

PRACTITIONER GUIDE

Community Consultations
for Crime Prevention
and Community Safety &
Well-Being Plans



CANADIAN MUNICIPAL
NETWORK ON CRIME
PREVENTION

Together for Safer Canadian Cities

RÉSEAU MUNICIPAL
CANADIEN EN PRÉVENTION
DE LA CRIMINALITÉ

Ensemble pour des villes canadiennes plus sécuritaires

DISCLAIMER

This is a living document. New evidence, best practices, and promising practices emerge regularly. As a result, it is intended to provide a general outline of the suggested methods of conducting community engagements based on CMNCP's experience and learnings through conducting consultations, as well as current evidence and knowledge. This document can support communities developing Crime Prevention and Community Safety & Well-Being (CP/CSWB) plans across Canada but should not be considered comprehensive or complete.

REVIEWERS

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- Strathcona County CSWB Plan Project Team
- The City of Regina CSWB Plan Project Team

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ABOUT CMNCP

The Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention (CMNCP) is a Canadian, not-for-profit, membership-based community of practice mandated to build capacity and mobilize Canadian communities to prevent and reduce crime and foster community safety and well-being. For more information visit www.safercities.ca.

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INTRODUCTION

This practitioner guide is intended as a resource for communities collecting data to inform the development of local Crime Prevention and Community Safety & Well-Being (CP/CSWB) plans. It outlines how to consult with communities, important considerations during this process, and offers recommendations to increase the likelihood for success based on promising and best practice, along with previous work by the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention (CMNCP) and others across Canada.

Considering the growing number of international organizations (e.g., UN-Habitat and UNODC) and governments (including the government of Canada and the province of Ontario) encouraging the development of CP/CSWB plans to promote safe, inclusive, and thriving communities, there is great value in a document to guide the collection of local data. This information is essential for plan developers to understand the current state of the community and identify priorities to address and improve community safety and well-being.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING ASSESSMENTS


A key aspect of developing a CP/CSWB plan is conducting a community safety and well-being assessment to understand assets/strengths, challenges/concerns, ideas, and available services at the local level. As UN-Habitat suggests, “local governments need to base policies and strategies on a comprehensive assessment of the city”.ⁱ The European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) also stresses the importance of considering perceptions held by different groups to draw a clear picture of the situation in a city/town/community.ⁱⁱ Consequently, collecting comprehensive local data is the best way for a community to make informed decisions and address local issues related to crime, victimization, and community well-being.



Figure 1. Community Safety and Well-Being Assessment Steps

ⁱ https://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/13544_1_596462.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://efus.eu/topics/audits-methodology/the-efus-safety-audit-guide-a-guide-to-better-understand-new-challenges-in-urban-security/>



There are several steps in the process of conducting community safety and well-being assessments, as outlined in Figure 1. It should be noted that these steps rarely occur in a linear process, rather, as a cycle where information is constantly collected, input is provided, and information is validated. While each step is an important part of the community safety and well-being assessment process, this topic summary focuses on the community consultations (qualitative data), as indicated by the green section above.

Additional information on the community safety assessment process can be found in CMNCP's [*Practitioner Guide on Crime Prevention and Community Safety and Well-Being Planning*](#).

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

An important aspect of a community safety and well-being assessment is speaking with community members to understand their perspectives and experiences related to crime prevention, community safety, and well-being. While numerical data can highlight general trends across the population, consultations provide an opportunity for plan developers to establish a more comprehensive understanding of realities at the local level and answer the why and how questions.ⁱⁱⁱ They allow residents to provide detailed information on local strengths and challenges, and offer suggestions to improve CP/CSWB. This input can supplement the findings from quantitative data (e.g., surveys^{iv} or existing local data) and/or reveal new information that may not have been captured within other data sources. As a result, community consultations are an important step in CP/CSWB plan development.

In addition to collecting valuable local information, there are several benefits to engaging community members in focused consultations.

- They provide an opportunity for those who may be difficult to reach to provide meaningful input in the plan development and implementation process.
- They help create buy-in and support from local organizations and community members as their contributions are highlighted within the plan.
- They help community members and grassroots organizations develop capacity as agents of change.
- They can help foster and strengthen relationships among community members and between individuals and local organizations.

- Through partnerships with non-profits, consultations can facilitate engagement between local government officials and community members who may be hard to reach.

While there are several formats through which community consultations can occur (e.g., public town hall events, focus groups, individual interviews, etc.) in its own practice, CMNCP recommends holding smaller sessions with specific groups in the community as opposed to large town hall gatherings with open invitations for attendance. Previous experience finds that larger gatherings tend to privilege certain voices (i.e., people with more clout in the community) over others (i.e., marginalized groups). Additionally, these sessions may not be accessible to some individuals who are unable to take time off work or may not

ⁱⁱⁱ EFUS. (2016). Methods and tools for a strategic approach to urban security.

^{iv} Please refer to CMNCP's [Topic Summary: Community Safety and Well-Being Survey](#)

have access to childcare or transportation allowing them to attend.

If a community does plan to host a large gathering or town hall meeting to obtain feedback from community members, the following should be considered:

- Ensure there are measures in place to address potential triggers and keep the space safe for all participants (i.e., counselling services on-site, pamphlets for resources, etc.).
- Have skilled and experienced facilitators run the session to ensure no one dominates the conversation and everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- Ensure participants are fully aware of who will be present at the session.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to share additional feedback following the session.
- Provide contact information for individuals who can respond to

questions or concerns from attendees (before, during, and/or after the session).

- Take steps to increase accessibility to and during the session (e.g., childcare options, bus tickets, consider the time and location, etc.).

Since those most likely to experience community safety and well-being challenges tend to be individuals who are more marginalized and are often excluded from town hall meetings, organizing consultations that elevate the voices of these groups helps ensure their concerns and experiences are included in the CP/CSWB plan development process and that subsequent efforts to address local CSWB challenges include those to improve the lives of marginalized community members. Further, holding separate consultations for each community group can increase the likelihood that people will want to share their perspectives. Generally, people tend to be more comfortable expressing their opinions among groups of like-minded individuals, or those with similar experiences, backgrounds, etc.

WHO SHOULD BE CONSULTED?

As mentioned above, CMNCP recommends organizing focused consultations to ensure a diverse range of perspectives are captured in the community safety assessment. While ultimately, the decision of who to consult will depend on the community and its

composition, based on previous work and best practice, CMCNP proposes three general groups to consider when planning community engagements (in no particular order):



*local stakeholders,
practitioners, and service
providers*



*equity-deserving groups
and people with lived/
living experience*



*other focused
populations within the
community*

LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS, PRACTITIONERS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Individuals working on the frontlines and local stakeholders generally have a strong understanding of the community's needs and can provide great insight on local strengths and challenges. Furthermore, they are familiar with gaps in systems and services and can therefore provide valuable recommendations on how to overcome them. These consultations could include representatives from community-based

organizations, social service and well-being agencies, municipal government, and/or elected officials. Other key sectors, such as healthcare and education, could also participate. For a more detailed list of sectors and stakeholders to consider, please refer to CMNCP's [*Practitioner Guide on Crime Prevention and Community Safety & Well-Being Planning*](#).

EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS AND PEOPLE WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE

As mentioned above, an important part of identifying local community safety and well-being needs is centering the voices of community members with a specific focus on equity-deserving groups and people with lived/living experience. They are often overlooked in planning processes, yet they experience the highest level of systemic barriers and are most likely to experience violence, victimization, and/or other forms of oppression (sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, etc.). Additionally, these forms of oppression rarely exist in isolation – in many cases, they intersect or

overlap resulting in further marginalization. As a result, this is an important consideration when consulting with these groups. Examples of groups that could be involved in the engagement process include Indigenous Peoples, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, parents of young children, newcomers or immigrants, older adults, people experiencing houselessness, loved ones of people with lived/living experience, people experiencing mental health or substance use challenges, women living in shelters, Black and People of Colour, youth, etc.

Consultations with Indigenous Peoples

When consulting with Indigenous peoples, it is important to ensure the consultation is culturally appropriate and follows proper local protocol for Indigenous engagement. For example, this could include speaking with elders and knowledge keepers before engaging with other Indigenous groups and beginning the session with an opening prayer by an Elder. Additionally, depending on local practice, other considerations may include holding ceremony,

smudging, offering tobacco, and providing honourariums to compensate participants for their time and knowledge. To ensure the session is respectful of Indigenous culture and participants, plan developers should consider partnering with a local Indigenous organization or leader and seek guidance from them in the planning and facilitation of Indigenous consultations.

OTHER GROUPS

Lastly, depending on the community there may be other groups that should be consulted as well. This can include community or neighbourhood associations (to hear from specific neighbourhoods), the business community, agricultural associations, military families, university and college students, segments of the population speaking different languages, etc. It is always helpful to seek input from local partners to identify which segments of the community should be consulted during the engagement process.

³ Important to note is that for some communities the plan reviewed may be a new or revised version.

CONSULTATION CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to engaging with different groups in the community to ensure multiple perspectives are included, there are several considerations that should be taken in preparation for consultations. The remainder of the document highlights recommendations to improve the quality of community consultation sessions based on previous work completed by CMNCP as well as input from local stakeholders, CMNCP members, and partners.

These are presented in five recommendations below:

RECOMMENDATION #1: WORK WITH LOCAL PARTNERS

The first consideration when planning community consultation sessions is working with local partners. This is particularly important for CMNCP, municipal staff, and representatives from other external organizations coming into communities to support CSWB plan development. It is highly beneficial to partner with local grassroots, community-based organizations, and service providers who have pre-established relationships and a strong understanding of the people they work with, deliver services to, and advocate for. Local partners could include representatives from equity-deserving populations, community leaders with connections to local groups, executive directors, or others who run organizations.

Typically, one local partner is identified for each group (e.g., an Indigenous serving organization to support an engagement with Indigenous Peoples) and they are sent an initial communication email with a general description of the project and an invitation

to an introductory meeting to discuss the process in greater detail (see [Appendix 1](#) for a sample). This meeting usually includes a discussion of the CP/CSWB plan, its goals, the proposed approach for consultations, and what is expected from potential partners if they agree to support the process. Ultimately, the role of partners is to provide input and guidance on the process, help identify the best engagement approach to meet the needs of the group, and ensure the consultation is safe, inclusive, and meaningful for all participants. Additionally, partners often have a pre-established, trusting relationship with the group being engaged, which can be leveraged by inviting participants and validating the work. They can also provide logistical support and guidance in different ways. For example, they may offer space for an in-person consultation (it is always helpful when participants can attend a consultation in a space that they are familiar with), and they can provide guidance on other aspects

of the session (i.e., how long it should last, what the format should look like, etc.).

In its guide, *Creating Inclusive Consultations*, the City of Toronto offers several criteria to consider when selecting local organizations to partner with. These include organizations that:

- Have ongoing, meaningful relationships with community members.
- Are led by and employ individuals who represent the communities they serve.
- Recognize the strengths and assets of the community.

- Collaborate with other local organizations, networks, projects, and groups.
- Have established organizational policies that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Utilize flexible consultation practices in response to the needs and interests of the community.
- Facilitate consultations in a way that is impartial and allows the voices of community members to be heard.
- Provide employment opportunities for individuals with lived experience.

RECOMMENDATION #2: BE FLEXIBLE

Flexibility is a vital part of the community consultation process, as there are many aspects that may change or need to be adapted throughout. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure the voices of community members are included in the CP/CSWB plan development process and as a result, unforeseen adjustments may be needed to achieve that.

In some cases, additional consultations may be required to increase the range of perspectives captured within groups (i.e., women from different ages or races, different Indigenous communities, etc.). It is important to remember that there is diversity within any group, and this should be considered when recruiting participants. Furthermore, consultations may be added as additional segments of the population are identified and included in the process. While CMNCP generally proposes an initial list of groups to engage in the CP/CSWB plan consultation process, the final list of consultations is always decided in partnership with the local project team. Since these individuals live in the community, they bring important insight and recommendations to this

process. Typically, they will review the list and identify any groups that should be added, or adjustments to be made based

Flexibility: A Local Example

In one community, a single consultation with Indigenous Peoples was initially proposed. After further conversation with the project team, as well as partners from the local Indigenous community, it was decided that a more meaningful approach would be to follow local protocol and hold several sessions as Indigenous Peoples are not a single, homogenous group. As a result, holding multiple consultations provided greater opportunity to capture as many nuances and perspectives as possible. Consequently, the process included consultations with Elders and Knowledge Keepers (men and women), local Indigenous leaders, frontline Indigenous service providers, and family members of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) – a total of five consultations, rather than one as originally proposed

on their knowledge of local context. As the engagement process occurs, additional groups may also be identified further along. While adding consultations at any point may create additional work, if resources allow, this is strongly recommended as it helps ensure the community engagement process is more comprehensive and can result in greater buy-in as the perspectives of a larger segment of the community are included in the CSWB plan development process.

Another aspect of the engagement process that will likely require flexibility is the timeline. There are numerous events or factors that can affect the timelines of this work and as a result, preparing for delays or adjustments early on is important. Along with additional sessions (discussed above) which can increase the timeline for consultations, the process of organizing and recruiting participants can take time depending on peoples' schedules and commitments, protocol with Indigenous engagements, and other unexpected circumstances faced by communities (e.g., a pandemic, extreme weather, local events, etc.). In one community

CMNCP worked with, the time frame for data collection was shorter than usual as they were entering a red zone due to a municipal election. In another location, engagement with youth had to be postponed until pandemic restrictions lifted and they returned to school. These are just some examples of how unexpected factors may impact the consultation process and timeline.

Finally, flexibility is vital in data collection approaches. While this is discussed in greater detail below, it is important to consider that it may not be possible or meaningful to collect data through the same approach with each segment of the population. Local partners may suggest conducting a consultation online as opposed to in person, adopting a different format for engagement, or speaking with the group on their own (without the external partner present). For each community, the consultation process will likely differ. Ultimately, remaining flexible to ensure a broad range of perspectives are captured and participants feel heard and respected is key.

RECOMMENDATION #3: ASK A FEW SIMPLE QUESTIONS

When preparing for community consultations, it is important to consider the type of information being sought from

participants. Based on previous work, CMNCP recommends the following considerations when identifying which questions to ask:

ASK GENERAL QUESTIONS

Questions that are too specific may unintentionally impact responses or result in the conversation becoming too focused and subsequently prevent other topics from being discussed. As a result, using more broad, open-ended questions that give community members the opportunity to discuss a range of topics and experiences is recommended. They also leave room

for participants to interpret the question in their own way and provide responses based on their own personal experiences and priorities. Finally, they provide an opportunity for facilitators to ask follow-up questions as needed.

LIMIT THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS

During community engagements, the focus should be on eliciting more in-depth information from participants and ensuring everyone has an opportunity to share their thoughts. As such, the number of questions should be limited. If there are too many questions, the session may feel rushed and community members may be unable to provide input to the extent they would like. Additionally, in a consultation format, having multiple questions can be overwhelming and may result in overlapping responses. As a result, keeping the question list short is recommended.

Generally, CMNCP recommends 3-4 questions per 60 to 90-minute consultation; however, this may differ depending on the amount of time allotted as well as the number of participants. Furthermore, even with a small number of questions, it is always useful to give participants an opportunity to share additional input following the session. Not only does this help them feel heard and give them a chance to provide feedback they may not have been able to share during the session, it allows them to provide additional thoughts that may have emerged following the session but are relevant to the discussion.

USE ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE

Keeping the questions simple and accessible ensures everyone can understand what is being asked and provide their thoughts. This means avoiding the use of jargon or language the average person may not be familiar with. If this is unavoidable, facilitators should clearly explain potentially complex terms at the start of the session to ensure everyone understands what they refer to. If

participants do not fully understand what is being asked, they may be unable to respond or provide the information facilitators are seeking from the session. Additionally, while some may ask for clarification, others may not feel comfortable doing so which could hinder their participation or prevent them from answering at all.

KEEP QUESTIONS CONSISTENT

Another important aspect of community consultations is consistency. While each group will undoubtedly have their own perspectives and experiences, keeping the questions as consistent as possible from one session to another makes it much easier to compare the results, identify

similarities and differences between groups, and highlight key themes across the consultations. This also reflects the value in using general questions (see above) as they are applicable to a broader audience and can therefore be asked in sessions with a wide range of sub-groups.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Based on the discussion above, CMNCP generally utilizes the following questions in its community consultation sessions:

1. What makes you feel safe and happy in [City/Town/Community]?
2. What, for you, are key issues related to community safety and well-being in [City/Town/Community]?
3. What are some ideas or opportunities to increase community safety and well-being in [City/Town/Community]?

The questions begin with a focus on positive aspects of the community. This is followed by a discussion of challenges or concerns related to community safety and well-being, and finally a question on ways to improve the community. This approach allows the consultation to begin and end with a focus on community strengths and how to build on them. Additionally, the questions are very general, allowing respondents to identify many aspects or areas in the city/town/community that make them feel a particular way.

It should be noted that in some cases, community partners have recommended adapting the questions to make them more applicable to a specific group. For example, in a consultation with families and parents, participants were asked which places they feel safe bringing their children to as opposed to areas they like or love in general. While the wording is slightly different, it is more applicable to their lives and still yields responses that are similar enough to compare with other groups – locations within the community that they enjoy.

RECOMMENDATION #4: INCORPORATE “DO NO HARM” PRINCIPLE

The Government of Canada's 2018 [*Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*](#) outlines three core principles:

- **Respect for Persons:** the decision to participate in research should always be fully informed and voluntary.
- **Concern For Welfare:** researchers should take every step to protect participants and prevent them from being exposed to unnecessary risks.

- **Justice:** all people must be treated equitably, with equal respect and concern.

CMNCP adheres to these principles, reflecting the ‘Do No Harm’ approach to community consultations. In its own practice, there are several steps that CMNCP takes to protect participants in the community engagement process. These include:

INFORMATION LETTERS

When reaching out to community members, information letters are helpful to ensure individuals make a fully informed decision on whether to participate in the consultation. These are often done via email, but depending on the audience, other methods may be preferred. The following are suggested details to include within the information letter:

- Background information on the project.
- The purpose/objective of the community consultation(s).

- Consultation format (i.e., in-person or virtual, discussion process, etc.)
- Expectation of participants (i.e., length of time, discussion participation).
- Topic(s) of discussion or the questions that will be asked.
- Time, date, and location (if already determined).
- Who will have access to the information and how it will be stored (confidentiality, anonymity, etc.).

- Trigger warning and list of local emergency services (if applicable).
- A statement indicating the desire to create an accessible environment and asking participants to identify any accommodations they may need during the consultation.
- Consent form.
- Any other relevant information that may impact the decision to participate.

ADAPTING THE APPROACH TO THE GROUP'S NEEDS

When consulting with different groups in the community, it is important to consider their needs and how the session may need to be adapted accordingly. For example, some segments of the population may feel more comfortable speaking to individuals they know. As a result, rather than having an external organization or city/town/community staff facilitate the consultation, partners may be better suited to engage directly with participants. As well, organizers may have to consider the schedules of the groups, and plan consultations outside of school or work hours to accommodate them. Other needs may include childcare (i.e., if

seeking input from parents), transportation to the meeting location if it is held in person, etc. Other things to consider may include:

- Accessibility considerations (see next section).
- Being aware of historical experiences and triggers of different groups (a local partner can be helpful to ensure participants are not harmed in the process).
- Considering transportation and scheduling needs.

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure all participants feel included and can fully participate in the community engagement process, it is vital to identify individual accessibility needs and have accommodations in place prior to the session. This should be considered not only when engaging people with disabilities, but all individuals. By asking for this information ahead of time, facilitators can take the necessary steps and have appropriate supports in place based on participant needs. This may include sending slides ahead of time, having an ASL interpreter present during the consultation, providing written documents in a larger font, allowing

individuals to provide written instead of verbal input, offering one-on-one support for older adults, etc.

Regardless of the format of the consultation (in-person or virtual) it is important to ensure that the space is accessible. This includes both the physical space (i.e., being wheelchair accessible) along with the virtual platform (e.g., having an ASL interpreter on a Zoom or Teams call). When adopting a virtual format (i.e., via Zoom), it is also helpful to provide guidance on the use of the platform itself (muting/unmuting, chat function, etc.) to ensure all participants can contribute during the session.

CRISIS SUPPORT

As mentioned above, consultation facilitators should offer crisis support during and after the session. This is generally done in conjunction with the partnering organization which can provide information for local supports. This information should be shared

with participants prior to the engagement to ensure they have it readily available if needed at any point during the process. In some cases, having clinical/crisis staff available during and after the consultation may also be necessary.

HONORARIUMS

Honorariums should always be considered during the consultation process. In addition to compensating people for their time, research finds that financial need is often a key barrier to peer engagement. As a result, to ensure that everyone (including those who face financial barriers) has an opportunity to participate in the CSWB plan

development process, organizations should provide compensation for both time and any costs that occur due to participation in the process (i.e., transportation).^v Generally, the value and format (cash, gift card, etc.) of honorariums is determined based on guidance from local partners.

FOLLOW-UP EMAILS

After the consultations, a follow-up email to participants is recommended. In its own practice, CMNCP includes a summary of the notes collected during the discussion so participants can review them, determine if they accurately capture the conversation, and offer additional comments. This demonstrates transparency, allows participants to validate

the findings, and ensures they can share everything they wanted to. It also provides an additional opportunity to thank them for their participation and reiterate the value of the input and how it will support the project. Please see [Appendix 2](#) for a sample follow-up email.

RECOMMENDATION #5: USE DIFFERENT CONSULTATION APPROACHES

Finally, creativity is important in community consultations. There are multiple ways to collect information and in its work across Canada, CMNCP has utilized several approaches to obtain input from community members. Community consultations are the

most common method, and generally involve one of three formats. These are discussed in greater detail below.

^v https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10214/17653/Feige_Choubak_PeerEngagementProject_LiteratureReview_%202019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

CONSULTATION APPROACHES

City/Town or Organization-Led Consultations

The first type of consultation is led and facilitated by the municipality with support from community partners. Generally, an initial meeting is set up with local partners to discuss the overall goals of the project and ask them to serve as gatekeepers to participants. Invitations are then sent out to potential participants either by an external organization (e.g., CMNCP) directly or via community partners on behalf of the city/town/community. The engagement session is then facilitated by one member of the project team (e.g., CMNCP, city/town/community staff) while another takes notes. Community partners are always encouraged to attend these sessions, and frequently do.

When To Use This Approach

This type of consultation is most appropriate with groups in which there is minimal concern for potential harm among participants, people who are comfortable sharing their experiences with outsiders (i.e., researchers), and those who generally do not have historically complicated relationships with government, law enforcement, and mainstream organizations. As a result, city/town/community or organization-led consultations are recommended for groups such as service providers, elected officials, business improvement associations, etc.

Partner-Led Consultations

The second type of consultation involves having a community partner facilitate the conversation, with members of the project team (i.e., city/town/community staff, CMNCP, etc.) present to support and take notes. In this case, local partners typically send out the participation invitation on behalf

of the city/town/community and run the consultation with community members. This allows participants to engage directly with a familiar person and provides the opportunity for facilitators to clarify questions or responses if needed.

When To Use This Approach

This type of consultation is recommended for groups who may feel more comfortable speaking to people they know or who share a similar background, as well as those who may differ culturally or in other ways and can benefit from having someone from that community to clarify questions or address concerns on the spot. Examples of participants for these consultations may include newcomers and immigrants, families, and women.

Community-Led Consultations

The third type of consultation is completed exclusively by the local partner organization. CMNCP and the city/town/community staff are not present for the engagement session and have no contact with participants. The recruitment of participants, consultation, and note-taking is completed by individuals from the partner organization/agency and data is provided after the session has been completed.

When To Use This Approach

This type of community engagement is often preferred by groups who have concerns about potential harms associated with trauma or re-victimization from conversations on certain topics related to community safety and well-being, as well as individuals who are hesitant to share their experiences or have a historical distrust in local government and mainstream organizations (like CMNCP). Examples may

include equity-deserving groups such as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, 2SLGBTQ+ groups, and people with lived/living experience of criminalization, mental health, and substance use.

Community-led consultations are also a great alternative to in-person discussions if time, capacity, and/or resources are limited. For example, in the past, CMNCP worked with a community on an extremely tight deadline which did not allow for the planning, scheduling, and facilitation of multiple community engagement sessions. Alternatively, several local organizations facilitated consultations internally with their clients and shared the data afterward. This allowed CMNCP to obtain a large amount of information very quickly – something which could not have been achieved through the other consultation formats.

For those who opt to engage in this type of consultation, CMNCP has developed a *Community-Led Consultation Guide*. The document offers guidance on preparing the session, conducting the consultation (including a script explaining what the CSWB plan is, and the questions facilitators will ask participants), along with how to report the notes and findings back to CMNCP. Please see [Appendix 3](#) for the full guide. Additionally, in the past, CMNCP has scheduled virtual

support sessions so those facilitating community-led consultations can join them and ask questions or receive guidance as needed.

Limitations

While the community-led consultation approach is a great option for collecting local data, there are some limitations that should be noted. First, they may be a challenge for some local organizations that are already very busy and may have limited capacity and/or resources to conduct an internal consultation. As a result, it is worth discussing whether a community-led consultation is a viable option for each potential partner organization and in some cases, providing additional support (financial or other) may be an option. Second, as the community organization is leading the discussion alone, the questions may be framed differently than originally intended. As well, since the organization provides notes from the session, the raw data is not accessible and there is no way to confirm if everything that was discussed is captured in the notes. Finally, this form of data collection relies on the community organization to complete the consultation within the specified timeframe. Ideally, if an issue arises, they will communicate this; however, this may not always be the case.

OTHER ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES

While consultations are useful approaches for many groups, CMNCP has also engaged in other data collection methods through its work. With guidance from partners, several other approaches have been utilized. This section highlights some of these approaches.

Case Studies

When CMNCP began working in one location, community members consistently mentioned a particular space that had emerged in response to the growing need for shelter during the winter months. The space had quickly become a community hub with multiple stories of connection, acceptance, and support. Because of the substantial role this location played in the community, the

project team decided to develop a case study highlighting all the work it had done. Staff and guests were interviewed, and the story of how the warming space came to be was written. It was then included as a standalone piece in the local CSWB plan as an exemplar of what is needed in the community.^{vi}

Existing Programs

On several occasions, information was collected from residents as part of existing programs within the community. For example, in one location there was a Meals on Wheels program which provided food to local seniors, often living in isolation or with limited transportation means. During the delivery process, the program representative spoke with recipients about community safety and well-being, allowing their feedback to be obtained as part of this process.

Similarly, another community organization had an existing weekly virtual coffee chat for parents with young children. As this was one of the groups CMNCP was trying to obtain input from, the organization agreed to incorporate the discussion around community safety and well-being into the coffee chat, rather than trying to set up an additional time for a consultation.

Online Engagement Tools

One community had an online platform with different engagement tools for community members. To support the development of its CSWB plan, an online tool was made available to residents. The tool allowed individuals to virtually place different coloured pins in on a map of the community, indicating areas they enjoy and where they feel unsafe. For each pin, they could also provide a comment or explanation as to

why they felt that way. This resulted in an interesting data set as themes in responses could be easily identified with areas receiving many pins.

Photovoice Project

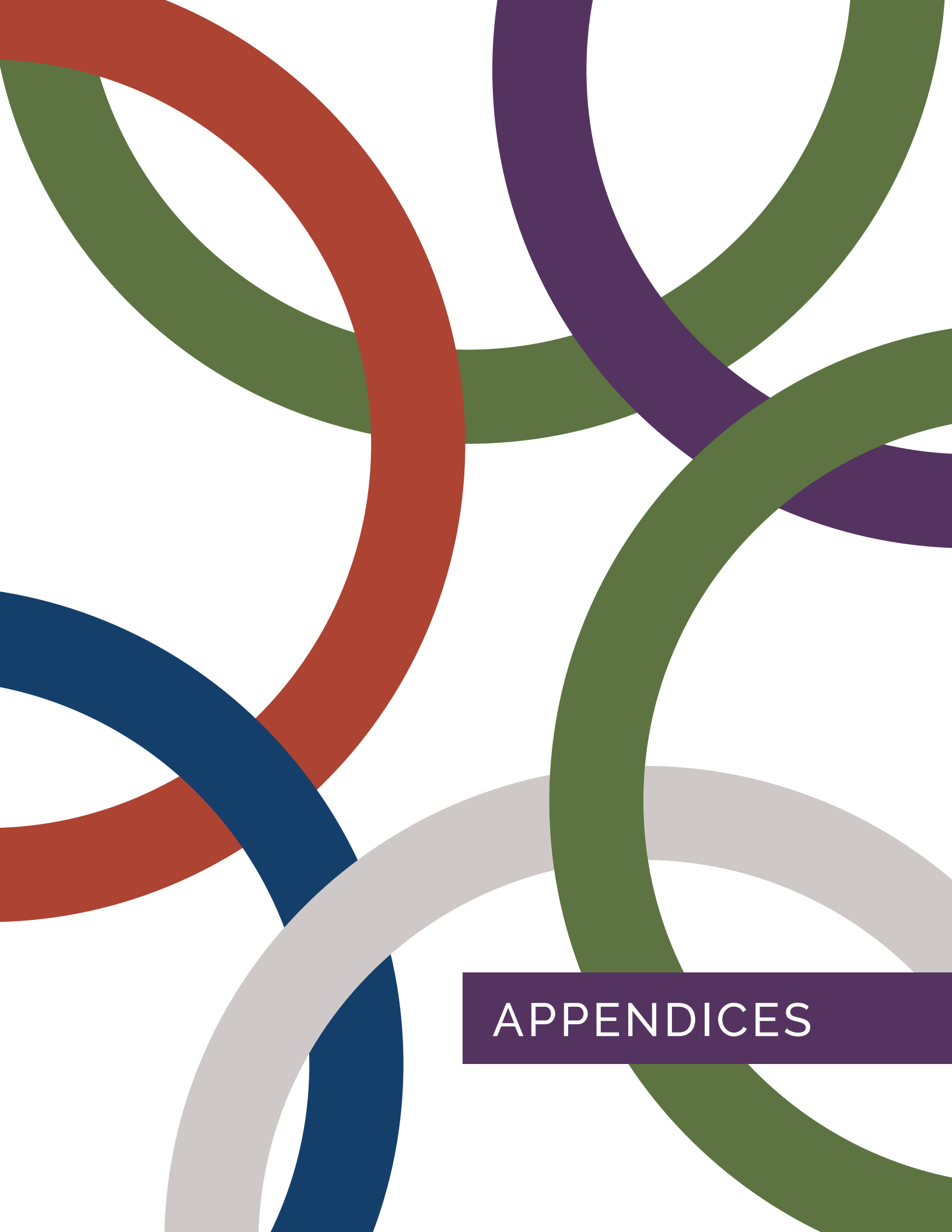
A creative approach that was used to engage youth in one community was through a photovoice project. The project team recognized that asking youth to participate in a 90-minute virtual focus group was not a meaningful way to engage them. Since this project occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, alternative options were limited. CMNCP partnered with a local youth leadership group and hired an Indigenous photographer who shared tips and tricks for photography during a virtual workshop. The youth were then asked to take photos of spaces in the community they enjoy and where they feel safe along with areas that make them feel uneasy. For each photo, they described why they chose the location. The photos were then compiled on a public website, allowing the youth's perspectives to be shared with the community. The information was also analyzed and included in CSWB plan development.^{vii}

Podcasts

For one project, a local grassroots organization with an existing weekly podcast series was contacted for a community-led consultation. As an alternative, they incorporated the discussion into one of their weekly podcasts and collected input from locals on community safety and well-being in this process.

^{vi} See Regina CSWB plan, page 65: <https://www.regina.ca/export/sites/Regina.ca/about-regina/community-safety-well-being/galleries/pdfs/Community-Safety-and-Well-being-Plan.pdf>

^{vii} The youth photography project can be found here: <https://www.yqyouthperspectives.com/>



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE INITIAL COMMUNICATION FOR CONSULTATION PARTNERS

Dear _____ ,

In partnership with key stakeholders in (location), we would like to invite you personally to a virtual consultation session on (date and time) to guide the development of (location's) Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

(Location) is partnering with the [Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention](#) to develop a Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan. The goal of the plan is to increase community safety and well-being for people living in (location) through a collective approach to issues such as poverty and inequality, services for those struggling with mental illness, substance use, and homelessness among others. This will go a long way to help addressing community safety in the long run. But these efforts will also need to be balanced with more immediate interventions to prevent and reduce crimes and increase community well-being. For more information on the CSWB planning process in (location), please visit (website) or contact (email).

Developing a CSWB Plan includes looking at what currently exists and is working well as well as identifying challenges that need to be addressed. To do so, we are looking to develop a better understanding of the perspectives and experiences of various groups in (location), with special attention being paid to groups who are marginalized and vulnerable when compared to other populations.

The City/Town will be engaging with a broad range of stakeholder groups, including (group being recruited). We would very much welcome your engagement in the upcoming consultation session. Please feel free to forward this invitation to **up to two** community members and/or service providers who would be interested in participating in this engagement session.

During the session, broadly, the questions we are looking to explore are as follows:

- What are areas in (location) that you appreciate, enjoy, love to frequent, and why?
- What are some areas in (location) that you are concerned about, and what is it about these areas that make you feel this way?
- What barriers do you see to community safety and well-being in (location) overall and what suggestions do you have to improve that situation now and more long-term?

Please note that if you would like your voice to be heard but would prefer not to participate in a consultation session, you can also fill out the Community Safety and Well-Being Survey^{viii} online at (link). Paper copies are available upon request. However, please consider that participating in the consultation sessions will allow you to share more detailed thoughts and ideas related to your

perceptions of safety and well-being in your city and exchange with others in the session.

We strive to host an inclusive, accessible engagement approach that enables everyone to participate. Therefore, please indicate any **accessibility or accommodations** needs that you require to fully participate in the consultation session.

Lastly, kindly RSVP your attendance and direct any questions to (contact and email) by (date). If you send this invitation to additional community members, please ensure that they are aware of the need RSVP. A calendar invite will be sent to all participants with the login information and consultation materials closer to the consultation date.

Thank you,

^{viii} If applicable.

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE CONSULTATION FOLLOW UP EMAIL

Hello everyone!

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences in our consultation on (date). Your input is very much appreciated and highly valuable in the process of developing (city/town/community)'s Community Safety and Well-Being plan.

We have compiled a summary of what we heard from the group discussions and have attached it in this email. Using the VOTE option below, **please indicate** if this summary accurately captures the key points discussed during the session.

We recognize that given the time constraints, some of you may not have had the opportunity to share everything you wanted to during the session. As a result, please feel free to have a look at what we did record and provide additional feedback or information pertaining to any of the questions, as well as any other important details you think we should know related to community safety and well-being in (city/town/location). You can do this by adding the information right into the document. If possible, please indicate your additions by tracking the changes or bolding the font so that we can ensure we see them all.

(For communities that are also conducting a CSWB survey) If you are interested in another opportunity to share your thoughts, please consider completing the **Community Safety and Well-Being Survey**, which can be accessed through (link). The survey is open to all residents so please feel free to share the link with others in your networks as well.

Finally, if you have any questions related to the session or the (city/town/community) CSWB work, please feel free to contact (name of facilitator/project lead) via email at (email address). Once again, we greatly appreciate your time and input in this process. We may follow up regarding the information collected from the consultation to ensure that it is interpreted accurately and reflects the realities in (city/town/community).

Sincerely,

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY-LED CONSULTATION GUIDE

(City/Town) Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Community-Led Consultation Guide

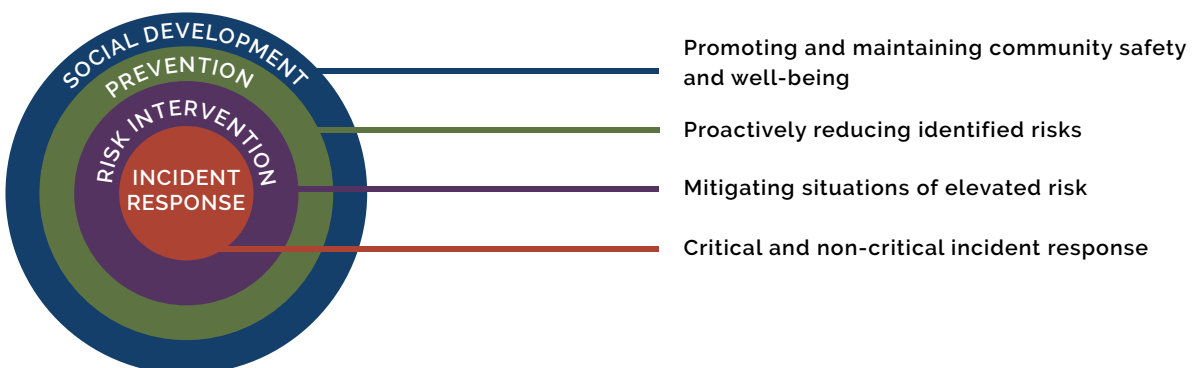
WHAT IS COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING?

Communities across Canada are increasingly recognizing the need to change the way they look at service delivery to increase **community safety and well-being** (CSWB) overall. This shift includes less reliance on reactionary, incident-driven responses and increased efforts and investments towards the long-term benefits of multi-sectoral collaboration, social development, prevention, and well-being.

CSWB is about more than just an absence of crime; it is about creating a place where everyone has a range of opportunities to grow, learn, work, play, connect, love, and be loved. To create a more positive experience for everyone, communities need to address the foundational systems and relationships in our society that play a critical role in shaping our environment and experience of well-being.

This is achieved through long-term, collaborative efforts to promote CSWB and reduce crime and other risks in the community using evidence-based responses that address unique local circumstances and the needs of residents. According to the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General, there are four key aspects of CSWB that should be included in the planning process: social development, prevention, risk intervention, and incident response (see image below).

While it is recommended that planning occur in relation to each of these categories, particular emphasis should be placed on the outer layers including social development, prevention, and risk intervention, to reduce the number of incidents that occur and therefore the need for response measures. Thus, the emphasis of these plans should be primarily on more upstream prevention approaches to promote CSWB and reduce harms from occurring in the first place.



For more information on upstream approaches to Community Safety and Well-Being, watch [this video](#).

(LOCATION)'S COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING PLAN

(Location/Organization) is partnering with the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention to develop a Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) plan. Increasing community safety and well-being for people living in (location) will require a collective approach to issues such as poverty and inequality as well as services for those struggling with mental illness, substance use challenges, and homelessness. While this will go a long way to help foster community safety in the long run, these efforts should be balanced with more immediate interventions to prevent and reduce harms (see four levels of planning above).

For more information on Community Safety and Well-Being Plans, watch [this video](#).

THE CANADIAN MUNICIPAL NETWORK ON CRIME PREVENTION

The [Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention](#) (CMNCP) is a not-for-profit community of practice created to build capacity and mobilize Canadian municipalities to prevent crime and foster community safety and well-being. To do so, CMNCP fosters CSWB through strategies that go beyond the established reactive police and criminal legal activities. These include the full range of preventive measures that can tackle the causes of crime through stronger actions and innovations in sectors such as schools, housing, social and youth services, as well as health.

Community Consultations

Developing a CSWB Plan includes looking at what currently exists and is working well to support community safety and well-being as well as identifying challenges and needs to be met. To do so, consultations help develop a better understanding of the perspectives and experiences of various groups in the community, particularly those who tend to be more marginalized or experience more challenges related to community safety and well-being.

The goals of engaging with the community are to:

- Inform the planning process
- Understand how people think and feel about safety/well-being
- Ensure that needs/priorities of the community are addressed in the plan

We recognize that certain groups may not feel comfortable or safe engaging with staff from (Location), law enforcement, or from CMNCP, given that they may not have a pre-established trusting relationship. Therefore, it is standard practice at CMNCP that some of the consultations will be led by local partners and/or service providers who already work with and deliver services to that specific group.

This step-by-step guide will allow you to facilitate the consultation session and report back to CMNCP to share the key findings and themes from the engagement.

We aim to conclude the consultations by (date).

FACILITATING A COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SESSION

STEP 1: PREPARATION

- Read the background information above and, if possible, watch the proposed videos.
- Share background information/invitation letter with participants.
- Contact CMNCP if you have any questions or require clarifications.
- Make sure you secure a room/space that is safe and confidential to have conversations.
- If you are conducting a virtual session, make sure you send a link to participants.
- Have a pen and paper so you can take notes.
- Prepare a list of crisis services to share with participants.

COVID-19 precautions

- Follow all relevant public health guidelines and consult with local public health officials when necessary.
- Only conduct in-person consultations if local public health permits.
- Avoid conducting in-person consultations if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- If possible, consider providing hand sanitizer and disposable masks for participants.

STEP 2: RUNNING THE CONSULTATION

The text in **bold** is a suggested script for you to read or paraphrase. The regular text provides tips for you as the facilitator. Note: some consultations may be conducted through one-on-one interviews, while others may be focus groups. Feel free to adapt your approach and the tips/talking points below based on the context and format of the consultation.

COVID-19 precautions

- Correctly and consistently wear a mask that completely covers your nose and mouth.
- If possible, ensure that participants and facilitators are seated two metres apart.
- Wash your hands before and after the consultation.
- Avoid handshakes or other physical contact.

Tips and Talking Points	
Welcome	<p>Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in this consultation on community safety and well-being as part of the development of (location)'s Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.</p> <p>Consider saying a few words to acknowledge the Indigenous lands you are on. Visit https://native-land.ca/ to learn more about the lands on which you are facilitating the consultation.</p>

Tips and Talking Points

Introduction

(Location) is developing a plan to increase the safety and well-being of everybody who lives here. Increasing community safety and well-being requires efforts from different areas in the city to address issues like poverty and inequality, as well as services for people who struggle with mental health or substance use challenges, homelessness, or other barriers.

As part of this plan, it is important to look at what currently exists and what people like in the (location), things that make people feel happy and safe. It also requires identifying challenges and needs that are not being met, and how those could be improved to allow everybody to feel good and safe in (location).

To help (location) understand those things, they are hoping to talk to different people in the community to hear their thoughts and ideas. This is an opportunity for you to share things that you enjoy in (location), but also things that could be improved to help you feel safer and improve your well-being. If it is okay with you, I have a few questions to ask you related to your perceptions of safety and well-being. You can reflect on where you think they could do a better job at meeting some of your needs, share some of the things that you like, but also some challenges that you face.

Everything you say will be anonymous, which means that nobody will know you said it and your name will not be associated with any of your responses. I will take notes and share them with the people who are developing the plan, but your name will not be shared. Also, your participation is completely voluntary. You can choose not to answer any or all the questions and you are welcome to end the interview whenever you want.

We are not looking to report specific information on your personal experiences, but rather to get a better overall understanding of concerns related to well-being and safety. We can't promise that each recommendation or concern will be solved, but we will do our best to make sure that your voice is heard, and that the city/town can find solutions to improve your experience of safety and well-being.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we start?

Make sure to answer any questions they may have.

Tips and Talking Points	
Questions / Discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What makes you feel safe and happy in your community? 2. Which areas do you enjoy in (location)? 3. What makes you feel unsafe in your community? 4. What are some areas in (location) that you have safety concerns about? (Think about neighborhoods, intersections, buildings) What are some ideas or opportunities to increase well-being and community safety in (location)? If you could recommend something to (location) that would help you feel safer and happier in the short and long-term, what would it be? <p>If the participant is hesitant or prefers not to answer a specific question, feel free to skip to the next one. If their response to a certain question sparks some additional conversation or questions, feel free to explore those themes with the participant.</p> <p>Please ensure to take clear notes that can be shared with the project team (note: there are blank pages included in this document for note taking).</p>
Conclusion	<p>Make sure you ask each participant if they would like to add anything or if they have any final questions/concerns. You can also encourage them to share the current survey (if applicable) with their friends and families and on social media. To request a paper copy of the survey, contact (email).</p> <p>Thank you for coming and for helping increase community safety and well-being for everyone in (location)!</p>

STEP 4: WRAPPING UP AND REPORTING BACK

- Make sure you collect any notes you took and that you report back to CMNCP on the results. You can transcribe notes into a Word document or email, or simply take photos of hand-written notes and send them to CMNCP.



CANADIAN MUNICIPAL
NETWORK ON CRIME
PREVENTION

Together for Safer Canadian Cities

RÉSEAU MUNICIPAL
CANADIEN EN PRÉVENTION
DE LA CRIMINALITÉ

Ensemble pour des villes canadiennes plus sécuritaires