

Unlocking the Potential of Cities in Prevention

A 10-Step Roadmap for Enhancing City-Led Support for Community-Based Programmes to Address Hate and Extremism

Background

In Europe and North America, hate, extremism and polarisation have emerged from the margins and entered the political mainstream. Rising levels of mis/disinformation and conspiracy theories have contributed to an increase in anti-establishment sentiment, intensified local tensions and divides, and undermined democratic values and institutions.

Seized by the security dimensions of these threats, numerous central governments are following the traditional “top-down” model that has characterised their response to extremist- and terrorist-related threats for the past two decades. However, effectively and sustainably addressing the threats of today requires a “bottom-up” approach more than ever, with an enhanced focus on building resilience to radicalisation at the local level.

The Strong Cities Network supports local authorities, practitioners and civil society organisations¹ (CSOs) to share good practice and leverage the critical and often underutilised role local actors play in preventing and responding to an increasingly hybridised and hyper-local threat.

While these challenges manifest differently in different cities, local governments and communities are the first to feel and deal with tensions on the ground. Cities cannot always influence the emergence of these trends, but they can work to build strong, resilient communities, making it harder for hate and extremism to take root. To maximise impact, this needs to be done in cooperation with, and often be led by, community-based CSOs. For their part, cities need to ensure these groups have the space, resources and capacities to leverage their comparative advantages in prevention. When cities play an active role in facilitating the involvement of and coordinating with grassroots organisations, these stakeholders can not only help ensure local governments are aware of and responsive to the needs of their residents but can promote durable connections and trust between local governments and communities.

Support for local CSOs should not be limited to well-established organisations and those that have existing relationships with the government. Rather, it should also be directed to smaller grassroots groups that may not have the public presence of their larger counterparts but have the dynamic local networks, capacities and credibility needed to design and deliver impactful hyper-local programming. Fundamentally, support should reach CSOs at all levels that have the relevant prevention-related capacities to make a positive difference, and no such potential partner should be excluded on political grounds, for example where they have been critical on

government. Partnerships should uphold values of democracy, transparency and integrity, not contravene them.

Among the takeaways from the ongoing [Strong Cities Transatlantic Dialogue Initiative](#) is that cities should not only view community-based organisations as partners in prevention but must also invest both in building long-term relationships with them and help them build their technical and institutional capacities. Strong Cities recognises that the ability of local governments to support community-based organisations, including by providing small grants, training and networking opportunities will vary from city to city depending on the country. But despite this, there are plenty of organisations with deep reach into and credibility with communities whose prevention potential could be expanded with the access to funding and partnerships that improved institutional and organisational processes, governance and systems can bring. Whether it is better understanding funding mechanisms, receiving basic training on governance or accounting practice, or just having the institutional ties with cities in place to demonstrate a collaborative approach, there are practical steps that can be taken to better position such critical partners.



A March 2023 transatlantic dialogue on City-Led Support for Community-Based Prevention Programmes, co-hosted by the [London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime \(MOPAC\)](#) and supported by the [UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office \(FCDO\)](#), convened more than 40 representatives from local governments and CSOs across Europe and North America.

Strong Cities has developed a roadmap for cities to consider should they wish to support community-based prevention work as part of a wider whole-of-city approach to addressing hate and extremism. The roadmap features ten (10) steps for cities to consider taking, based on consultation and engagement over the past 18 months with a range of cities around the world.

Roadmap for Community-Based Prevention

1. Prioritise regular, proactive and sustained engagement with communities in all parts of the city, particularly those that have been traditionally “hard to reach” and/or where feelings of marginalisation are most acute.
 - a. Be mindful of which communities may be reluctant to engage directly with government officials or government-sponsored programs.
 - b. Work with local organisations or other community leaders who can encourage engagement in the short term and support trust building initiatives to repair troubled relationships in the long term.
2. Ensure there is a community liaison office, team or senior official within local government dedicated to building prevention partnerships with CSOs working within these communities.
3. Undertake initial mapping of the hate and extremism threat landscape and the relevant community-based prevention stakeholders within the city. This could be spearheaded by the community liaison, violence/hate prevention and/or public safety leads within the city, in collaboration with external experts and inputs from the community-based organisations themselves.
4. Form a city advisory board on community-led prevention efforts. Chaired by the mayor or their designee, the multi-stakeholder board should include representatives from:
 - a. Relevant city agencies or offices that engage with local communities (e.g., housing, health, social affairs, education, transportation, parks/recreation, human rights).
 - b. Community leaders (e.g., faith, youth, LBGTQI+, cultural, indigenous) representative of the demographic diversity of the relevant city; this should be informed by the above mapping.
 - c. Researchers, subject matter and monitoring/evaluation experts.

5. The Advisory Board's mandate should include the following:
 - a. Liaise with communities and the CSOs serving them to understand their concerns and needs, ensuring initial mappings (step 3) are reflective of the concerns/perspectives of the wider community.
 - b. Identify existing city initiatives, programmes and other resources, including small-grants¹ programmes and ones provided by the central government or other sources (e.g., international donors, the private sector or philanthropies) that could be leveraged to support community-based prevention activities.
 - c. Recommend what steps the city should take, if any, to (further) support community-led prevention efforts: recommendations could address, *inter alia*, thematic and geographic foci, funding, training/capacity-building, networking, and the comparative advantages of different community-based organisations when it comes to prevention work.
6. Decide on the scope and scale of support (including funding, training/capacity-building and networking) the city should provide to community-based partners working on hate and extremism prevention. Such a decision should be informed by what the community-based organisations themselves feel they need to deliver sustainable prevention programmes.
7. Leverage an existing or create a new city funding scheme to provide small grants to grassroots organisations working in the prevention space. Among the key issues to be addressed include:
 - a. Sources of funding (e.g., local government, central government, private entities, philanthropies and/or international donors).
 - b. Application process.
 - c. Thematic priorities.
 - d. Communications strategies
 - e. Size and duration of grants.
 - f. Reporting requirements, including to ensure funds are not misused.
 - g. Ensuring the funds reach hyper local, grassroots organisations that may lack the human resources or linguistic capacity to engage directly with the city let alone the internal systems to comply with government grant requirements.
 - h. Monitoring and evaluation of individual grantees and the wider programme to ensure lessons are being learned.
 - i. Incorporating training and networking for local CSOs to build the technical and other capacities necessary to apply for and implement city prevention grants.
8. Offer interested community-based organisations the opportunity to receive training to grow their expertise on issues related to extremism and hate prevention and enhance

their institutional capacity to implement prevention and other programmes. Training could address a range of themes – from regular threat briefings hosted by subject matter experts to mentoring on how to build the institutional capabilities of the local organisation. They should be offered as widely and regularly as possible to foster networking and relationship-building among participating organisations.

9. Create or leverage an existing networking platform for beneficiaries of city-supported grassroots extremism and hate prevention efforts to facilitate the sharing of lessons learned among local CSOs and collaboration among them on prevention programming.
10. Prioritise transparent and publicly available evaluations of city-supported community-based preventions efforts, recognising that generating and sharing impact data is important to improve the efforts, as well as for securing political and community support for continuing and expanding such efforts.

Resources

[Strong Cities Network Transatlantic Initiative City-Led Support for Community-Based Prevention Programmes](#)

[The Mayor of London's Shared Endeavor Fund \(SEF\)](#)

- [SEF Theory of Change](#)
- [SEF Call 4 Prospectus](#)

[UK National Grant Programmes](#)

[Mayor's Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes \(OPHC\), New York \(USA\)](#)

- [Hate Crime Prevention Innovation Grants](#)
- [Community Project Grants to Prevent and Eliminate Bias and Hate \(nyc.gov\)](#)

[COMPACT Community Resilience Grant - Multicultural NSW \(Australia\)](#)

[Global Community Engagement & Resilience Fund \(GCERF\)](#)