
BRIDGING CITIES

THROUGH INNOVATION & TRADITION



Community Challenges, Shared Solutions

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Handouts and presentations are available in the conference app.

Community Challenges, Shared Solutions

Iowa League of Cities Conference
September 25, 2026



ALIGNED
COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Moving cities from fragmented responses to
unified, sustainable community strategies



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COMMUNITY STRATEGIES



Sarah Ott
Founder
Aligned Community Strategies



Jeff Bladel
Law Enforcement Consultant
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The Challenge



Community Challenges

Gun violence spurs anger, blame;
[redacted] seeks answers to surge of
shootings

New report highlights affordable
housing crisis for low-income
renters in the [redacted]

Jails are the de facto mental health care in [redacted]
Sheriffs don't want the job

**Neighbors frustrated as
homeless encampment
returns soon after removal
efforts**

[redacted] stubborn youth crime problem: Does
anyone here have the will to act?

“We are collaborating. Why aren’t we making more progress?”

Collaboration $\neq$ Strategy

YOU CAN HAVE:



Great
Relationships



Regular
Meetings



Committed
Partners



Lots of
Programs



Significant
Investment

.....and still not have a coordinated community strategy.

Why Community Response Falls Short

Competing Priorities → Critical needs go unaddressed as agencies focus only on their own mandates

Siloed Funding Streams → Inefficient use of resources and duplication of services

Lack of Shared Data Systems → Incomplete or conflicting information prevents evidence-based decisions

Mistrust or Territorialism → Collaboration stalls; organizations withhold resources or disengage

Short Political Cycles → Long-term strategies are abandoned with leadership changes

Lack of Cathedral Thinking → Communities remain stuck in short-term fixes without systemic impact

From Collaboration to Collective Action



Collective Action



**Collaboration gets people to the table.
Collective action gets the table moving toward a
shared result.**

Collective Action

Collective action requires more than collaboration.

It requires:



Shared
understanding



Shared
strategy



Shared
ownership



Shared
accountability

Framework



Assess → Understand the problem, system, assets, gaps, and contributing factors.

Align → Develop a shared strategy across organizations, interventions, and time horizons.

Implement → Translate the strategy into ownership, governance, timelines, and coordinated action.

Sustain → Monitor progress, build capacity, adapt the strategy, and maintain accountability.

Assess

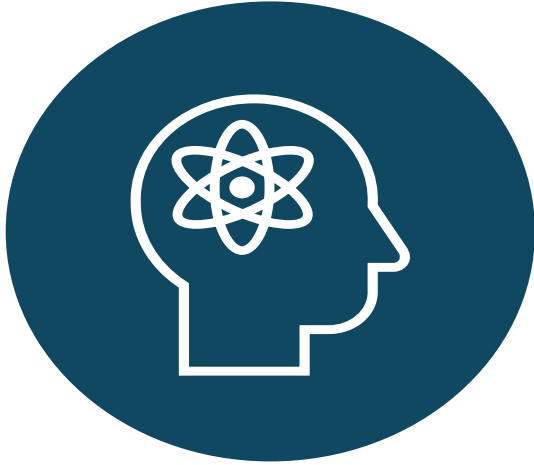


Assess



“Are we solving the right problem?”

Assess



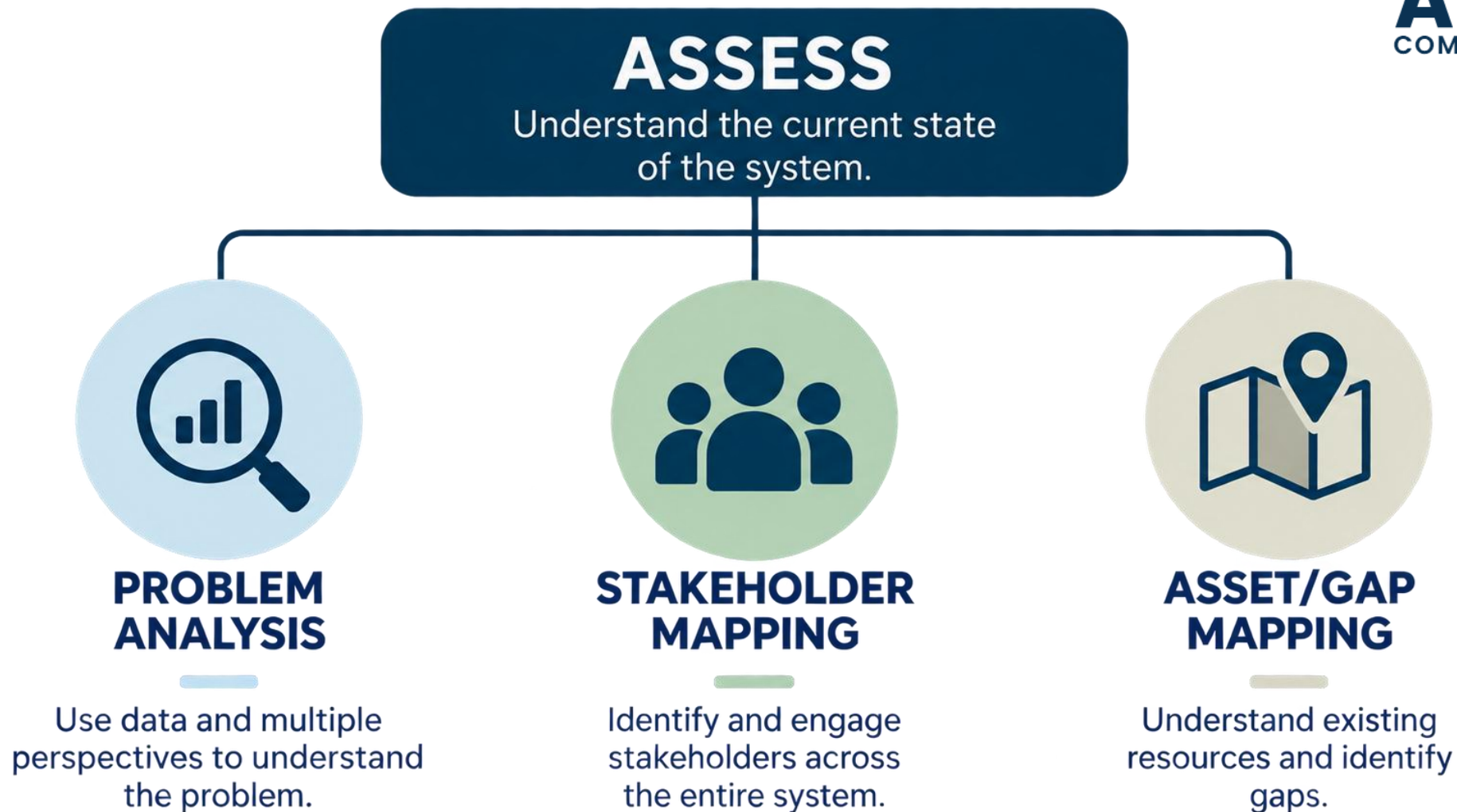
What We
THINK
The Problem Is

VS



What The
SYSTEM TELLS US
Is Happening

Good Strategy Starts With Understanding The Difference.



Align



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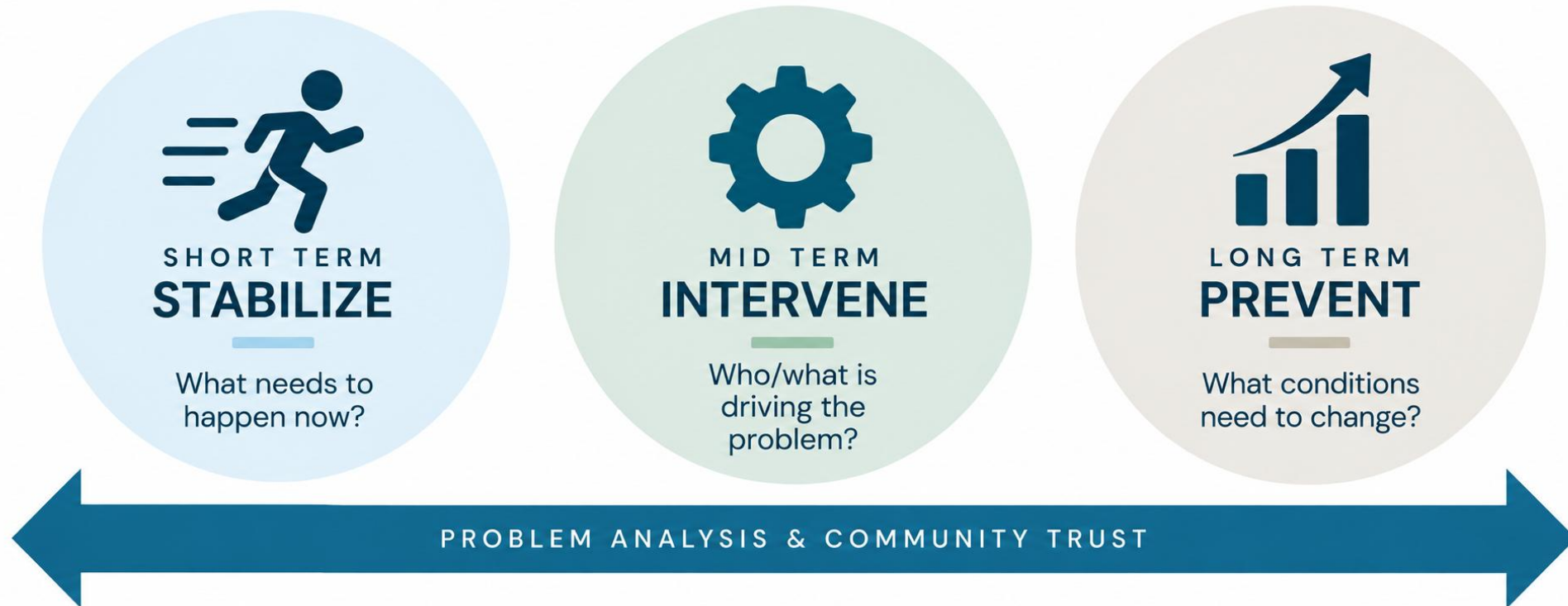
Align



“How do we create ONE community strategy?”

Strategy Alignment

A coordinated approach across different time horizons.



Align



Alignment means making intentional choices about how different strategies, organizations, resources and time horizons work together toward the same outcome.

Implement



Implement

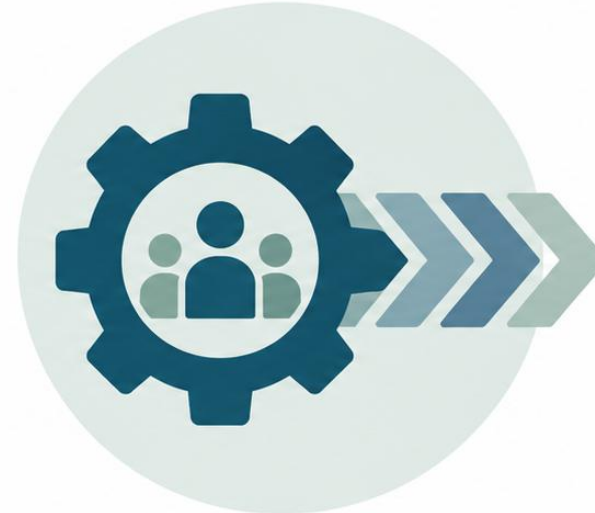


“Who actually makes this happen?”

Implement



Strategy without
infrastructure
becomes another plan
on a shelf.



Implementation
is where collective action
either becomes real
or falls apart.

Implement



Communities often develop a strategy and assume the existing collaborative table will somehow execute it. But implementation requires intentionally creating the infrastructure around the strategy.



Implementation Infrastructure

Implementation Roles

Role	Description	Example
 Strategy Owner	Accountable for the outcome	Housing strategy lead
 Action Owner	Responsible for a specific action	Launch coordinated outreach
 Contributing Partners	Provide resources/capacity	City, nonprofits, health system

Implementation Rhythm

Implementation Happens Between Meetings



Weekly/ongoing

Action owners
execute work



Monthly

Working groups
review actions,
barriers and measures



Quarterly

Leadership team
reviews progress,
resolves systemic barriers
and reallocates resources



Annually/periodically

Community revisits
strategy and adapts
priorities

Facilitating vs Managing

Some communities need facilitation. Others need someone actively managing the space between organizations.

Know which problem you actually have.



Facilitating Implementation

CONVENES AND GUIDES

- ✓ **Convenes** stakeholders and builds alignment
- ✓ **Facilitates** discussions and decision-making
- ✓ **Helps** develop plans and shared commitments
- ✓ **Builds** momentum and keeps the work moving

VS.



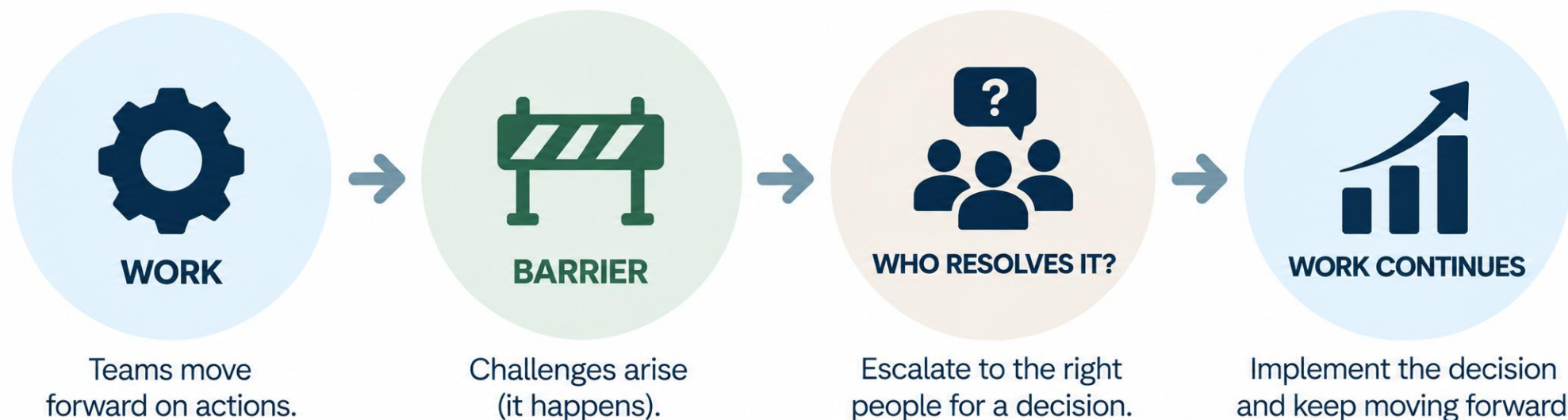
Managing Implementation

DRIVES AND COORDINATES

- ✓ **Coordinates** across organizations and partners
- ✓ **Tracks** progress and holds people accountable
- ✓ **Identifies** and resolves barriers in real time
- ✓ **Keeps** the work on track and moves it forward

Implementation Barriers

What happens when implementation gets stuck?



Sustain



Sustain



“How do we know if this is actually working?”

Monitoring



It is important to monitor the fidelity of our implementation because we want to know with evidence what works and what does not work so we can be more effective and efficient with our decisions and planning in the future.

Did we do what we said we would do?

- ✓ Are strategies being implemented as designed?
- ✓ Are partners fulfilling their defined roles and responsibilities?
- ✓ What data shows implementation is consistent and effective?

Monitoring

Did we do what we said we would do?

	Positive Progress	Poor Progress
 Acceptable Fidelity	 Plan is working (Continue on!)	 Plan is not working (Back to Step 2!)
 Unacceptable Fidelity	 Plan is working (But don't count on it!)	 Uncertain/Redo (Hold people accountable!)

Maintaining Momentum

Transparency and cathedral thinking help communities stay engaged and motivated even when progress requires sustained effort over time

- ✓ Public progress reports to maintain accountability and trust
- ✓ Small wins translate into trust and patience and buy in

Case Study



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Shooting death of Jamon Winfrey

Davenport Police Chief: 14-year-old boy found shot to death Thursday was believed involved in the previous day's shooting

Police: 12-year-old boy dead after shooting in Davenport Thursday

The Davenport Police Department confirmed on Friday afternoon a 12-year-old boy died in a shooting in the 1300 block of Marquette Street Thursday.

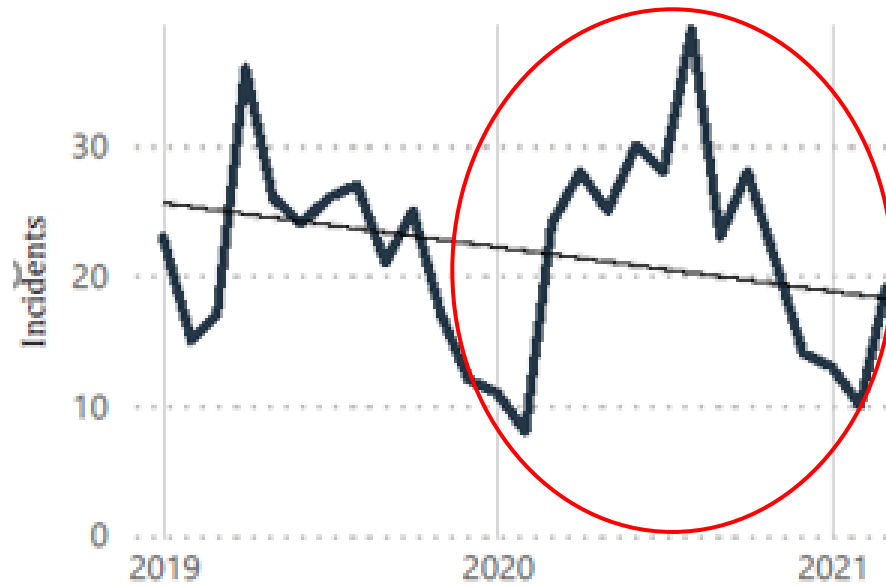
Police recover nearly 80 bullet casings after Redstone Parking Ramp shooting

Davenport mayor announces task force to combat violent crime

The City of Davenport has been working to fight juvenile crime and violent crime for years.

1 dead, 3 injured in Sunday shooting on W. 3rd Street, Davenport; 1 shot in The District

Gun Violence



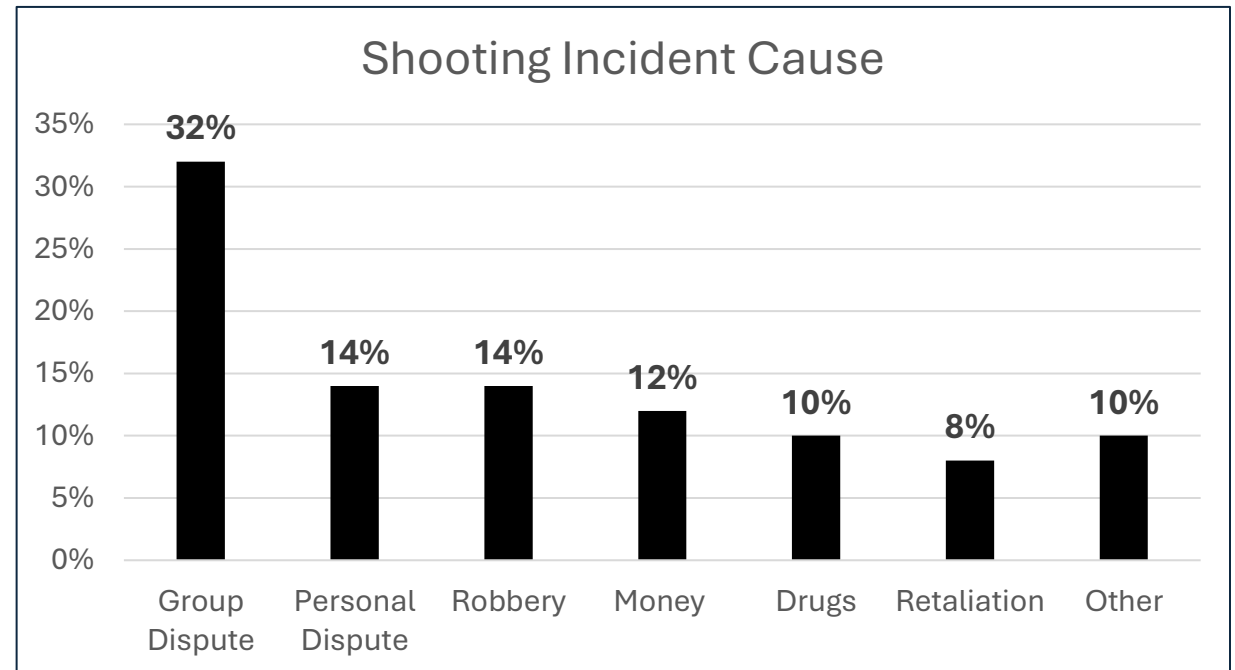
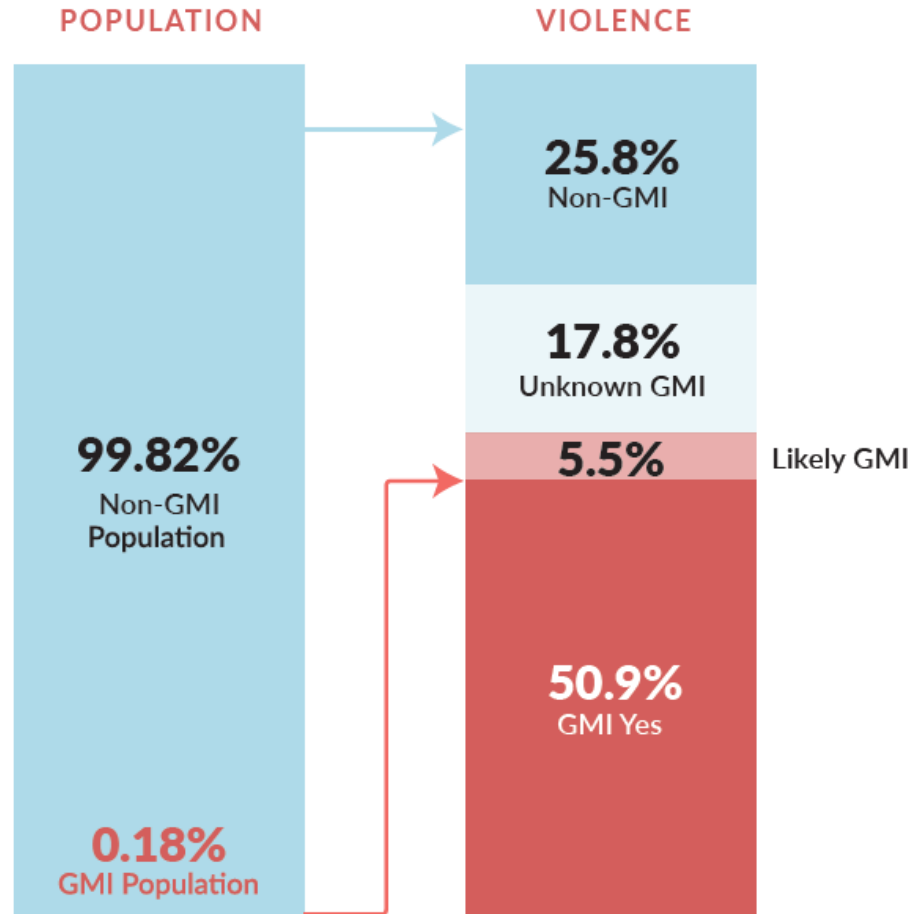
45% increase in shots fired from 2019-2020

64% increase in non-fatal shootings from 2019-2020

Assess | Are we
solving the right
problem?



The Data



Asset Mapping



Align | How do we
create ONE
community
strategy?



Align



The more effective the community strategies are,
the less enforcement is needed

Align



Implement | How
do we actually
make this happen?



Implement

How did we make the strategy real?



LEADERSHIP & OWNERSHIP

City leadership established the strategy and identified owners for key initiatives.



GOVERNANCE

GVI Executive Committee + CAP Advisory Committee created ongoing oversight.



CAPACITY & PARTNERS

City + schools + county + community partners + state/federal partners + funding.



STRATEGY IN ACTION

CAP + GVI + focused enforcement + partnerships.

Implement

Governance made it executable



STRATEGY

Prevention →
Intervention → Enforcement



GOVERNANCE

Executive Committee /
Advisory Committee



OWNERS

Specific agencies +
partners



ACTION

Programs, interventions,
enforcement, funding

Sustain | How do
we know if this is
actually working?



Sustain

Are we doing the work AND is it working?



Data Monitoring

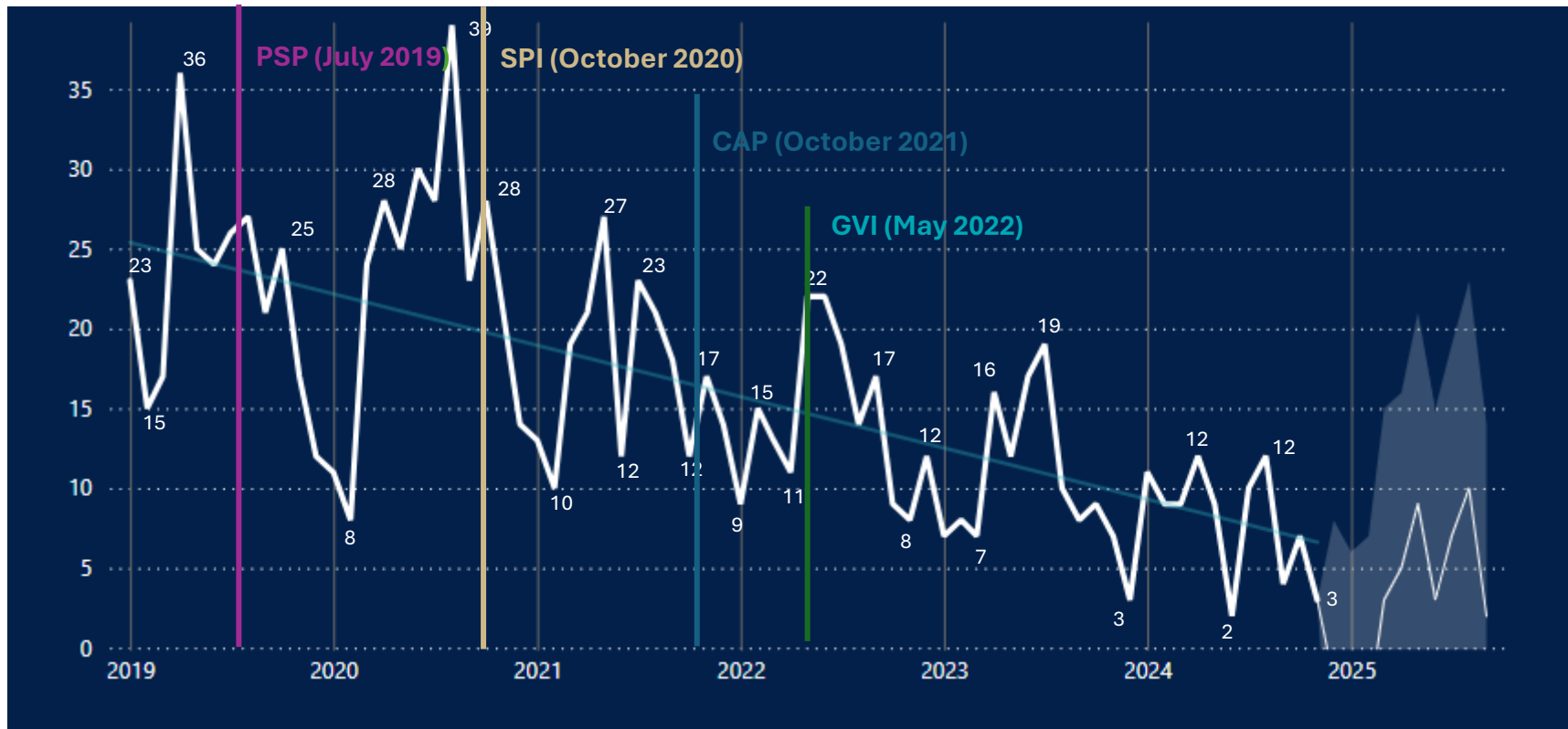


Shooting Review | Operationalized a weekly meeting to review all shootings and determine best course of action with partners. Includes all QCA law enforcement and Federal partners



Impact

Davenport Shots Fired Trend with Forecasting



* Data represents January 1 – November 30 each year.

Impact

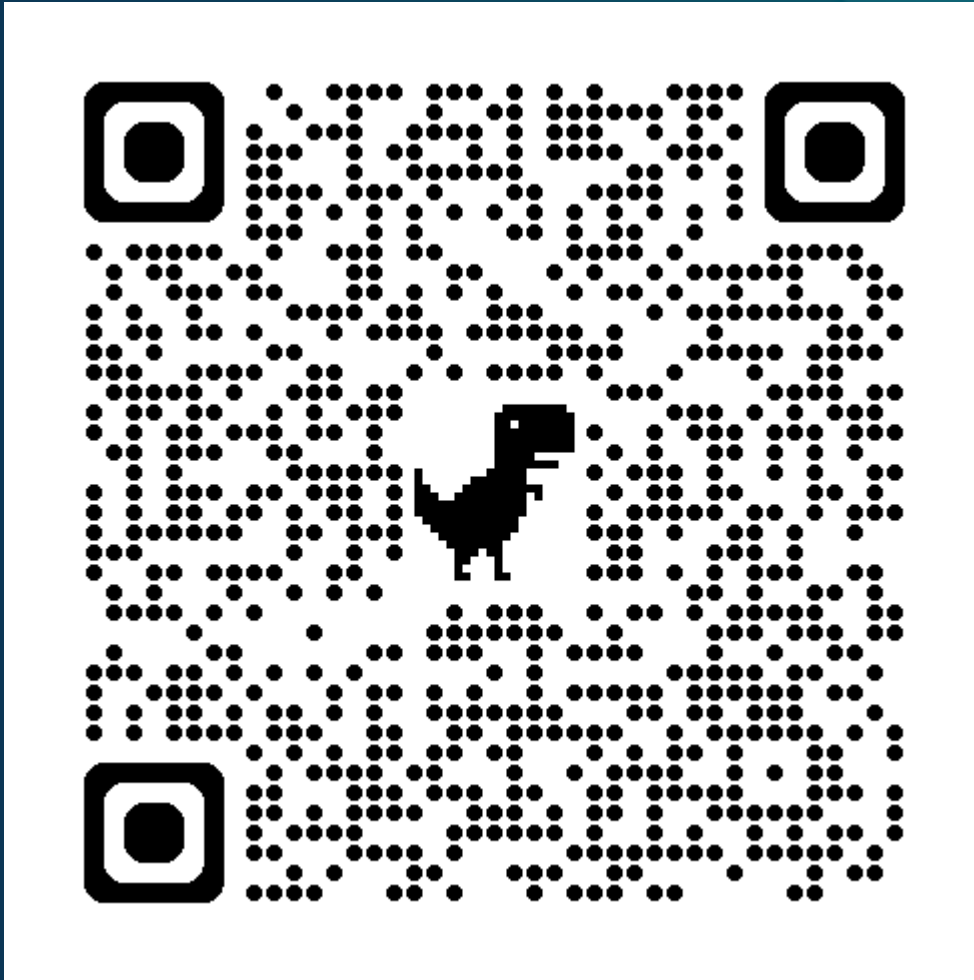
Scott County reports less youth-related crime, touts success of resource program

Davenport sees success in curbing gun violence

Violent crime down in Davenport, police chief says

Officials: 90 offenders notified as part of Davenport's Group Violence Intervention program

'We want to keep people safe': Group Violence Intervention hits one year mark in Davenport



Is Your Community
Ready for
Collective Action?



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Where is your community getting stuck?



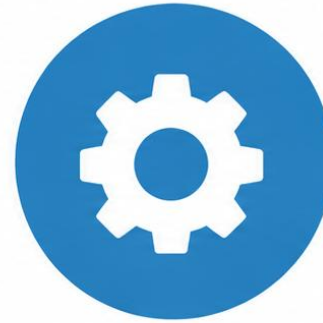
ASSESS

Do we have a shared, data-informed understanding of the problem?



ALIGN

Do our partners share one strategy — or simply operate individual programs?



IMPLEMENT

Does every priority have clear ownership, infrastructure and accountability?



SUSTAIN

Are we measuring both whether the strategy is being implemented and whether it's producing results?

Thank You

