

Responding to Hate: Building Safe Inclusive Communities

A community resiliency guide and action toolkit
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Introduction

By Not In Our Town and Over Zero

Building Resiliency in Your Community by Overcoming the Threat of Hate and Violence

Not In Our Town works with communities everywhere to prevent hate violence and build safe, inclusive environments where everyone can participate in public life. In this increasingly fractious time, the structures, communications networks and model for collaborative engagement between diverse communities and the institutions in our cities and schools can help strengthen our ability to respond quickly and prevent violence.

The outline and guidance in this toolkit presented by Over Zero complements and strengthens the NIOT model for engagement and action. Working at the local level—where innovative methods can be tested, shaped and shared—is critical to developing solutions that can address racism and bigotry and lead to a more equitable and inclusive environment in our communities, country, and our world.

Not In Our Town is a movement to stop hate, address bullying, and build safe, inclusive communities for all. Our work focuses on solutions that inspire and empower communities. With film, social media, and organizing tools, Not In Our Town helps local leaders build vibrant, diverse cities and towns, where everyone is encouraged to participate.

Over Zero partners with community leaders, civil society, and researchers to harness the power of communication to prevent, resist and rise above identity-based violence and other forms of group-targeted harm.

This toolkit was authored and designed by Over Zero, which granted permission for adaptation by Not In Our Town.

Over Zero is grateful for valuable contributions and feedback for the original toolkit from Caleb Njoroge Gichui, Vasu Mohan, Arjun Sethi, Ashley Quarcoo, Shannon Hiller, Nealin Parker, and Zainab Chaudary

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Build or Strengthen Your Stakeholder Network

For a resiliency network to be effective, it must include leaders representing as many stakeholder groups in a community as possible – particularly those groups most likely to be affected by hate and intolerance. Successful engagement to propel change requires collaboration between key institutions and in communities that are targeted by hate and intolerance. It is the combination of these collective forces that enables a community to work deeply on the cultural shift and relationship building that can propel structural change.

You can begin thinking through the different stakeholder groups in your community with the following prompts:

- Who are the diverse community members and groups who may be directly affected by hate and racism?
- Who are the key leaders in your town that reflect core values (city leaders, school leaders, librarians, law enforcement)?
- Which faith communities are present in your community?
- What types of formal organizations exist in your community (e.g. trade unions, civic organizations, media, volunteer organizations, advocacy organizations, mutual aid societies)?
- What types of informal organizations exist in your community (e.g. Facebook groups for parents, sports teams, gardening clubs)?
- Who are the educators, teachers, student groups, PTAs, and campus leaders?
- Who are the local businesses and employers?
- Who are influential groups in your community? Who do people listen to? Who has a large platform?
- Who are other groups that may be marginalized in your community?
- Who are information spreaders in your community (e.g. bartenders, postal workers, Facebook group moderators)?

Build Trust within Your Community and Between Communities

While each member of your network will have built trust with different groups and audiences in your community as individuals, you can also take steps to build trust as a collective and to build and deepen trust across different groups.

1. Show up for groups being targeted with harm. This could mean releasing a statement or physically showing up to a vigil or rally. Be sure to check in with targeted groups about the types of actions that can best address their needs and priorities – do this regularly to remain up-to-date as the context evolves.
2. Amplify voices and stories from affected communities. Be sure to get permission for sharing personal stories from groups or individuals.
3. Set realistic expectations of what your network can and cannot do and meet them. Be clear in communicating what resources and capacity you have and follow through on the commitments you make.
4. Be visible in your work with different community leaders. While the majority of your coordination will likely be behind-the-scenes, showing different community leaders working together can help build trust between communities (and for the network members). (Note: you can decide to do all of your work behind the scenes rather than have a public-facing network, but showing different network members doing things together even informally can help boost trust).
5. Listen to people's concerns, grievances, needs, and priorities. You can do this through existing channels or forums or develop a new one (such as a moderated Facebook group). Whatever the mechanism, be sure to be transparent about the best ways to communicate with your network. If you do establish a more formal channel for this, develop a clear process for moderation and, again, be transparent about that process.
6. Organize resources and provide support for targeted communities. Again, be sure to check in with targeted communities about their needs and priorities.
7. Circulate reliable information to your community. This can be directly related to helpful resources and information (e.g., information about mutual aid networks, community relief resources, statements from city government, voting procedures, road closures on voting day, etc.).

Note: Get familiar with best practices for correcting misinformation more generally, and use them as needed in your communications.

Stakeholder outreach

Once you have mapped stakeholder groups and identified leaders and potential partners, you can begin reaching out to new stakeholders. It is important to remember that this outreach should not be transactional but rather aimed at building deep relationships built on mutual trust. Outreach should therefore begin with learning about potential network members – their experiences, priorities, needs, etc.

Building relationships and coalitions can be a complex process. It is critical to approach this process from a place of curiosity, humility, and patience. This means:

1. Focus on listening and learning from other members of your network, particularly those from communities most likely to be affected by violence.
2. Remember that people have different experiences in the same community. Again, approach learning about others' experiences from a place of curiosity and humility.
3. Remember trust-building can be a long process that requires sustained interaction. Be open to learning about barriers to building trust- whether that is unintended harm you have caused or wider community dynamics.

Note: You may be building new connections with a shorter than ideal timeframe – keep this in mind and be realistic with your asks and requests. At the very least, it is helpful to know who is out there and make sure they know your interest and intentions with this work – even this basic level of connection can help with coordination in moments of crisis.

Mapping Network Resources

Mobilizing a resiliency network takes resources. Work together with your fellow resiliency network members to brainstorm which resources you have access to and where there are gaps. You can use this list to jumpstart your thinking - add all the resources you can think of that you have access to or might need.

Type of Resource	Who has it? (Fill in any details)
Access & influence (e.g. access to and influence with key leaders and decision-makers)	
Connections to local government	
Connections to key business leaders	
Connections to key faith leaders	
Connections to trusted news sources	
Connections with diverse community leaders	
Connections with youth leaders	
Knowledge (e.g., who has particular insight or knowledge about different parts of your community?)	
Local community or faith leaders	
Communities targeted by hate and bias	
Local news outlets	
Skills	
Social media capacity (e.g. ability to create graphics, knowledge of social media metrics/tracking, etc.)	
PR and crisis communications	
Mediation/Dialogue facilitation	
Legal expertise (including legal observation)	
Other:	

Engaging Diverse Communities

It's key to begin conducting your outreach in a way that is collaborative and designed to build long-term trust. You can begin your conversations with potential partners or network members by outlining your concerns and reasons for organizing a resiliency network. Then, you can refer to the goals of a resiliency network and/or the information provided about risks and election violence as is useful.

Approach initial conversations slowly and with flexibility. Think of this as a time to learn about people's needs, concerns, priorities, etc. You can use this worksheet to guide these initial conversations.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Listen to learn. Remember that one of the benefits of a diverse network is that people bring complementary knowledge and insights.
2. It's important to respect people's time and boundaries. If someone says they don't have the bandwidth to be involved, ask them if they know someone else who may want to get involved.
3. Building trust is an ongoing process and it may be best to wait to ask more sensitive questions, particularly with groups with a history of being marginalized or targeted with violence.
4. Transparency is critical. Be transparent with people about your goals, the process ahead, what they can and can't expect from you, etc.

Remember:
Building trust is foundational to this work. To build trust and credibility, make sure you set accurate expectations for your work with new groups and that you live up to them. Listen to peoples' experiences and recognize what they are bringing to the table, as well as any needs they identify. Find ways to show that you are listening and that you want to learn about their experiences and them as people.

Outreach Questions

QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL RESILIENCY NETWORK MEMBERS

Once you've discussed the goals of a resiliency network and the potential partner's interest, consider asking the below questions to better understand their interests, needs, experiences, and potential role in the network:

1. What groups do you currently work in and identify with? What's your role in these groups?
2. What are your long-term goals for making our community more resilient? Do you see your goals as in alignment with other members of the groups you just mentioned?
3. What underlying strengths do you think our community has to build resiliency?
4. What underlying weaknesses do you think our community has that create obstacles to resiliency?
5. With these strengths and weaknesses in mind, how can we work together? What actions are you prepared to engage in?
6. What skills, perspectives, and experiences do you bring to this network? What are you most excited about bringing to the table?
7. What are your concerns and expectations for working within a network like this? How do you hope this network can support you or help further your goals and priorities?

Risk and Resilience Analysis

In order to prepare your network for action, you can start by pooling your knowledge and experiences to build a collective understanding of the different sources of risk and resilience in your community. This is a chance to bring together the diverse knowledge and experiences within your network to lay the foundation for your collective efforts. Further, this type of exercise can help you identify how specific actions might backfire or cause unintended harm, and can position you to identify, strengthen, leverage, and ultimately build upon local capacities for resilience.

This exercise can be done collectively or you can provide prompts to people to think through individually then discuss them together. The key here is to make sure this is a collaborative process where everyone's voice is heard, taking full advantage of the diversity of experiences and knowledge in your network. This exercise will allow you to (1) identify risk factors, (2) identify resilience factors, and (3) identify remaining gaps in knowledge. This exercise will also build understanding and trust among the network.

You can use the prompts on the following pages to guide your risk and resilience analysis. Please use them as a starting point for conversation and add questions you feel are important for your community!

The prompts are organized into the following broad categories:

1. Examining the broader (historical and current) context of conflict and cooperation
2. Charting the communication landscape
3. Considering the different people and groups involved
4. Geographic analysis: mapping your community

As you go through these discussions, remember that different people within your network will likely have different perspectives and experiences. Many groups have already experienced discrimination, marginalization, and violence, and it's particularly important to recognize and learn from their experience.

Understanding our Past to Build a Resilient Future

Examining the broader context of conflict and cooperation: Examining the historical and current experiences of your community can provide insights on existing risks, sources of resilience that you can build on and strengthen, and lessons learned. Further, it can help create more of a shared understanding of the experiences of different community members and groups.

RISK	RESILIENCE
<p>What is the history of tension, conflict, bias or hate in your community?</p> <p>» Who was impacted by violence and in what ways? What are the common narratives or stories about this history? Is this history a point of contention?</p>	<p>What is the history of organizing and cooperation and responding to hate and bias in your community?</p> <p>» Is there a history of people or groups responding to violence or other crisis events? What are the different narratives or stories about this history?</p>
<p>Which groups have been historically marginalized in your community? Which groups are currently being marginalized or excluded from different spaces or institutions?</p> <p>» How has this happened historically? How is it happening right now?</p>	<p>Have there been responses to the marginalization of different groups in your community (by the groups being marginalized and/or with other groups or stakeholders)?</p> <p>» How has this happened? How is it happening right now?</p>
<p>What are other tensions at play (e.g. job loss, COVID-19 impact, school closures, etc.)?</p>	<p>Have different groups supported one another in the face of other challenges (e.g. job loss, COVID impact, school closing, etc.), violence, hate or tensions?</p>
<p>Capture key takeaways (including any gaps in your collective knowledge):</p>	

Narratives for Change

Charting the communication landscape: You won't be communicating into a vacuum: understanding the existing narratives and how they're spread through your community can help you build a stronger foundation and communicate well in a crisis.

RISK	RESILIENCE
<p>What are the narratives that contribute to division, conflict, tension, or other harms in your community?</p> <p>» Are any of these particularly strong or prevalent right now? Are any particular rumors or misinformation especially prevalent right now?</p>	<p>What are the common narratives about cooperation, unity, and resilience in your community?</p> <p>» Are any of these particularly strong or prevalent right now?</p>
<p>Are there any common or emerging narratives about risks for violence and/or other harm in your community during the upcoming election cycle?</p>	<p>Are there any common or emerging narratives about ensuring a free, fair, safe election cycle in your community?</p>
<p>How are divisive narratives/rhetoric spread or shared in your community?</p> <p>» Who are the speakers/messengers (e.g. a news anchor, a community leader)?</p> <p>» What channels are used to spread these messages (e.g. emails, TV, Facebook, phone calls)?</p> <p>» Who are the different audiences listening to these messengers and channels?</p>	<p>How are these unifying narratives spread in your community?</p> <p>» Who are the speakers/messengers (e.g. a news anchor, a community leader)?</p> <p>» What channels are used to spread these messages (e.g. emails, TV, Facebook, phone calls)?</p> <p>» Who are the different audiences listening to these messengers and channels?</p>
<p>Capture key takeaways (including any gaps in your collective knowledge):</p>	

Forming a Hate and Bias Incident Response Team

A Hate and Bias Incident Response Team provides support for community members who are targets of hate and bias, helps build relationships between community members targeted by hate and between residents and key institutions in the community, pinpoints problems before they escalate and prevent hate crimes, and builds trust and better relationships between law enforcement and the community. Additionally, the hate and bias response team could help to defuse community tension during the aftermath of a hate-related incident.

The Hate Response Team would be a subcommittee of Not in Our Town, and would be a collaboration of governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community members.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Monitors incidents of hate and bias by working with law enforcement, local media, community groups, and social media.
- In cooperation with other resources, supports victims and targeted communities after incidents to both provide resources and express support from the community.
- Works with the NIOT community to communicate facts about incidents, guided by the needs and wishes of victims
- Works with the NIOT community to mobilize communities in response to incidents, with a focus on defusing situations.

TEAM CONCEPT

This should be a diverse group that can respond to the specific needs of targeted groups. Membership should include community and civic leaders outlined earlier in the guide, including representatives of diverse communities targeted by hate, city and county agencies, civic organizations, faith groups, law enforcement, youth leaders, and parent groups. All members should be trained, but a core group should have more focused training that can help guide incident response. Some leaders on the response team will be trained to work with victims, others may be able to act as liaison with law enforcement or social media. The majority of members will be there to help build a response and support for victims by reaching out to diverse communities when an incident occurs, write letters and messages of support for victims, organize vigils or gatherings, and spread positive messages of support and information on social media.

Hate and Bias Incident Response Team In Action

BEST PRACTICES FOR HATE AND BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

1. Builds a response protocol for incidents including contacting victims, working with the team to provide resources to the victim, communicating with target groups, and helping to mobilize a community support response.
2. Develops a relationship with local law enforcement and the District Attorney to act in support of victims when a hate incident occurs.
3. Contacts victims to express support from the community and see if the victim is willing to come forward, or would like to remain anonymous. **Respecting the wishes of victims is essential to team protocols.** It is always optimal for victims to report incidents to law enforcement, but that may not be possible or wanted by the victim. While it is critical that this step is taken in cooperation with law enforcement to be able to support the victim, the team's efforts should not compromise any possible investigation.
4. Works with NIOT community outreach team on a communications plan to help alert the community of an incident.
5. Raises awareness in the community about the Response team and victim support needs.
6. Creates monitoring mechanisms that include:
 - Connections with diverse local organizations providing email addresses and or a phone number for targets to call in case of an incident.
 - Relationships with local media organizations or reporters to learn about hate incidents and raise awareness.
 - Relationships with diverse student and parent groups in schools.

Rapid Response Messaging

Here we offer Do's and Don'ts for rapid response communications. While this sheet offers general considerations and best practices, it's important to note that messaging strategy and content will ultimately depend on the dynamics within your particular context. As you read these guidelines, consider how you might tailor and operationalize them in your community.

DO'S:

Listen to and consult with targeted communities before acting

Set and model positive norms

Tell people "who we are", rather than "who we're not"

Emphasize agency

Model or showcase empathy

Offer a concrete path forward for grievances

Be careful and specific when sharing information about violence or other related events

Ensure that you don't dehumanize

Undermine biases that emerge in conflict

Use best practices for correcting mis- and dis-information

ALWAYS analyze for risk

Anticipate and prepare

DON'TS:

Don't call for peace without offering a way to address the underlying issues

Don't be vague or dishonest

Don't call-out violence or tensions without also addressing the underlying issues that gave rise to it

Don't dehumanize

Don't signal negative norms

Don't feed narratives of "collective blame"

Don't raise the profile or notoriety of violent actors

Don't repeat misinformation or rumors.

Don't emphasize or create chaos or confusion

Don't buy into a zero-sum frame

Read more about these "Do's" on the following page and more about these "Don'ts" on pg 57

- 1. Listen to and consult with targeted communities before acting:** Where specific groups or communities are targeted for violence, listen to them first to learn their needs, ideas, and preferences for public statements and actions.
- 2. Set and model positive norms:** Show that the vast majority of people in your community do not support and will not participate in violence – especially and even in the face of escalating tensions or incidents of violence.
 - Emphasize the unifying, local identity of your community and draw on relevant community narratives and values for protecting the dignity and rights of all residents.
 - Use “we” framing to set positive expectations. “We, as the [CITY/TOWN] community, will/are/are committed to [VALUE/ACTION].” Then provide evidence that shows that this is true.
 - Stress the importance of working together across groups to be a national model for addressing hard issues, rather than serving as fodder in national electoral politics.
 - Show in addition to telling. Model these positive norms. Share stories or highlight actions that showcase the norms you are trying to set for your communities in the face of strains, escalation or trigger events. Show the specific actions that you as leaders are taking; show how many people in your community support these positive norms and are taking positive action. This provides “social proof” that the values and actions you are encouraging are possible and prevalent throughout your community.²⁵
 - > Listen to the people and communities affected by the violence. Learn about their needs and channel your resources (public platform, financial resources, in-kind support, etc.) accordingly.
- 3. Tell people “who we are”, rather than “who we’re not”:** Define your community or group in positive, inclusive terms and use the community’s own words and examples. Themes likely to resonate include inclusivity, diversity, unity, agency, hope, good will, a focus on safety (e.g. everyone should feel safe voting).²⁶
 - **Why?** Asserting who we are not actually strengthens the association between “we” (our community or other group) and the very actions we are seeking to avoid. Further, in times of uncertainty, people are drawn to leaders who can define a clear identity and set of values for their group – “this is who we are and this is what we care about”.²⁷

- 4. Emphasize agency:** In uncertain or tense moments, people can feel a loss of agency in deciding how they will act - especially because narratives that seek to move people towards violence often portray it as the only option (“to protect our group,” “secure our future,” etc.²⁸). This can create strong social pressures and a feeling that someone has no choice but to support violence or just stay quiet. It’s important to emphasize that people have a choice choice in how they act -- and that their values and common goals dictate that they will resist violence. This can be framed through the lens of the broader community’s commitment to resisting violence, or a particular group (e.g. a faith community, a community organization, etc.).
- 5. Model empathy**

 - **Toward targeted communities:** When communities are targeted with violence and you seek to share stories from targeted communities (with their permission), model empathy toward those communities. Rather than just sharing content meant to generate empathy among audiences, modeling this empathy yourself may more powerfully generate empathy among your audience.
 - **Toward your audience:** Demonstrate that you care about them and that you understand this is a difficult and confusing time. Recognize their emotions and show a path forward.
- 6. Offer a concrete path forward for grievances:** Provide clear channels and processes for addressing grievances and violence in real-time. Acknowledge any grievances that do arise, and help people understand the different options for addressing these grievances. For example, if disputes arise around the election, or if there are issues with voting (e.g. technical or procedural issues to be addressed), provide people with specific information about different options for addressing these grievances, and keep them updated on the different procedures. Note: as grievances arise, people may use many means to address them – from filing legal challenges to protest. It’s important not to discourage people from addressing grievances, but instead to help make people aware of, and encourage, ways of doing so.
- 7. Be careful and specific when sharing information about violence or other related events.** If violence does happen, it’s important to be careful and specific when discussing it. In addition to the other recommendations, keep in mind the following :

 - When specific communities are targeted with violence you should be sure to listen to them before taking any action, including communicating. Learn about their needs and channel your resources (public platform, financial support, in-kind support, etc.) accordingly.
 - When sharing information about violence, it’s important to remember that violence

can be used as a coercive tool to intimidate and silence entire communities who fear further violence and targeting. It's essential not to fuel fear and intimidation of these communities, and to instead show how many people stand in support of them and against violence.

- Sometimes, language around violence can fuel unequal narratives between groups – or simply be inaccurate. For example, saying “violence erupted at a protest” if the violence being described is police firing teargas on protestors, is inaccurate in that it implies a spontaneous eruption of violence, likely from protestors. Being specific about exactly what happened, including not using broad passive phrasing about violence, is important for accuracy, for preventing unequal descriptions of groups relating to violence, and to ensure that you don't create a vague and broad feeling about violence and its prevalence.

8. Ensure that you don't dehumanize: dehumanizing narratives between groups often paint members of a group as a whole as lacking either warmth or competence.³⁰

There are many dehumanizing narratives that portray groups as less than fully human, or with words and metaphors that prime images of animals or pests. Be careful of the words you use when describing people or events – for example, using the phrase “people swarmed onto the streets” uses a verb (swarmed) that is typically used to describe insects.²⁹ Also avoid victimizing language and imagery that shows people targeted with violence as helpless. Finally, if you're talking about any group, but especially groups that are in any way marginalized or discriminated against, be sure to showcase their warmth (caring for others, empathy) and their competence (responsibility, complex emotions like concern or hope, etc.).

9. Undermine biases that emerge in conflict: Once groups begin to have conflict with each other, certain biases and narratives can emerge. For example, we tend to think “we are acting out of love – wanting to protect our own group” while “they are acting out of hate.”³¹ Of course there is a mixture of motivations in any group, but this asymmetry between how we think of our own group and others can help cement conflict. Be sure not to feed into this narrative.

10. Use best practices for correcting mis- and dis-information: It can be easy to accidentally fuel misinformation when you're trying to correct. To avoid simple mistakes, like increasing exposure to misinformation, use the “**Correcting Misinformation**” handout on pg. 59] to familiarize yourself with best practices.

11. ALWAYS analyze for risk. Even well-intentioned efforts may backfire and cause unintended harm. It's critical to consider how your effort may interact with the surrounding context to amplify or defuse risks for violence or further tensions.

- **For more information on how to conduct a risk analysis, see the worksheet on page 62**

12. Anticipate and prepare: Use your scenario planning to think about specific messages you want to prepare in advance.

For example:

- In anticipation of tensions during the counting period, since mail-in ballots will take longer to count and the results will not be known for some time after the election, you could prepare messages celebrating the community for patiently waiting, reinforcing common identities, and keeping a sense of calm. Once counting has begun, messages should provide status updates and reinforce that this longer wait-time is expected. Throughout, continue providing procedural updates and encourage calm and the use of official channels to address any disputes. Being prepared with this type of messaging in advance can help you mobilize quickly if people are impatient or rumors about the counting process have started (or if candidates declare victory before the count has been completed!).
- As you think about messaging to keep people calm and ensure they have information throughout the voting and counting processes, be ready to amplify updates from non-partisan or bi-partisan coalitions or monitors who are observing the election.
- You can also think about specific messaging for any of the scenarios you've come up with. You may not use it word for word, but having thought through messages and even having a draft to start from can help you respond in a crises moment!

DON'TS

1. **Don't be vague or dishonest.** Be clear in your messaging and acknowledge when you don't know something. It's important not to squander trust with your audience, particularly in tense moments.
2. **Don't speak about violence without also addressing the larger context and its short and long-term impacts.** For instance, the larger context may include histories of anti-Black violence, racism, voter suppression, distrust, division, etc.
3. **Don't dehumanize** or use words or metaphors that signal connections to animals.³² Instead, **emphasize communities' warmth and competency**³³ (see above).
4. **Don't signal negative norms** when drawing attention to negative behaviors (e.g., violence has overtaken this community).³⁴ Instead, emphasize how the community is committed to finding a peaceful solution.
5. **Don't feed narratives of "collective blame."**³⁵ If you are talking about violence, be specific and clear when describing who is committing violence and how it fits into the broader context. Broad language describing violence tied to a group can fuel an associations of that group with violence, especially where stereotypes already exist.
6. **Don't raise the profile or notoriety of violent actors.**
7. **Don't repeat misinformation or rumors.** If you have to in order to provide corrective information, provide a warning that the information is incorrect first.³⁶
8. **Don't emphasize or create chaos or confusion.** Instead, if there are tensions, confusion, or a feeling of chaos provide clarifying information on what is happening and why, as well as steps being taken to calm things down. This also means that you should not use sensationalist or alarmist language, or engage in speculation about things that might happen. This is particularly important to remember as you and your network discuss possible risks and scenarios – this should be done for the purposes of planning and preparing to help your community prevent violence; messaging about these risks or speculating on how they might happen in broad public messages can actually at fuel to the fire!

Developing a system for internal communication, coordination, and decision-making

The next step is to get practical and actually map out the details of how you'll coordinate and make real-time decisions within your network. Throughout this process, you'll consider all your ideas about types of responses, who would do what, and who has access to key information.

Remember the continued importance of internal communication and coordination throughout your network. When violence, confusion, and tensions emerge, they can be experienced differently by different stakeholders. This is where the diversity of your network is so important: it will enable you to understand the challenges you face from multiple perspectives and take action that addresses these varied experiences. It's particularly important to pay attention to the knowledge and perspectives of any group within your community that is targeted with violence, and not to take action on their behalf without consultation. Work together to strategize on engaging those who might support violence and promoting norms that strongly discourage and condemn violence.

Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

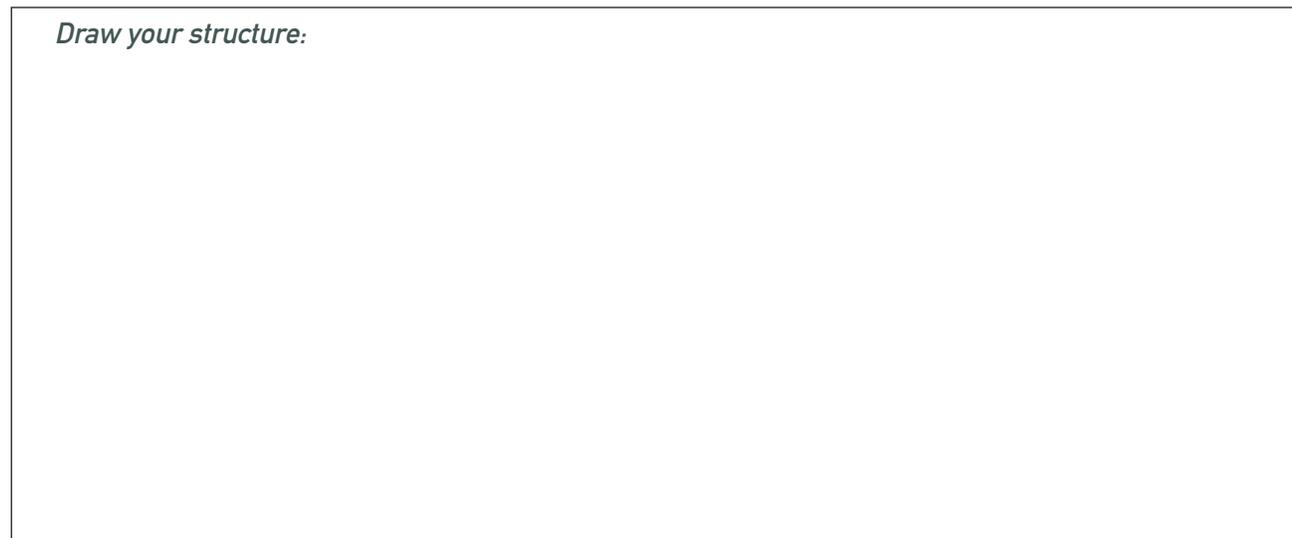
To prepare your network to effectively respond to events in realtime, the first thing to do is to determine how you will communicate and make decisions.

DECIDE ON STRUCTURE

We suggest agreeing on a clear structure — for example, is there a committee of three people who lead and are each responsible for soliciting input and approvals from a different piece of the network? Does the Hate and Bias Incident Response Team take the lead on this? Ensuring that there is a designated group that is responsible for gathering inputs and responsive decision-making will ensure you are able to respond quickly. Note that it's very important that the network agrees on that group and that it's diverse and representative of the broader network.

- To build this structure, refer back to your crisis monitoring process. You already created a mechanism for coordinating communication to flag risks and escalation. Can this be a starting point for coordinating response?
- Make sure you have a clear process for coordination - all the way down to who will call one another. A phone tree can be a great tool for this.

Draw your structure:



» Once you've agreed on a structure for decision-making, you can be as prepared as possible by agreeing on some general guidance and process for deciding whether to respond »

It will also be important to agree on some general guidance and process for deciding whether to respond.

Rapid Response to Hate and Bias Incident Coordination & Decision-making

Consider what you know about what exactly is happening, who is involved, how it's being communicated or interpreted, where it is happening, when it happened or is happening (e.g. if it's a rally, is it planned for a specific time? Are you worried about a particular place after dark? A house of worship during worship time?), and anything you know about how it came to be.

VERIFY, GET MORE INFORMATION & ANALYZE THE SITUATION

To verify, collect more information, and analyze the situation, consider the following questions:

Verification & information Collection

- How do we know about this event (or sign that things might be escalating)? Who is the source? Are there other sources? Is it first-hand or second-hand information?
- What role can the Hate and Bias Incident Response Team have in collecting information?

Analysis

- What is the potential for escalation? What would escalation look like?
- Who are the communities targeted by the event or the incident?

What other questions do you want to ask?

Planning Proactive Action

Now plan how you'll take action! You can use the below chart to write ideas for each priority you selected on the last page, designate a point person (or group of people) to coordinate and move that priority forward, and list everyone who will be involved and the role's they'll play. Refer back to your communications infrastructure and network resource mapping to think about what resources and communication capacity and reach the network can bring to bear on each strategy!

Strategy: (e.g. "Build Unifying Identities")	
Describe what you'll do or brainstorm ideas for action that a point person can build on:	
Point person responsible for coordinating/organizing?	
Other people involved & their roles?	

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Other people involved & their roles?	

Planning Proactive Action

SELECT PRIORITIES TO FOCUS ON:

Think with your network about which priorities you'd like to focus on. You can use the checklist below to mark which you'd like to focus on and make notes. You can also brainstorm any other action priorities you think are important but aren't in this list; write them down at the bottom of the list.

- A: Build unifying identities
- B: Set positive norms
- C: Proactively develop prosocial messaging
- D: Proactively communicate accurate information and correct misinformation
- E: Learn and use best practices for correcting mis- and disinformation
- F: Build trust within your community and between communities

Monitoring Plan

SCENARIO #1: _____

- Who is being targeted or may be impacted by violence, intimidation, etc.?

- How can the Hate and Bias Incident Response Team be deployed?

- Who is involved in escalating the risk (e.g. fanning tensions or perpetrating violence)?

- Who is influential for any of the people or groups involved?

- Who would you want to be able to reach and influence?

- Who would you want to be able to reach in order to learn more?

- Who would you want to be able to support?

Think about, if you faced this scenario today, what you could have done beforehand to better prepare (e.g. what you wish you had known prior, who you wish you were in contact with prior, etc).

SCENARIO #2: _____

- Who is being targeted or may be impacted by violence, intimidation, etc.?

- How can the Hate and Bias Incident Response Team be deployed?

- Who is involved in escalating the risk (e.g. fanning tensions or perpetrating violence)?

- Who is influential for any of the people or groups involved?

- Who would you want to be able to reach and influence?

- Who would you want to be able to reach in order to learn more?

- Who would you want to be able to support?

Think about, if you faced this scenario today, what you could have done beforehand to better prepare (e.g. what you wish you had known prior, who you wish you were in contact with prior, etc).

Monitoring Plan

FIGURE OUT MONITORING CAPACITY

Complete the following monitoring chart to consider who would learn key pieces of information about each scenario – the signs of tension, the need for a response – and how they’d learn about this information. The Hate and Bias Incident Response Team may include this among their tasks, but also consider who would be well positioned to respond – who could reach key stakeholders at important moments, for example. Consider the necessary skills, resources, platform, access, etc.:

Warning sign or scenario:			
Who could flag, monitor, or verify?	How?	Who could respond?	With what skills/resources/platform/access/social capital?

Warning sign or scenario:			
Who could flag, monitor, or verify?	How?	Who could respond?	With what skills/resources/platform/access/social capital?

Warning sign or scenario:			
Who could flag, monitor, or verify?	How?	Who could respond?	With what skills/resources/platform/access/social capital?

Correcting Misinformation

Correcting misinformation can be tricky, particularly because the more we hear a piece of information (even if it is being disputed), the more likely we are to believe it. Luckily, research and practice have shown us that there are effective ways to correct misinformation without reinforcing it. We outline best practices in this handout.

1. Correct misinformation as quickly as possible. The more that people hear or see misinformation, the more they are likely to believe it.
2. Use positive framing. For example, if John has been accused of being a thief, the best correction will re-focus attention on what John is (e.g., “John is an honest person who is always sharing”) rather than what he is not (e.g., “John is NOT a thief.”) Why? Repeating the original accusation can strengthen the very association you are trying to undercut (John and thief).
3. Try not to repeat the misinformation, but if you have to, give a warning before you repeat it (not after!). As misinformation is repeated, it becomes more familiar and believable to people. By warning listeners in advance of repeating the association, you activate their critical thinking skills to prevent the association from unknowingly taking hold.
4. Make sure your correction comes from a source (whether an individual, institution, or news outlet) that people find credible and that represents their interests and values.
5. Prompt people to question sources of mis- and dis-information. Encourage people to consider the motive of the source: why would someone spread false or misleading information (e.g., is it clickbait that would help them earn money)? Research has shown that critical thinking and deliberation can reduce the influence of misinformation.³⁸
6. If possible, provide an alternative explanation for the evidence underlying the incorrect claim. Misinformation is more influential when people infer a causal relationship from the evidence and subsequent event (e.g., between the presence of flammable materials and a subsequent fire). A correction that simply disputes that the materials caused the fire will be less effective than one that explains the fire resulted from arson.³⁹
7. Keep your corrections simple and easy to understand. If possible, use clear and simple visualizations.
8. Consider the underlying narratives that the mis- or dis-information is tapping into. Why would someone believe the misinformation? What emotions, identities, or experiences are attached? What sense of truth or existing belief is it resonating with? Understanding this can allow you to identify the larger narratives, ideas, and beliefs you will need to tackle.

Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

DESIGN RESPONSE

Using the guidance you developed earlier, design your response!

- Think about your different response options. Consult within the network with communities who are directly affected by the incident or who have other specific insights.

- Think about how you'd implement your most promising response options: Which audiences do you need to reach, how do you want to impact them, and which messengers and channels will you activate to do so?
 - How will the Hate and Bias Incident Response Team be engaged?
 - Refer back to your communications infrastructure and resource mapping: what parts of your communications infrastructure and the resources available to your network could help you be effective in your response?

- Use the best practices from the Rapid Response Messaging handout to help design your communication approach.
 - Consider whether anyone could face consequences or risks by participating in the response. Make sure they are aware and able to make a fully informed decision about whether or not to participate.

DO A FINAL RISK CHECK

Look at the risks you identified in the prior exercises. Are there additional risks based on the specific actions you've decided to take?

Then, for each risk, consider (1) how likely is it that this will happen? (2) if it happens, how much harm will be done? And (3) are there things we can do to mitigate the harm?

You can use the chart on the next page if it's helpful to capture your list of risks and answers to these questions.

Once you've done this, weigh the risks and decide whether to proceed. If you decide to go ahead, your next step will be to implement your response! As you do, **keep monitoring the situation and the impact of your response and repeat steps 1-4 to add new responses or change and adapt your response as the situation evolves.**

Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

DECIDE WHETHER TO RESPOND BY WEIGHING RISKS & POTENTIAL IMPACT

Before responding, it's important to weight the potential risks and impact of a response. You can consider the following questions:

- What would likely happen if we did/said nothing?
- Who would be aware of this event if we did/said nothing?
- Are there ways doing something could inadvertently make the situation worse?

It's important to note that many responses will carry both risks and benefits. Use your best judgment and work with affected communities to weigh risk vs. impact.

Taking Proactive Action

To avoid playing “whack a mole” in countering negative messaging only as it arises, you can consider priorities for proactive communication that help reduce the resonance of harmful messaging and set the stage for rapid response*. Here are a few core communication priorities that you can use right away (with tips on how to use each priority on the page indicated). Use these ideas as a starting point – you may have more!

A: Build and strengthening unifying identities.....71

Building and strengthening identities that cut across lines of conflict in your community can help undermine us versus them dynamics.



B: Set positive norms.....73

Setting and maintaining strong positive norms can steer people towards positive actions (and away from harmful actions), especially in contentious and uncertain situations.



C: Encourage and support action.....76

You can build a foundation for positive engagement by encouraging and supporting people to take positive actions.



D: Proactively communicate accurate information and correct misinformation.....77

In the face of attempts to spread mis and disinformation about the election, it’s important to be proactive in ensuring that people have correct information and expectations. There are several predictable priorities for communicating accurate information.



E: Build trust within your community and between communities.....78

As a network, you can work to collectively build trust across and between different groups and audiences in your community.

Note: You can decide how public-facing you want your network to be, versus how much of a behind-the-scenes coordinating mechanism. Either way, you can collaborate and coordinate together towards these messaging priorities.

* In fact, many of these priorities overlap with rapid response communication priorities, since they set the foundational narratives that rapid response communication can build upon.

Tips for Building and Strengthening Unifying Identities

As conflict divisions harden, certain parts of our identity (for instance, partisan identities) can become more and more salient while other identities, including those that cut across conflict lines (e.g., being a parent or a resident of a town) recede. As these divisions harden, us versus them mentalities can take hold, and the pressure to go along with our group, even if it means supporting violence, increase. **Building and strengthening unifying identities is a core priority to undermine this type of singular “us vs. them” dynamic in your community.**

Because we are often influenced by the groups that we are part of, activating these multiple identities can also be a powerful way to mobilize people and help them take positive action.

1. Strengthen existing identities, or build new, cross-cutting and overarching identities.

Because it can be scary for people to use their voices in ways that go against their group, and because there are high levels of partisan division and zero-sum narratives, bolstering a new identity that subsumes dividing lines makes speaking out feel safer: while acting alone is very hard, it becomes easier as part of a group that also provides belonging, recognition, and a sense of pride. Cross-cutting identities can be reinforced or built around movements, brands, or geographic identities.

Showcase a broad and inclusive “we” that cuts across lines of division in your community. Think about what different identities or groups exist in your community that you can highlight and make more salient. For instance, is it your local city or town identity? The local sports team? Family identities (e.g. being parents)? A local campaign or slogan that people from all backgrounds have gotten behind? What other groups that cut across lines of division can be mobilized in your community (e.g. people working in a particular industry, a core set of local values)? There are likely multiple overlapping and intersecting identities that can be activate in the midst of deep division to bolster cross-cutting ties and build multiple inclusive versions of “we.” To resonate, “we” should be characterized by interdependence and common goals and aspirations. Rather than pushing us into singular identities, this keeps multiple aspects of our identity active and challenges us/them divides that may be taking hold.

2. Ascribe positive values and tie positive actions to different identities.

Underscore that all members within a given community – regardless of their partisan, religious, racial, ethnic, etc. identity – have common interests and concerns. For instance, all community members want better schools for their children, to avoid further deaths from the coronavirus,

Tips for building and strengthening unifying identities (continued)

the election does not bring violence to the neighborhood. Emphasizing common goals or aspirations for a community imbues a sense of “we’re all in this together” while undercutting us/them divides that might otherwise take hold.

3. Tell stories that highlight shared identities and cooperation

Stories and images act as “social proof” for the narrative or cause you are advancing – highlighting that diverse groups have and can work together. For instance, consider the powerful message from reading about the large-scale interfaith COVID-19 food relief efforts in North Carolina that resulted in 20,000 pounds of food being distributed in Durham alone.⁴² Such stories can model the larger “we” while undercutting negative perceptions between groups and making it harder for people to activate divisive identities.

Note: Once you’ve figured out the different unifying identities you can use to reach people, you can also leverage these identities in your rapid response communication – for example, framing the responses you’re promoting through these identities (“this is how we, as [moms/residents of Town/Tigers fans] are responding to these events – look at the positive actions we are taking and what we will do together.”).

Tips for Setting Positive Norms

Perceived social norms – what we think all or most people like us are doing or approve of – powerfully shape peoples’ actions, sometimes even more than our privately-held beliefs.⁴³ Perceived norms are especially influential in uncertain or high-threat situations, such as contentious election cycles.

It’s important to note that our perceptions of norms aren’t always accurate, and a few loud voices can make extreme positions seem more prevalent or expected than they are – for example, the voices of those promoting division or hate can serve to create the impression that most people support division and hate even if that’s not the case. Even well intentioned messaging can inadvertently contribute to negative norm perceptions, unintentionally promoting the very ideas it is meant to counter.⁴⁴ Proactively and carefully setting positive norms for your community can help ensure that people feel supported in standing up against violence and hate – and can help prevent division, hate, and support for violence from being perceived as the norm.

1. Identify norm-setters.

Leaders can set expectations that violence or hateful rhetoric targeting different groups is neither expected nor acceptable behavior. To do this, identify who in your network is a “norm setter.” Norm setters are people who are in some ways reference points for a particular group or audience – they might have influence in some way as an official leader, be seen as influential in a less formal way, have a large platform and reach, or a large number of social connections, for example. In some way, they are seen as representative (or leading) in the norms for the group. Depending on the audience you want to reach, this can be anyone from a sports coach to a faith leader, the local mayor, or a student activist. You can also figure out if anyone in your network has access to other norm-setters in your community and work with them.

These are your messengers, and they can “show” as well as “tell” by doing things that demonstrate positive norms, and then sharing those stories. You can support them, for example, to post positive messages on social media, showcasing themselves standing up against negative actions, or writing op-eds in publications the target audience finds credible – all actions that model the desired behaviors for their particular group while undercutting narratives that violence and negative behaviors are prevalent.

Because norm setters need to be credible for different audiences, your resiliency network can be well-positioned to identify and bolster norm setters that can reach deeply and widely within your community. These will also be important messengers when it comes to rapid response!

Tips for setting positive norms (continued)

2. Set norms modeling positive behaviors through messaging and action.

Set positive norms by sharing stories that model positive behaviors. Show people taking positive action, and talk about participation in the election, patience through the process, and making sure everyone is able to vote safely are core priorities. Show what you are doing, and what others are doing. Make it clear that the expectation for your community is helping ensure that everyone can vote safely, feels safely voting, and that as a community you are committed to caring about one another and addressing local issues no matter the outcome of the election, for example.

3. Tie norms to identities that resonate with people when possible – and promote norms that activate or reinforce cross-cutting identities

Because people are particularly sensitive to norms for groups they are a part of – whether that’s their partisan political group, their faith community, or a clique in a high school cafeteria – it can be important to tie normative messaging to different groups that people are part of. For example, you can tie normative messaging to the unifying identities, use “we” framing, and include a positive expectation. For example: “as moms, we are working hard to make sure everyone in our community is able to vote safely in this election!” or “as Tigers fans, we are helping make sure everyone has the information they need about how to participate this election!” ...” or “as proud Michiganders here in Lansing, we are working to make sure that everyone feels safe voting.”

You can also send a message through the messengers you choose. For example, if you can ensure that messages based in unifying identities showcases diverse groups – for example, a group of moms of many backgrounds speaking –you can also show a norm of diversity, respect, and collective support in your community.

4. When calling out harmful dynamics or actions, be careful not to inadvertently signal a negative norm.

When harmful things happen – whether that’s a hate crime, harmful rhetoric from a local leader, or any other type of violence, it’s important to be ready to assert positive norms while also drawing attention to the issue. Sometimes well-intentioned messaging meant to address negative dynamics

Tips for setting positive norms (continued)

can actually send a signal that those negative dynamics are more common than they actually are. For example, students on college campuses tend to overestimate how much their peers binge drink – and therefore, binge drink more. Campaigns to reduce binge drinking were successful when they corrected these overestimations – once people thought their peers binge drank less, they in turn drank less. Conversely, a campaign that simply talked about how binge drinking is a problem on college campuses could be expected to drive up binge drinking by making it seem more common.⁴⁵

The same broad consideration – of how to bring attention to a harmful issue without making it worse – applies when talking about hate and violence. Consider the message “hate is everywhere and growing” – it’s meant to dissuade individuals from spreading hate speech or joining extremist movements, but it also signals that those things are normal and acceptable – and this messaging can in turn potentially make people less sensitive, and more likely to accept them. Instead, craft messages that make clear that most people DO NOT approve of violence or other negative behaviors. Even if negative behaviors are growing more prevalent, make sure that when you draw attention to it you also focus on a story or statistic that reinforces the positive norm you seek to bolster – that most people disapprove of violence and hateful rhetoric, or are supporting efforts to ensure a peaceful and credible election. To return to the example of talking about hate, one could create messaging that talks about a recent increase in hate crimes locally being met with enormous public disapproval and talk specifically about the actions being taken to address the issue and how leaders from targeted communities are responding. The headline, rather than “hate is everywhere and it’s increasing” would read, “community members condemn recent hate crimes and mount a response.”

5. Develop messaging that outlines “who we are” rather than only “who we are not.”

Particularly in times of uncertainty, people gravitate toward leaders who can define “who we are” over those who purely focus on “who we are not.” Rather than pointing out the flaws in others, define your audience in positive, inclusive terms and using the community’s own words and examples. Themes likely to resonate include inclusivity, diversity, unity, agency, hope, good will, a focus on safety and security, competency and effectiveness.⁴⁶

Tips for Proactively Communicating Accurate Information and Correcting Misinformation

There are already attempts to spread mis and disinformation about the election, including preemptive and unfounded declarations of fraud, misleading information meant to prevent people from voting, and the politicization of changes to election procedures necessitated by COVID-19. Misinformation can be difficult to effectively correct after the fact, so it's important to get out in front of misleading narratives. One way to do this is through anticipating potential topics of misinformation and proactively spreading correct information. Here are some priorities. Note that you should identify accurate sources and relationships with people who have knowledge on voting procedures in your state to craft these messages:

1. Reiterate civic education messages about procedures that remain unchanged from prior elections.
2. Proactively tell people what to expect regarding any procedural changes. Such messages can, for example, prepare people for any changes in polling locations, times, and absentee procedures.
3. Create messages affirming the constitutional imperative for everyone to have a chance to vote. This message might be couched in terms of community values – our community votes and supports one another in voting. This can also activate cross-cutting identities to depict voting as something we are all doing, even if we are voting in different ways.
4. Since election results will take longer to find out than they have in recent elections due to the need to count mail-in ballots, you can talk about the importance of voting and then of being patient while waiting for the results. This should be done in a way that isn't speculative or alarmist – messages should be simple and calm.
5. Encourage community-members to share credible voting information throughout their networks, including with their friends and families. Note that it can be important to identify credible sources in advance - who has the most up to date and reliable information about voting processes, procedures, and updates?

Tips for Encouraging and Supporting Core Values of Inclusion

You can build a foundation for engagement by encouraging and supporting people to take positive actions. Here are some pointers:

1. Communicate clear action steps people can take to bolster community resilience.

In addition to promoting a vision for community resilience, identify and explain clear steps individuals and the community can take to build this resilience. This should include specific tasks and responsibilities for different actors involved in the effort. Research shows behavior change and group actions are more likely to materialize when there's a clear roadmap for how it will happen.⁴⁷ You can plug people into immediate proactive actions and begin to think about things that will help prepare them for the risks and scenarios you've considered.

Think about clear simple things people can do, even simply sharing information with their friends and neighbors, or posting a slogan or statement you come up with alongside a personal story.

2. Provide messages of gratitude for engaging in positive behavior (such as helping behavior).

Reinforce positive behaviors through thanking individuals for their work. As part of this, reiterate how their efforts have contributed to creating resilience and advancing the community's larger goals.

Planning Proactive Action

Strategy:	
Describe what you'll do or brainstorm ideas for action that a point person can build on:	
Point person responsible for coordinating/organizing?	
Other people involved & their roles?	

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Communications Infrastructure

IDENTIFY GAPS

Now that you have built your infrastructure (remember, like your network, this is an ongoing process—to be added to and updated regularly), you and your network can work to identify gaps in your infrastructure. As a group, list out the audiences that are currently not being reached. You can use the initial stakeholder mapping you did at the beginning of the process as a starting point.

PLAN HOW YOU CAN FILL GAPS

For each of the audiences identified as currently out of reach, answer the following questions:

Who in your network is ruled out as a contact person (who wouldn't be seen as credible, or might be immediately dismissed by the audience)?

Who in your network “knows someone who knows someone” who could connect you to the audiences not currently being reached?

Who in your network could potentially reach out without any existing connections to the group?

Which channels does this audience reliably use?
Which channels do they not use?

Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

Use this chart if helpful to list out risks and evaluate them:

Risk	How likely (High, Medium, Low)	What impact? (High, Medium, Low)	Steps that can be taken to mitigate

As you respond, monitor how it goes - see what impact you have, and afterwards review with the network to keep learning and improving your work together.

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NOT
IN OUR
TOWN

STOP HATE. TOGETHER.