands both inside the task force and in the streets. Though the Taskforce engaged thousands of residents and completed compelling final reports¹⁸ the political climate threatens the success of this

[16] An Administrative Order Office of the Mayor of the City of Atlanta, Administrative Order no. 202-32, 06 Aug. 2020, <https://citycouncil.atlantaga.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=4620>.

[17] Reimagining ACDC Task Force, “Policy Workgroup Recommendation Report: A synopsis assessment of the Policy Workgroup efforts conducted from September - December 2019 for the Reimagining ACDC Initiative,” March 2020. <https://www.atlantaga.gov/home/showdocument?id=45685>. Accessed on 01 July 2021.

[18] Ibid.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

campaign to close the jail — ACDC — which costs taxpayers \$14 million each year to house between 25-50 people each night, and remains open to this day.

This experience highlights important lessons. First, the formula that leads to success for one task force might not produce the same results for another. Secondly, organizers should not presume relationships with elected officials and task force members based on prior experiences are equivalent to power and accountability. Even where a mayor is very politically interested in outcomes that appear aligned with yours, successful implementation of task force recommendations is not guaranteed, and the cooptation levels are much higher.

It is crucial to establish vibrant methods for true community engagement and power building before jumping into a task force — so that less time can be spent on this during what is often a short task force timeframe. It is also vital to create a group at the outset who will be responsible for holding the task force accountable and ensuring that the recommendations are implemented, as often organizers are burned out by the end of a task force process.

It is also vital that you don't leave out the work of agitation, protest and organizing while you are busy running a taskforce. Street pressure was vital to keep stakeholders running back to the table to work on a solution. The success of the Atlanta PAD task force required some

engagement with political theater, engaging close to 5,000 community members to build power, and doing the grunt work that is the nature of task forces. It also requires rigor in understanding what your goals are inside of it, what the value of spectacle is, and who you are giving cover by participating in the task force versus what you are actually trying to get. When this is done successfully people can have an embodied experience of actively participating in governance, and winning clear community demands. And, it is essential that intergenerational labor of keeping up pressure on both the inside and outside is valued, and that organizers using non-traditional methods to turn up the heat on the streets to accomplish collective goals are respected and involved in decision-making around inside strategies as well.



[15] United States, Congress, House. Defund Cities that Defund the Police Act of 2020. Congress.gov, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-116th-congress/house-bill/7632>, Introduced 16 Jul. 2020. bill/7632/actions?r=5&s=1

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

AUSTIN REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE (CITY INITIATED & COMMUNITY LED)

On April 24, 2020, a month before the murder of George Floyd, Mike Ramos was killed by Christopher Taylor, an Austin police officer. The people generated pressure from the streets throughout the summer of 2020 that drove the City of Austin to pass a historic budget in August of 2020, after hours of community testimony, that would reallocate \$153.2 million out of the \$434 million police budget¹⁹ as follows: (1) Reduce & Reinvest Austin Police Department (APD) funding by approximately \$31.5 million — taken primarily from cadet classes and overtime — to reinvest in permanent supportive housing and services, EMS for COVID-19 response, family violence shelter and protection, violence prevention, workforce development, and a range of other programs; (2) Transfer a number of APD functions (and related funding of approximately \$76.6 million) out of APD over the course of the fiscal year. These include Forensics Sciences, Communications/911 call center, strategic support, and internal affairs; and (3) Create a Reimagine Safety Fund to potentially divert approximately \$45.1 million from APD toward alternative

forms of public safety and community support, as determined through the year-long reimagining process.²⁰ This compelled the City of Austin’s city manager to call for a Reimagining Public Safety Task Force to determine how funds reallocated from the police department should be spent.

This victory was in response to years of work, setbacks, and successful campaigns²¹ to defund the APD led by local grassroots groups and coalitions.²² Despite a low crime rate, the police budget made up over 50% of Austin’s city budget.²³ Thanks to concerted organizing over the summer of 2020, building on almost a decade of steady coalition work led by Communities of Color United (CCU), the budget is now roughly 40%.²⁴

In 2014, CCU took advantage of Austin’s redistricting, which shifted it from a city in which officials were elected “at large,” to one in which the council is elected from geographic voting districts.²⁵ They seized the opportunity to build a powerful base focused on shrinking the police budget while

[19] “Together We Lift the Sky” Austin City-Community Reimagining Public Safety Task Force “2021 Mid-Year Recommendations Report” Prepared for the City of Austin, pp. 2-3, [https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Reimagining%20Public%20Safety/Completed%20RPS%20Taskforce%20Mid-Year%20Recommendations%20Report%20\(1\).pdf](https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Reimagining%20Public%20Safety/Completed%20RPS%20Taskforce%20Mid-Year%20Recommendations%20Report%20(1).pdf); Munce, Megan, “Gov. Greg Abbot signs slate of legislation to increase criminal penalties for protesters, punish cities that reduce police budgets,” *The Texas Tribune*, 01 June 2021, <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/06/01/texas-abbott-defund-police-protest/>.

[20] Ibid.

[21] For more information on the campaign to Defund Austin Police, <https://defundaustinpolice.com/>.

[22] Communities of Color United: Coalition for Racial Justice, <https://www.facebook.com/CCUCoalition>.

[23] PolicyLink. “Centering Grassroots Visions to Reimagine Public Safety: Lessons from Austin and Oakland.” *YouTube*, commentary by Paula X. Rojas, Kellee Coleman, Gabriela Torres, and Ashleigh Hamilton, 27 May 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOkGyGo9HII>.

[24] PolicyLink. “Centering Grassroots Visions to Reimagine Public Safety: Lessons from Austin and Oakland.” *YouTube*, commentary by Paula X. Rojas, Kellee Coleman, Gabriela Torres, and Ashleigh Hamilton, 27 May 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOkGyGo9HII>.

[25] Ibid.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

redistributing resources toward community wellness. Every year since 2015, CCU's organizing successfully slowed the growth of the police department. In 2016, it resulted in 1% of the police budget being moved directly to the health department.

When the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force was created, CCU and other grassroots groups were invited to the table. Initially, they were skeptical of the task force, believing that it was just a tool for the city to appease and quash pressure from the protests. However, CCU's organizing over the previous decade had won a city Office of Equity which was staffed by people the community trusted because they were genuinely pushing the city to change. So, while the task force was not the imagined vehicle for transformation, organizers made an assessment that it was a container through which they could advance their vision. They actively organized a wide coalition of grassroots groups, legal advocacy stakeholders, and community leaders directly impacted by criminalization to join the task force.

The next challenge was the question of who would facilitate the task force. Initially, the city had hired 21CP Solutions, a consulting group founded by Ron Davis, the former head of the Department of Justice COPS Program who co-chaired former President Barack Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The leadership of 21CP includes a number of current and former police officials, including the head of one of the

most notorious police fraternal associations, the Police Benevolent and Protective Association of Illinois. In other words, the choice of facilitator already pre-determined the scope and solutions the task force would be able to explore — ones that involved police. Organizers fought back and won — the city agreed to having the Office of Equity to co-facilitate the task force until grassroots groups were able to choose a qualified facilitator who aligned with their values, goals, and objectives.

Organizers strategically organized for the kind of process that would enable them to make meaningful progress on their demands to divest from policing and invest in community safety. They began by engaging all members of the task force, in spite of resistance, in a four hour session focused on a timeline of the actual history of policing and the Austin Police Department. This exercise helped to build consensus that ongoing police violence, inequality, and racism must be interrupted.

Next, organizers pushed the task force to develop shared values and to create a structure and process that would shape how people would work together, what would be shared with the public, and what recommendations would be produced. Values adopted by the task force included centering people directly impacted by criminalization in the work of the task force, and ensuring that punitive and harmful culture is interrupted.²⁶ The Task Force also facilitated base building and community

[26] PolicyLink. "Centering Grassroots Visions to Reimagine Public Safety: Lessons from Austin and Oakland." *YouTube*, commentary by Paula X. Rojas, Kellee Coleman, Gabriela Torres, and Ashleigh Hamilton, 27 May 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOkGyGo9HII>.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

engagement by providing various forums and mediums for community members directly impacted by criminalization to attend sessions, provide statements, and record testimony²⁷ at times and places accessible to working people.

Despite these gains, organizers in Austin face considerable backlash. In June of 2021, Texas Governor Greg Abbot targeted the successful protests and punished cities that reduced police budgets, saying that it “paves the way for lawlessness.”²⁸ Abbot signed into law House Bill 1900²⁹ and Senate Bill 23,³⁰ which penalize counties and cities that reduce their police budgets in the following manner: (1) HB 1900, allows the state to

deduct money from a city’s sales tax revenue and ban the city from ever increasing property taxes or utility fees if it reduces its law enforcement budget. Also, any areas annexed by the city within the last 30 years could vote to de-annex, and the municipality would be banned from annexing any further areas. (2) SB 23 penalizes counties with a population of over 1 million, mandating that they hold elections before reducing or reallocating their law enforcement budgets. Counties that do so without voter approval would have their property tax revenue frozen. These bills, which goes into effect September 1, 2021 will impact cities like Austin, Dallas, and Houston.³¹

DALLAS WORKING GROUP ON NEW DIRECTIONS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY & POSITIVE COMMUNITY CHANGE (JUDICIALLY INITIATED, COMMUNITY LED)

In the summer of 2020, thousands flooded the streets of Dallas in protest of the murder of George Floyd, placing pressure on the local government to act to reduce police violence and increase community safety. The Dallas County Judge reached out to faith leaders, grassroots group Mothers Against Police Brutality,³² and

activists and organizers to participate in a virtual meeting with the Dallas County District Attorney, City of Dallas Police Chief, and City Manager. Community members produced a statement entitled “10 New Directions for Public Safety and Positive Community Change” which outlined a set of policy demands calling for, among other

[27] “Together We Lift the Sky” Austin City-Community Reimagining Public Safety Task Force “2021 Mid-Year Recommendations Report” Prepared for the City of Austin. [https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Reimagining%20Public%20Safety/Completed%20RPS%20Taskforce%20Mid-Year%20Recommendations%20Report%20\(1\).pdf](https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Reimagining%20Public%20Safety/Completed%20RPS%20Taskforce%20Mid-Year%20Recommendations%20Report%20(1).pdf).

[28] Munce, Megan, “Gov. Greg Abbot sings slate of legislation to increase criminal penalties for protesters, punish cities that reduce police budgets,” The Texas Tribune, 01 June 2021, <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/06/01/texas-abbott-defund-police-protest/>.

[29] Tex. Texas House Bill 1900, Passed 01 June 2021, <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/billtext/html/HB01900F.htm>.

[30] Texas Senate Bill 23, Passed 01 June 2021, <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/billtext/html/SB00023F.htm>.

[31] McGlinchy, Audrey, “Bill penalizing Texas cities that cut funding for police heads to governor’s desk,” Austin Monitor, 01 June 2021, <https://www.austinmonitor.com/stories/2021/06/bill-penalizing-texas-cities-that-cut-funding-for-police-heads-to-governors-desk/>.

[32] Mothers Against Police Brutality, <https://mothersagainstpolicebrutality.org/>.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

things, reallocation of funding to enhance safety through housing and improving the living conditions of communities directly impacted by criminalization.³³ One of the 10 recommendations requested that City and County officials create a task force to identify and recommend alternative responses to harm to increase safety in the community, and make budget allocations to sponsor the first initiatives in the coming budget year.³⁴ County Judge Clay Jenkins worked to address the recommendations, and invited faith leaders and representatives of community organizations join a “Working Group on New Directions for Public Safety & Positive Community Change.” Members included city managers who participated in the task force from seven cities in Dallas County and representatives from the In Defense of Black Lives coalition, Faith in Action, American Indian Heritage Day, Our City Our Future, Abundant Life of AME Church, Friendship West Baptist Church, Faith Forward Dallas, North Texas Dream Team.³⁵

The task force was put together quickly, and grassroots groups serving on the task force launched into action to ensure that the task force did not include law enforcement and featured the voices of directly impacted people and organizations. The county administrator, Darryl Martin, was tasked with chairing the task force. He held a great deal of power given that he writes the county budget. The membership of the task force

was comprised of nine community members and seven city managers. Community organizers were successful in ensuring that law enforcement were not members of the task force, though police chiefs were allowed to be present during meetings, given that these were public bodies and proceedings. While city managers write the budgets, mayors and city council members pass the budgets. This dynamic created a challenge for the task force, in that city managers were not able to make promises about what would be adopted into the city budgets.

During the expert and data gathering phase of the task force, community organizers prevailed in centering the expertise of formerly incarcerated and criminalized community leaders. They were also instrumental in bringing in national experts who offered non police community-based safety strategies to the table. Everyone on the task force spent hours reviewing this data and information and listening to testimony, which was essential to humanize people directly impacted by policing and to shift task force members’ perspectives around public safety.

In the end, community engagement in the task force resulted in some policy gains, although they represent a “drop in the bucket” compared to what needs to be done, as Mothers Against Police Brutality co-founder Sara Mokuria emphasized.

[33] Working Group on Public Safety & Positive Community Change, “Report of The Working Group on 10 New Directions for Public Safety & Positive Community Change, pp. 3, 15 Aug 2020, <https://interactive.wfaa.com/pdfs/10-New-Directions-Working-Group-FINAL-REPORT-15-August-2020.pdf>.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Belt, Mollie, “Dallas County Taskforce releases report to advance social justice, police reforms, Dallas Examiner, 05 Sept. 2020, <https://dallasexaminer.com/news/local/dallas-county-taskforce-releases-report-to-advance-social-justice-policing-reforms/>

[36] Goins, David, “Dallas County invests \$5 million to reduce police intervention on mental health calls,” WFAA.com, 01 Sept. 2020, <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/dallas-county-invests-5-million-to-reduce-police-intervention-on-mental-health-calls/287-c8ccfd2-bf97-431b-a310-f4764e683c57>.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

Dallas County Commissioners unanimously approved spending \$5 million to help reduce law enforcement interactions on mental health calls.³⁶ Additionally, \$3 million was set aside for implementation of “alternative crisis response models” for cities in Dallas County to reduce interactions between law enforcement and community members for certain mental health and substance abuse calls, as well as calls related to

homelessness.³⁷ Finally, \$1 million was invested towards the completion of the Deflection Center at Homeward Bound,³⁸ an alternative to jail for individuals presenting with mental health or substance use disorders.³⁹ Community groups are working to ensure that this behavioral treatment program does not mimic police work through social work, and advocating for non-police first responders to be included in the model.

DURHAM COMMUNITY WELLNESS & SAFETY TASK FORCE (COMMUNITY INITIATED & LED)

In 2019, the city of Durham, North Carolina — whose police department budget is roughly \$70 million a year — planned to expand the Durham Police Department by 75 new police officers.⁴⁰ Groups in a coalition called Durham Beyond Policing,⁴¹ which included BYP 100 Durham chapter, SONG (Southerners On New Ground) Durham chapter, Jewish Voice for Peace Triangle chapter, Communities in Partnership (C.I.P), All Of Us Or None Durham chapter, Sanctuary Beyond Walls, SpiritHouse and Harm Free Zone, Triangle Showing Up for Racial Justice (TSURJ),

and UE 150 Durham City Workers Union, successfully opposed this increase in the police budget and instead diverted funds to community wellness needs. Among other calls to action, demanded the establishment of a community safety task force to transition some public safety responsibilities and funding away from the police department and towards social services and eviction defense for Durham residents.⁴²

In 2019 the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force⁴³ was established by the

[37] Ibid.

[38] Homeward Bound, <https://www.homewardboundinc.org/>.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Oglesby, Cameron. “Durham task force will assess community safety, police funding.” *The 9th Street Journal*, 06 July 2020. <https://9thstreetjournal.org/2020/07/06/durham-community-task-force-to-assess-community-safety-policing/>. Accessed 01 July 2021.

[41] Shaped, co-authored, and reviewed by a volunteer team of Durham resident members of All of Us or None — Durham Chapter, BYP 100 Durham Chapter, Communities in Partnership, Jewish Voices for Peace-Triangle chapter, Sanctuary Beyond Walls, SONG Southerners on New Ground-Durham chapter, SpiritHouse, Harm Free Zone, UE 150 Durham City Workers Union, Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) — Triangle chapter, Durham Beyond Policing Coalition, Purifoy, Danielle, et.al. *Durham Beyond Policing Coalition: Proposal for a Community-Led Safety and Wellness Task Force*. Smith, Ryan. Proposed Community Safety Department & 911 Calls for Service Initiative. 09 June 2021.

[42] Oglesby, Cameron. “Durham task force will assess community safety, police funding.” *The 9th Street Journal*, 06 July 2020. <https://9thstreetjournal.org/2020/07/06/durham-community-task-force-to-assess-community-safety-policing/>. Accessed 01 July 2021.

[43] See website for the Community Safety & Wellness Task Force: <https://durhamnc.gov/4448/Community-Safety-Wellness-Task-Force>.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

governing bodies of the City of Durham, Durham County, and Durham Public Schools Board of Education, with a mission to recommend programs to enhance public safety and wellness that rely on community-based prevention, intervention, and re-entry services as alternatives to policing and the criminal legal system.

From the beginning, community groups organized to make sure youth and people directly impacted by criminalization were there at the table. In the end, they were able to demand that task force membership include at least three community members who were under the age of 25 and active in racial justice issues.

Additionally, the new director of the Department of Community Safety and Wellness will be ranked at the same level as the police chief in the city's organizational hierarchy. They both will report directly to the City manager, and the departments will have separate budgets. The task force also requested that the city human relations commission do an analysis of all the task forces in Durham,

which found that across all task forces participants performed a great deal of unpaid work, even though most of the participants had a median income of \$10,000. The city then allocated \$1 million dollars to the task force, including funds to provide stipends to participants.

For the FY21-22 budget cycle, community organizers secured four enthusiastic votes among seven task force members in favor of reallocation of funds for 60 vacant police positions over the next three years to the new city Department of Community Safety and Wellness for unarmed, skilled care workers residents can contact in moments of crisis. Task force members are currently setting up roundtables to propose alternatives to school resource officers, support Bull City United, a peer-to-peer violence interrupters program led by formerly incarcerated people, and to design new possibilities for community nonviolence programs, de-escalation training, and an on-call crisis response program with social workers, nurses, and crisis counselors.

LOS ANGELES ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION WORK GROUP (COUNTY/ CITY/COMMUNITY INITIATED & COMMUNITY LED)

Since the horrific beating of Rodney King and the Watts Rebellion, Los Angeles has established numerous ineffective governmental bodies to find solutions to police violence, such as the Independent (Christopher) Commission and the LAPD

Commission. Recently, organizers in LA County and City have been fighting to stop a \$3.7 billion jail plan, close the Men's Central Jail, hold systems of harm accountable, and redirect police department resources to community. Through coalitions

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

like Los Angeles No More Jails (2010),⁴⁴ The Coalition to End Sheriff Violence (2012),⁴⁵ Justice LA (2016),⁴⁶ The People's Budget — Black Lives Matter LA (2017),⁴⁷ and Reimagine LA (2017)⁴⁸ community members have consistently made demands for divestment from systems of policing and punishment. Meanwhile, city and county governments published bureaucratic reports outlining visionary goals and mechanisms of accountability with few to no resources attached to them. Organizers then fought and succeeded in passing a voter-based initiative, Measure J, that redirected 10% of net county revenues to alternatives to incarceration, housing, and youth justice. Reimagine LA continue to fight for these resources through a Care First Budget.⁴⁹ Despite Measure J's success at the voting booth, this large and wealthy county is only promising a \$100 million out of the \$900 million originally contemplated to alternatives to incarceration.

After years of pressure from coalitions like LA No More Jails and Justice LA, the LA County Board created the Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group (ATI Work Group). The work group brought together county and community stakeholders to develop

a Care First, Jails Last Roadmap⁵⁰ made up of 114 recommendations designed and approved through an intensive consensus building process involving more than 1,000 government and community stakeholders over ten months using the Gradients of Agreement. Driven by the ATI Work Group guiding values of equity and racial justice, inclusion of many voices, and human-first language, the ATI's six Ad Hoc Committees (Justice System Reform, Community-Based System of Care, Community Engagement, Data & Research, Funding, and Gender & Sexual Orientation) developed and conducted detailed analyses for every recommendation and reviewed them all with a racial equity framework.

Although law enforcement was still a part of the process — which proved to be a hurdle, especially in the Justice System Reform Ad Hoc Committee — there were opportunities to leverage consultants to develop transparent data sources through the Roadmap and the Care First Dashboard.⁵¹

The planning group for the entire process, the co-chairs for the Ad Hoc Committees, and other support staff had at least eight independent consultants, two philanthropic

[44] LA No More Jails, <https://www.facebook.com/LANOMOREJAILS/>.

[45] Dignity and Power Now, <http://dignityandpowernow.org/coalition/>.

[46] Justice LA, <https://justicelanow.org/>

[47] People's Budget LA, <https://peoplesbudgetla.com/>.

[48] Reimagine LA, <https://reimagine.la/>

[49] "Care First Budget 2021-2022: A Budget that Centers the Needs of System-Impacted Communities." Reimagine LA Coalition. 2021. <https://reimagine.la/carefirstbudget>.

[50] "Care First, Jails Last: Health and Racial Justice Strategies for Safer Communities." Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group. 2020. https://ceo.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/1077045_AlternativestoIncarcerationWorkGroupFinalReport.pdf.

[51] Ibid.

[52] "Maintaining a Reduced Jail Population." Los Angeles County Department of Health Services. 2020. http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/bc/1076621_MaintainingaReducedJailPopulationPostCOVID19.pdf.

[53] "Developing a Plan to Close Men's Central Jail as Los Angeles County Reduces its Reliance on Incarceration." Los Angeles County Department of Health Services. 2021. http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/bc/1104568_DEVELO_1.PDF.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

leaders, fifteen community leaders, and eleven government employees coordinating the work to center culture change, power sharing and equity. Positive things are still moving forward, but the creation of new work groups and new offices (i.e., Jail Population Reduction Work Group,⁵² Men's Central Jail Closure Work Group,⁵³ Measure

J Advisory Committee,⁵⁴ and Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative⁵⁵) has hindered implementation, leading to disorganization of coordinated efforts to achieve broader demands around removing police from mental health crisis response, pushing to cut funding from the sheriff's department, and closing jails.

OAKLAND REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE (CITY-INITIATED & COMMUNITY FOUGHT TO JOIN AND LED)

Building on Oakland's long history of Black-led organizing, community members have been pushing for non-police interventions to crisis, decarceration strategies, and to stop new jail construction for over six years. Through the efforts of coalitions like the Anti-Police Terror Project (2016),⁵⁶ Decarcerate Alameda County (2016),⁵⁷ and many others, organizers have been demanding police audits, halting jail expansion, demanding jail closure, and shifting funds away from law enforcement. Oakland's long history of Black-led organizing, including through the establishment of The Black Panther Party, many keys to the struggle towards liberation. The city has also felt the pain of losing

people like Oscar Grant, Dajuan Armstrong, Christian Madrigal and countless others to murder at the hands of police. The Anti-Police Terror Project also created a Mental Health First Community First Response Model,⁵⁸ developed The Black New Deal,⁵⁹ and moved the Oakland City Council to reduce the police budget by \$18 million.⁶⁰ It is also seen in Decarcerate Alameda County moving the County Board of Supervisors to adopt a Care First Resolution⁶¹ to end the jailing of people with mental health and substance use needs. The people in Oakland are resilient visionaries that continue to reimagine community safety.

[54] "Spending Plan Recommendations for Year 1 (FY 2021-2022)." Measure J Reimagine LA Advisory Committee. 2021. https://ceo.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Updated_MeasureJ_Report-Revised-06.14.21.pdf

[55] Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative. <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ati/>.

[56] Anti Police-Terror Project. <https://www.antipoliceterrorproject.org/>.

[57] Decarcerate Alameda County. <http://www.decarceratealameda.org/>.

[58] "M.H. First: Community Response." Anti Police-Terror Project. <https://www.antipoliceterrorproject.org/mh-first-1>.

[59] "The Black New Deal." Anti Police-Terror Project. 2020. <https://www.antipoliceterrorproject.org/blog-entire/2020/4/22/black-oakland-demands-in-light-of-covid-19-and-rates-of-black-death>.

[60] "Oakland Just Redirected \$18 million from Police: Into Violence Prevention Programs." KQED. 2021. <https://www.kqed.org/news/11879404/oakland-just-redirected-18-million-away-from-police-into-violence-prevention-programs>.

[61] "Resolution Adopting a Care First, Jails Last Resolution in Alameda County." Alameda County Board of Supervisors. 2021. http://www.acgov.org/board/bos_calendar/documents/DocsAgendaReg_5_10_21/HEALTH%20CARE%20SERVICES/Regular%20Calendar/item_2_Care_First_%20Jails_Last_reso_5_10_21.pdf.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

In July of 2020, Oakland City Council decided to create the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force.⁶² The APTP was one of the pivotal anchor coalitions that decided to participate in the task force as leaders and as part of the voting membership. The coalition and its allies influenced legislation that created the task force and explicitly set forth a goal of reducing the Oakland police department budget by 50% and investing in a reimagined vision of public safety. They also influenced the development of Task Force Advisory Bodies on Budget and Data Analysis; Alternative Responses; Programs and Investments; Legal and Policy Barriers and Opportunities; Oakland Police Department Organization and Culture; and a Youth Advisory Board. The Task Force Advisory Bodies provided all the labor associated with the development of the recommendations to enhance public safety through a more appropriate, efficient & equitable allocation of resources. The Youth Advisory Board was added later in the process to elevate youth voices in the conversation. The OPD Organization and Culture Advisory Board was created to allow law enforcement to continue to move their agenda.

Task Force decision making processes proved discouraging and traumatic. While attempting to arrive at some form of consensus, the process utilized parliamentary procedures resulting in conflict, tension, and exhaustion through a sometimes-rushed voting process. There was an unclear process around establishing

grounding principles that led to dissent among voting members, demands from the public to adopt community-led principles, and development of final principles bottom lined by the APTP coalition. The result of this challenging process was a plan developed by the community and for the community, which, among other things, enabled access to data that supported non-police community safety strategies.⁶³ Oakland organizers are still pushing for change and have a powerful group of City Officials who are moving the conversation alongside them.



[62] "Reimagining Public Safety." City of Oakland. 2020. <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/reimagining-public-safety>.

[63] Brooks, Cat and James Burch. "Oakland is Reimagining Public Safety." The Defund Police Coalition. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55de3d9fe4b00eccbe4dcd5f/t/60469654a881380ff898a9ad/1615238748044/APTP_Defund-Coalition_Report_03_08+FINAL+2+%28small%29.pdf.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

SEATTLE EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE TASK FORCE (CITY INITIATED, CITY LED, & COMMUNITY OPPOSED)

Individuals and groups in Seattle have been organizing towards ending the construction of youth jails, defunding the police, and investing in true community safety for years. During the 2020 uprisings, organizers developed bold demands to defund the Seattle Police Department by 50% every year, leading to passage of legislation committing to divestment from the police budget and investment in community safety through a participatory budgeting process.

The Mayor vetoed the legislation, but powerful Black-led and multi-racial organizing by Decriminalize Seattle⁶⁴ and King County Equity Now⁶⁵ pushed 7 out of 9 City Council Members to override the veto. \$30 million of police department funds were set aside to be distributed through a participatory budgeting process to support the redesign of the mental health system, center food sovereignty, and imagine real community-led crisis response and case management for unhoused people, people in the sex trades, and/or people who use drugs, while prioritizing the needs of Black people. Over 100 community researchers were funded to develop a blueprint to realize true community safety to guide the

participatory budgeting process, and released the Black Brilliance Research Report.⁶⁶

While the community organizing and research to create the Black Brilliance Research Report was under way, the Seattle Mayor created the Equitable Communities Initiative Task Force with a proposed \$100 million budget to engage in a parallel process,⁶⁷ which was not open to the public. This split conversations about investment in communities away from the demand to divest from policing, which the Mayor opposed. Separately, she created an interdepartmental team, including the Seattle Police Department and Center for Policing Equity, who engaged in “a COMSTAT for justice community outreach process,” which also had the effect of undermining the community-led process. The Mayor made it clear that she was not interested in defunding the police or in participatory budgeting, the two primary demands of the uprising reflected in the Black Brilliance Research report.

As they opposed the creation of the Mayor’s Task Force, Seattle communities organized to reduce its harm so that the

[64] Decriminalize Seattle, <https://decriminalizeseattle.com/>.

[65] King County Equity Now, <https://www.kingcountyequitynow.com/>.

[66] Severe, LeTania & Glaze, Shaun in partnership with community, Black Brilliance Research Project, “Black Brilliance Research Report” 20 Feb. 2021, <http://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9210619&GUID=CA0CF864-7944-4FDF-9EDC-64FC53CA3C46>

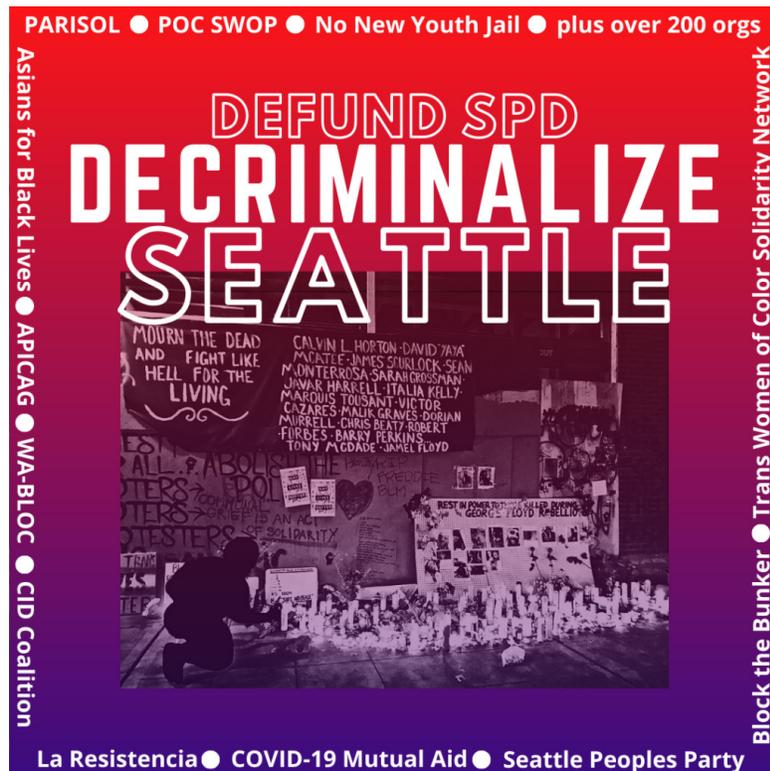
[67] Hightower, Kamaria, “Equitable Communities Initiative Task Force Launches to Guide Historic \$100 Million Investment in BIPOC Communities,” 14 Oct. 2020 Office of the Mayor, Mayor Jenny A. Durkan, Arts & Culture, <https://durkan.seattle.gov/2020/10/equitable-communities-initiative-task-force-launches-to-guide-historic-100-million-investment-in-bipoc-communities/>.

PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE CASE STUDIES

vision articulated in the Black Brilliance Research report could be realized. Given the Mayor's dismissal of community leadership by creating entirely different and unaccountable processes, Seattle groups organized to prevent people from accepting appointments to the task force and against the police-led community feedback attempt. As a result, many people who were aligned with the community demands did not accept task force appointments,⁶⁸ and multiple coalitions pushed city agencies, employees, offices and commissions to come out in favor of community defund demands and against the Mayor's task force recommendations so that she

couldn't steam-roll them through. Seattle organizers also began to recognize the co-optation of their language in the government-led process.

Communities are still pushing community demands forward in spite of all of these setbacks, and organizing to shift municipal leadership so that the participatory research outcomes and participatory budgeting can be fully implemented. They are also continuing to defend defund victories and prepare to deepen divestment from policing and investment in community-led budgeting processes during the upcoming 2022 budget cycle.



[68] Goode, Sean, "Opinion: Beware the Bootleg Rolex (A Response to Mayor Durkan's \$100 Million Proposal for BIPOC Communities)," South Seattle Emerald, 27 Sept. 2020. <https://southseattleemerald.com/2020/09/27/beware-the-bootleg-rolex-a-response-to-mayor-durkans-100-million-proposal-for-bipoc-communities/>.

CONCLUSION

THE PATH AHEAD

The struggle to end systems of policing and punishment must take place on multiple fronts.

As outlined in this report, under certain circumstances, and with many *caveats*, public safety task forces can serve as useful vehicles to advance campaigns to defund systems of policing, reduce police contact and involvement in our lives, and secure deep investments in non-police community based safety strategies.

Each of these communities' experiences experimenting with using governmental task forces to advance community safety carries valuable lessons. While the existence of a public safety task force — or your participation in it — may not change everything that needs to be changed, it can create a container to shift public perceptions and policymaker action around policing and public safety in your community, and thus bring us closer to genuine and lasting safety for all.



APPENDIX A

A FACILITATOR'S PERSPECTIVE: ADDITIONAL LESSONS FROM OAKLAND

By Anand Subramanian

(OAKLAND RESIDENT AND CO-FACILITATOR OF THE OAKLAND REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE)

Even in Oakland, California — a progressive and diverse city with a storied legacy and ongoing history of impactful, Black-led radical activism — moving the needle on shifting funding away from policing to invest in non-carceral responses, programs, and services was a monumental task.

Oakland's general fund allocation to the police department in the next budget will decrease by 2 percent (though the overall dollar amount will increase by \$9 million) and approximately \$25 million will be invested in violence prevention programs and in **MACRO**, a new non-police response to crises — thanks to the relentless advocacy of community-based organizers (primarily from the Defund OPD coalition, led by Anti Police-Terror Project) and the brave leadership of city council members (two of eight seats are now held by BIPOC women, formerly organizers) who pushed back against the mayor's proposed \$27 million increase to the Oakland Police Department. Oakland City Council also **directed the**

City Administrator to take tangible steps to implement additional Task Force recommendations, ensuring Oakland will continue the work of increasing public safety by shrinking the size and scope of policing, supporting the development of community-led programs that respond to harm, and investing in addressing the root causes of harm and violence.

This powerful dynamic of well-organized, directly-impacted community advocates who were trusted as experts and leaders by bold policymakers was a foundational element that factored heavily into PolicyLink's decision to co-facilitate the Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Task Force at the request of those trusted community partners and the invitation of City Council.

Another critical element was the unanimously-approved **resolution** that created the Task Force, directing the development of recommendations "to increase community safety through alternative responses to calls for assistance, and investments in programs that address the root causes of violence and crime (such as health services, housing, jobs, etc.), with a

ADDITIONAL LESSONS FROM OAKLAND

goal of a 50% reduction in the OPD General Purpose Fund (GFP) budget allocation.”

Unlike the subjective term “reimagining,” which is open to varied interpretations and often misunderstood or co-opted to advance a traditional (and harmful) police reform agenda, the resolution’s language provided a north star to keep Task Force and Advisory Board members on track and hold them accountable to a explicitly-articulated purpose. Further, the resolution allowed for facilitation toward an achievable result on

an challenging timeline — assessing *whether* to divest from the police department and invest instead in community, for example, was outside the scope of the Task Force’s purview. Finally, the narrow goal also ensured that co-facilitating would be a worthwhile endeavor to help advance our organizational goal to imagine and build a world beyond policing.

Below are three additional lessons learned for advocates to consider:

1

SELECT A TRUSTED, VALUES-ALIGNED FACILITATOR WITH A DIVERSE SKILL SET

PolicyLink accepted the co-facilitator role at the request of community partners who had organized for many years to defund the Oakland Police Department and refund communities—and at the invitation of an elected official who had a demonstrated record of centering and serving BIPOC communities in Oakland. Trust between PolicyLink and those community partners had been built over years of strategic collaboration and advocacy on various campaigns at local, state, and federal levels related to shifting the paradigm away from policing towards more transformative, community-based approaches.

This foundation ensured alignment towards a shared goal—too often, facilitators in this context have been

selected on the basis of technical expertise in policing and/or other aspects of the criminal-legal system, qualities that may indicate misalignment with transformative goals and/or inhibit the creativity and visioning needed to build a new public safety infrastructure. Where possible, demand a specific, trusted facilitator (if you need suggestions, go to defundpolice.org and use the chat function).

To successfully facilitate a “reimagining public safety” task force, facilitators must be values-aligned (both in terms of trust and political values/education) and also possess a diverse set of skills (either individually or aggregated as part of a team), including project design and management, meeting design and facilitation, trauma-informed

A FACILITATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

interpersonal skills, and demonstrated expertise on the current criminal-legal system and on invest-divest and/or other relevant, transformative frameworks. Facilitators must be transparent, communicative, credible, organized, patient, and strategic.

While political value-alignment is critical, facilitators must also remain objective in service of the stated task force goal (again, highlighting the importance of a clearly-articulated goal

aligned with community demands). This means facilitators should be impassive, understand and consider all perspectives (while centering those of people directly impacted by policing and criminalization), and step back in service of amplifying the Task Force and community voices, all while ensuring a narrow focus on achieving the goal, typically in the face of massive and intense opposition.

2

MAXIMIZE INFLUENCE OVER TASK FORCE STRUCTURE, DESIGN, AND MEMBERSHIP

The structure of the Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Task Force and the process to select members was largely developed by the Task Force co-chairs (two City Council members) prior to the retention of Task Force facilitators. The structure, design, and selection process could have been improved in the following ways:

FORMAL VETTING

Elected officials and various Boards and Commissions selected the Task Force's 17 designated members⁶⁹ without any formal vetting of relevant

expertise or mandated assessment of alignment with the Task Force goal. Although a majority of members ended up being aligned, the margin was thin and members who opposed the goal regularly detracted from the process, leading to frequent tension, frustration, and mistrust.

ALL TOPICS ADDRESSED

Although the work of all Advisory Board volunteers was exemplary and should be lauded, only one of the four topics initially designated for an Advisory Board⁷⁰ benefited from the structure:

[69] Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Task Force. *Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce Report and Recommendations*. 29 Apr. 2021. <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Oakland-RPSTF-Report-Final-4-29-21.pdf>, p.2.

[70] The Youth Advisory Board also benefited from the structure and modeled amazing collaboration and creativity, but it was not contemplated as part of the initial Task Force design.

ADDITIONAL LESSONS FROM OAKLAND

Alternative Responses, Programs, and Investments.⁷¹

- Identifying and navigating Legal and Policy Barriers and Opportunities would have been better served by an independent legal consultant with appropriate expertise. Legal and Policy Advisory Board members could have been housed in an expanded Alternate Responses Advisory Board to develop many of its creative and important recommendations.
- Similarly, Budget and Data analysis required specific technical expertise and access to numerous datasets that the City of Oakland released too late; keeping this function to city employees through the City Administrator's office (with appropriate oversight) may have been more efficient.
- Finally, the Oakland Police Department Organization and Culture Advisory Board too often veered outside of the scope of the Task Force's goal, focusing on traditional police reform. The task of determining how the department would be reorganized as a result of divestment could have been handled internally by the City Administrator and police representatives.

ENSURE SUFFICIENT CAPACITY

Even without political opposition, developing an entirely reimaged public safety system is a formidable task, requiring a minimum of tens of thousands of hours from a variety of perspectives and people with various types of programmatic and technical expertise. Oakland employed a co-facilitation model that proved beneficial to share the massive workload, but also presented a set of challenges that ultimately created extra work. Some of these challenges included alignment of roles, authority, information sharing, decision making, and logistics. While the Oakland co-facilitators maintained a productive relationship throughout and were able to navigate these challenges, the process may have been more efficient and effective with a sufficiently-resourced single facilitator, also allowing for a clear, shared understanding of responsibilities and accountability across Task Force members and other participants.

Aside from facilitation capacity, Oakland engaged close to 200 resident volunteers as Task Force and Advisory Board members who were asked to develop recommendations. This was a challenging task, especially for a diverse set of volunteers who ranged from professionals working daily on relevant aspects of safety to directly-impacted

[71] This Advisory Board also formed subgroups focused on Reducing Police Interactions, Preventing Violence and Repairing Harm, and Addressing the Root Causes of Violence and Harm.

A FACILITATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

people bringing critically-important perspectives to other civic-minded residents who wanted to support an important effort without any specific expertise. Thanks to the determination and sacrifice of the Advisory Board volunteers, there was a critical mass of expertise and capacity to develop a

comprehensive set of well-researched, robust recommendations, but advocates in other locations should attempt to ensure that the task is actually achievable with available capacity before supporting a Task Force effort — this may require compensation or other resources.

3

CONSIDER A PHASED APPROACH

Oakland's task force had a mere six months to achieve the daunting task of reimagining public safety, an aggressive timeline that ensured that recommendations could be considered by City Council before it approved a new two-year budget. While this goal was important, visioning and detailing an entirely new public safety system while trying to navigate legal and policy barriers on their own timelines (e.g., police union contracts) was always an

impossible task in the short term. An Oakland Task Force recommendation calls for a second phase of the Task Force to continue developing and refining the work; while there is optimism that this will manifest, building in various multi-year phases on the front end would have better acknowledged the weight of the task and allowed for a more focused effort over the initial six-month period.

APPENDIX B

**REFUND • RESTORE •
REIMAGINE**

**DEFUND OAKLAND POLICE
COALITION PRIORITY
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM
THE REIMAGINING PUBLIC
SAFETY TASK FORCE**

REFUND · RESTORE · REIMAGINE

DEFUND POLICE COALITION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE

The Defund Oakland Police Coalition urges City Council to implement the recommendations of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force and reallocate funding from policing to community programs and services that support Oakland's working families. Of the final recommendations approved by the Task Force, we **STRONGLY SUPPORT** the following:

CITY COUNCIL SHOULD IMPLEMENT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS IMMEDIATELY (BY JUNE 30)

- Adopt "verified response" standard for dispatch of patrol officers to burglary alarms (#53)
- Immediately make long-term investment in MACRO (#57)
- Fund/create community hotlines and transfer 911 call center out of OPD (#58)
- Move most traffic enforcement to OakDOT (#59)
- Dissolve the OPD homeless outreach unit and reinvest in mobile street outreach (#61)
- Repeal laws criminalizing homelessness and poverty (#64)
- Stop enforcement of laws that criminalize sex trade between consenting adults (#66)
- Establish a restorative justice web of support (#67)
- Expand and fund existing harm reduction services (#71)
- Invest in gender-based violence prevention:
 - Increase funding for gender-based violence prevention (#74) & response services (#72)
 - Expand flexible funding for survivors of gender-based violence (#73)
- Cap OPD overtime (#89)
- Establish public works street team/custodial stewards (#95)
- Create school-site based violence prevention and crisis intervention teams (#109)
- Invest in community workers and violence interrupters (#144)



- Eliminate the BearCat armored vehicle ASAP (#38)
- Eliminate the OPD mounted horses unit (#152)

CITY COUNCIL SHOULD IMPLEMENT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

- Create an Oakland specific crowd control ordinance (#1)
- Demilitarize police department (#43)
- Renegotiate OPOA MOU in 2021 instead of 2024 (#44)
- Implementing a second phase of Reimagining Public Safety (#47)
- Reallocate and reinvest funds from the OPD budget into other areas that increase public safety (#50)
- Build on the Task Force's guiding principle #2 (#52)
- Create civilian community response teams to respond to nonviolent, non-mental health incidents (#60)
- Provide a public health response to addiction/substance abuse (#65)
- Provide more comprehensive reentry support (#68)
- Expand restorative justice diversion for youth and young adults (#69)
- Transform unused vacant lots (#79)
- Make all Oakland community colleges free for local residents (#81)
- Engage community to amend Measure Z (#91)
- Reimagine community safety hub in Oakland under Department of Community Safety (#s 36 and 97)
- Create a civilian Department of Cannabis, invest in equitable development of the cannabis industry, and lower the cannabis business tax (#s 111-113)
- Accountability #1 (qualified immunity) (#137)
- Accountability #4 (review misconduct for lateral transfers) (#140)
- Eliminate country court and jail fees & provide stipend for re-entry (#145)
- Address food insecurity (#147)

“The Defund Oakland Police Coalition is excited about the many recommendations presented by the Task Force that offer real opportunities to shift, reimagine, and evolve the way Oakland thinks about and implements public safety. After five years, the voices of Oaklanders are finally being heard. This matters not just for Oakland, but for the country. For well over a decade, Oakland has been America's vanguard for criminal justice reform. As we go, so does the nation.”

– Cat Brooks,
co-founder of the
Anti Police-Terror
Project and
Executive Director
of the Justice
Teams Network

No one can stop us from imagining another kind of future, one that departs from the terrible cataclysm of violent conflict, of hateful divisions, poverty, and suffering. Let us begin to imagine the worlds we would like to inhabit, the long lives we will share, and the many futures in our hands.

—Susan Griffin



IC INTERRUPTING CRIMINALIZATION