



Community Violence Intervention Center

2013 Bush Prize Winner

When I first started at CVIC, I was trying to do a counseling session, but my client's son was being loud. She told him to stop, and he looked at her with contempt and punched her in the arm. She didn't really react, she was so used to being hurt. I thought, 'This kid needs some help,' but at that time I had nothing I could do for him. Fifteen years went by and I was on a criminal justice systems database, and this kid was in there for domestic assault. It was so predictable and so preventable.

– Kristi Hall-Jiran, Community Violence Intervention Center executive director

What is the Bush Prize?

The Bush Prize is an annual award that honors and supports innovative organizations with a track record of making great ideas happen. Winners receive public recognition for their work and creative capital to use however they choose. The Bush Prize is part of Bush Foundation's Community Innovation initiative, which inspires and supports communities to create innovative solutions to their challenges. Each year, the Foundation selects Bush Prize winners from Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography. Community Violence Intervention Center (CVIC) was one of nine winners of the inaugural 2013 Bush Prize.

To learn how CVIC made its community innovation happen, Wilder Research conducted interviews with Executive Director Kristi Hall-Jiran and three organizational stakeholders. Additionally, Wilder Research reviewed internal documents provided by CVIC, including an initial community needs assessment and multiple documents focusing on details of the Safer Tomorrows partnership, the initiative for which CVIC received the Bush Prize award.

What is Community Violence Intervention Center?

Community Violence Intervention Center is a violence intervention and prevention agency based in Grand Forks, North Dakota. In its 35-year history, CVIC has delivered programs and services focused on a violence-free Grand Forks County, including a 24-hour crisis line; housing and legal services for domestic and sexual assault victims; advocacy for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and person and property crimes; safe parent-child visits and exchanges; education and treatment programs for perpetrators of domestic violence; and community education programs about domestic and sexual violence.

What is CVIC's community innovation?

In collaboration with the City of Grand Forks, Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota, and the Grand Forks Public Schools, and in partnership with public and parochial schools in Grand Forks County, CVIC coordinated and provided administrative management for the development and implementation of a program called Safer Tomorrows, which institutionalized violence prevention education for all K-12 students and for many youth athletes in Grand Forks County. The Safer Tomorrows initiative is a multi-pronged effort that includes prevention-focused education programming for youth (delivered in schools and through youth sports leagues); intervention and healing programming for youth victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, child maltreatment, and bullying; and a rigorous data collection and management component (with the goal of better understanding the nature and prevalence of violence directed toward youth in the Grand Forks community). Additionally, CVIC's Community Innovations Program (which includes Safer Tomorrows and the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) project) spearheaded collaborative community efforts which resulted in systems changes regarding domestic and sexual violence prevention and intervention in the Grand Forks community, such as new procedures for police response regarding potential domestic violence incidents.

The Safer Tomorrows partnership was catalyzed in 2010 by a \$2 million grant from the U. S. Department of Justice's Defending Childhood Initiative (DCI). Grantees were awarded funding to prevent, reduce, and combat childhood exposure to violence – a direction in which CVIC was already heading for the five to ten years prior to receiving DCI funding. CVIC has evolved from its focus on crisis intervention to a more holistic approach that includes violence prevention.

About 30 years ago, when the CVIC was new, it focused on intervening in crisis, with people whose lives were endangered. The next step was how to lift people out of crisis. Many people with violent childhoods end up in violent adulthoods, whether they are the receiver of violence or the inflictor, so it's important to help people build new lives. Then the third step, which CVIC is doing now, is preventing people from experiencing violence at all. I'm convinced that a lot of violence can be prevented. –Stakeholder interview

A primary success factor for Safer Tomorrows is the long-term commitment from its more than 40 partner organizations. The partnership includes education partners, such as Grand Forks Public Schools and the University of North Dakota; government partners, such as Grand Forks Sheriff's Department and the mayor's office; healthcare partners, such as Altru Health System; and numerous nonprofit organizations that serve children, families, and women. One stakeholder specifically mentioned the depth of these partnerships as a key strength of Safer Tomorrows.

It doesn't matter that I am daily engaged because I know that Safer Tomorrows is being cared for by numerous people. What you have in our community now is a whole integrated system that has grown organically. –Stakeholder interview

The variety of partners involved in Safer Tomorrows and CVIC's other collaborative projects is a testament to CVIC's systems-focused approach to intervening in and preventing domestic violence. Kristi Hall-Jiran described how partners learned how each system responds to violent situations in the Grand Forks community. She and CVIC stakeholders noted that this understanding of each other's work is a success factor for Safer Tomorrows and other collaborative projects.

Some context for CVIC's community innovation

Understanding the context in which a community innovation happened is important to a holistic and informed understanding of that innovation. First and foremost, CVIC operates in the field of violence prevention and intervention. Kristi Hall-Jiran noted that CVIC is unique in this field because of their systems approach to violence prevention, whereas many other domestic violence agencies focus solely on intervention.

We really pride ourselves on being a comprehensive intervention and prevention center. We really come at the problem from all angles, which distinguishes us from other domestic violence agencies. We're going all the way down that continuum to look at how we can stop violence from starting in the first place. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

The community context of Grand Forks County is also critical for understanding the Safer Tomorrows initiative. The willingness exhibited by nonprofit, for-profit, and governmental organizations in Grand Forks County to collaborate with the goal of ending community violence is a distinct community strength for Safer Tomorrows. However, interview respondents also mentioned challenges regarding community perceptions about violence. Specifically, stakeholders noted a tendency among some community members to blame victims of interpersonal violence.

Additionally, the diversity of Grand Forks County – including the City of Grand Forks, rural areas surrounding the City, as well as the geographic proximity to the Spirit Lake Reservation – is an important aspect of CVIC's community context. Interview respondents noted the success that Safer Tomorrows experienced in engaging Native and rural communities, despite a general lack of initial trust in the initiative from these community groups.

How did CVIC bring about its community innovation?

Bush Foundation awarded the Bush Prize to Community Violence Intervention Center in recognition of the organization's demonstrated history of using community problem-solving to bring about innovative solutions. The purpose of this case study is to learn more about how CVIC facilitates this problem-solving in their community. The Bush Prize celebrates organizations that use inclusive, collaborative, and resourceful problem-solving processes to bring about innovation. This section of the case study highlights these elements of CVIC's problem-solving efforts.

Bush Foundation’s definition of inclusive: Meaningfully engage key stakeholders – thoughtfully identifying those needed to create the intended change and, whenever possible, including those directly affected by the problem

The strength of CVIC’s Community Innovations Program is in the number of professional stakeholders who are committed to the initiative’s goal of a violence-free Grand Forks County. Interview respondents highlighted extensive processes through which CVIC stakeholders learned the details of their fellow partners’ work regarding domestic violence. Through these processes, CVIC’s partners built relationships and understanding that allowed them to meaningfully engage with the initiative’s work.

We did interviews at every position level and at every FTE level, with front line staff as well as with administrators [at each professional stakeholder agency]. We found differences between what is actually happening and what administration thinks is happening. We looked at each piece of paper involved in anything that agencies do. We basically audited each agency. Part of the audit process was to experience a domestic violence incident from the perspective of multiple agencies. One group sat in a jail all night, others sat at a 911 call center, others rode with police. You see all the systems differences. You also see the things that people are dealing with – how fast those calls come in, how mean people are in jail. Once you know that context, it’s easier to talk with people about keeping people safe. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

Additionally, Kristi specifically noted Safer Tomorrows’ approach with teachers as an example of how Safer Tomorrows meaningfully engages professional stakeholder groups, describing an engagement approach rooted in empathy and understanding of stakeholders’ professional demands.

When working with schools, we really tried to understand from their perspective. They have a really hard job; they have so many demands, with the curricula and guidelines. We asked them, ‘How do we build our work into what you are already doing?’ –Kristi Hall-Jiran

In addition to engaging professional stakeholders, interview respondents noted that the Defending Childhood Initiative grant enabled Safer Tomorrows to engage a larger variety of service-recipient stakeholder groups. Kristi noted that they gathered the perspectives and opinions of key service-recipient groups.

We really widened our collaborative net. We asked who needs to be a part of this conversation. We invited kids, survivors, rural populations, American Indian populations – and really spent our time listening to them. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

CVIC also noted some specific ways they have sought meaningful engagement with the Spirit Lake Reservation. The organization’s outreach to American Indian elders and incorporation of American Indian-specific healing practices into CVIC’s ongoing intervention and healing work are examples of their efforts to improve the cultural competency of domestic violence services in the area.

We're identifying people who we can call on regularly who are culturally competent to work with Native Americans. We are starting to build networks of spiritual resource people. We have employed the use of a spiritual toolkit, which includes sage and an abalone shell. Our goal is to get that toolkit to all Defending Childhood sites, so they feel that they can offer it as an alternative. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

Bush Foundation's definition of collaborative: A true joint effort, with partners willing to share ownership and decision-making as they pursue an innovation together

The success of Safer Tomorrows is inextricably linked to the collaboration that the initiative has fostered. As mentioned previously, Safer Tomorrows is grounded in its diverse and committed partners. A history of collaboration among key partners is a strength of the initiative. For example, CVIC has a history of collaboration with schools in the Grand Forks area, and an assistant superintendent was already invested in CVIC's work prior to the Safer Tomorrows initiative. Additionally, Kristi Hall-Jiran credits shared values among partners, and a vision based on those values, as a crucial component of the success of Safer Tomorrows.

The Safer Tomorrows structure consists of a governance committee and 11 working committees focused on specific initiatives related to preventing and intervening in youth domestic violence. Examples of these specific initiatives include 'Coaching Boys to Men,' which is a violence prevention program delivered to youth via sports leagues developed by Futures Without Violence, and 'Restorative Justice,' which is a violence intervention program delivered in public schools in Grand Forks County by Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota. With more than 40 organizations and agencies participating to various degrees in Safer Tomorrows, extensive coordination is necessary to effectively deliver programming and services as well as facilitate systems change, such as curriculum additions in schools and building on the Coordinated Community Response project's changes to police response regarding domestic violence incidents. To ensure effective operations of the partnership, Safer Tomorrows hired a full-time Safer Tomorrows coordinator to schedule meetings, create task lists, and serve as the primary contact person for Safer Tomorrows partners.

CVIC approaches their partners as experts and empowers committees to make their own decisions. Part of the success of Safer Tomorrows can be attributed to CVIC effectively structuring the partnership to facilitate productive input from their numerous partners during decision-making processes.

The philosophy of CVIC is that when you get a group of experts in a particular field, you want to empower them to make the best decision. We wanted to allow them the freedom to make decisions. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

Community Violence Intervention Center excels at engaging and retaining its partners, a strength that was identified in stakeholder interviews, as well as evidenced by the number of partners involved with Safer Tomorrows. Stakeholders attributed CVIC's effective partner

engagement and retention to freely sharing knowledge and decision-making power with partners, identifying necessary partners for Safer Tomorrows success, and facilitating opportunities for meaningful collaboration between their partners.

The thing about CVIC is that they are not hoarding information; they share willingly with other organizations and communities. –Stakeholder interview

They have developed themselves as a leader; they have identified those different targets of expertise and picked out individuals as those experts. They get them together and get them working on tasks. –Stakeholder interview

Additionally, Kristi Hall-Jiran described two examples in which the Safer Tomorrows governance committee collaborated with teachers regarding ways in which Safer Tomorrows might more effectively deliver programming in schools. The willingness to collaborate with teachers – who are acknowledged by the Safer Tomorrows governance committee as experts in delivering Safer Tomorrows programming – indicates the extent to which CVIC and the Safer Tomorrows governance committee value the input of its stakeholders and partners.

The schools have weekly class meetings, and some of the teachers were so good at our programming that they ran out of our ideas and needed new material for ‘circle time.’ They took the initiative to ask about developing new ideas and we collaboratively allocated grant money to pay them for developing their ideas. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

We had a ‘healthy friendships’ program for 7th graders. The research shows that if you develop healthy friendships at that age, the likelihood of healthy romantic relationships increases. After 1-2 years, the teachers told us that we needed to deliver that programming to 5th graders instead. We honored that and moved it to 5th grade. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

Bush Foundation’s definition of resourceful: Using existing resources and assets creatively to make the most of what a community already has

For CVIC, effectively using existing resources is predicated on sharing between partner organizations. The large number of partners involved with CVIC’s collaborative projects has resulted in many opportunities to share resources. Interview respondents noted sharing resources in many ways, but the most salient included sharing physical space, grant-writers, and trainers for professional development and community education sessions. Not only does this sharing build a collaborative foundation for the initiative, it also stretches critical resources and fills gaps for providing resources.

In order to help people out of domestic violence, you need to have a place for them to go. We didn’t have a place and didn’t have enough money to buy a place, but a local organization had a home that it had acquired as a part of a land purchase. We were able to use that home as a safe house for victims of domestic violence. –Stakeholder interview

CVIC’s Community Innovations Program has also leveraged institutional resources by embedding trainings and processes implemented with federal funding into established

organizations and institutions. For example, the police department changed some of its forms to remind officers to check for children when responding to domestic violence calls, which has increased the number of reports to Child Protective Services. Kristi Hall-Jiran explains how Safer Tomorrows embedded training in public and parochial schools:

Safer Tomorrows invested a lot up front in sending teachers and counselors to train-the-trainer sessions for teaching violence prevention and healthy relationships sessions. Then champions were identified at each school to continue that work, so it didn't have to be a Safer Tomorrows position coordinating the trainings. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

Leadership that fosters a culture of innovation

Wilder Research asked interview respondents to reflect on how CVIC's leadership facilitates community innovation. Safer Tomorrows benefited from two types of leadership: a strong executive leader and an empowered group of stakeholder-leaders. All stakeholders mentioned CVIC, and particularly the executive leadership role of Kristi Hall-Jiran, as critical to the success of Safer Tomorrows and their shared goal of promoting a violence-free Grand Forks County.

CVIC tends to be very outward-facing. Kristi is an example. She's all over the place. She's out there and working with people. She's been very involved on all fronts. She's a recognizable face, a community ambassador. –Stakeholder interview

We demonstrate from the top that we want to be the best at what we do. Our staff understands that we want to be top quality in every way. We aren't just here to serve some clients and then go home at the end of the day. –Kristi Hall-Jiran

As noted, empowering others with decision-making and leadership roles represents the second key leadership function that facilitated innovation in the Safer Tomorrows partnership. Kristi Hall-Jiran specifically mentioned empowering others as an important aspect of her leadership, saying, “We have tried to build a culture in which people are free to brainstorm and come up with ideas.” This decentralized leadership allows the Safer Tomorrows partnership to productively harvest ideas and skills from a multitude of committed partners who possess skill sets and professional connections for preventing and intervening in violence.

Summary

In addition to CVIC's case study, Wilder Research produced similar case studies for all 2013 Bush Prize winners and a synthesis report of key findings. These reports can be found on Bush Foundation's website. A primary learning from the synthesis analysis is that community innovation is an iterative process and that repeated risk-taking is necessary to achieve community innovation. Despite the "unknowns" inherent in community innovation, Community Violence Intervention Center forged a new and effective path for solving a problem in its community and has proven itself an innovative leader in the field of domestic violence services.

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