

Innovations in 911 Response

Playbook: Developing an Alternative Response Program



Congratulations on taking the first steps toward building an alternative response program! Or perhaps you have already started and are seeking additional insights. No matter where you are in your journey, this worksheet is designed to help you strengthen your alternative response program and community.

We encourage you to use this interactive PDF worksheet to reflect, brainstorm, and plan next steps across five categories: **Response Model**, **Program Home**, **Staffing Model**, **Team Structure**, and **Funding Sources**.

1. **Response Model:** How could we choose the response team models that could be most impactful in our community?

Please refer to publication pages 3-5 for more information.

Listening to the Community: Ask Yourself

- Who should we talk to?
- How can we engage with them?
- What do we hope to learn from listening?
- How will we use the input and share back what we have learned?

Assembling a Team: Ask Yourself

- What do we hope this advisory group will contribute?
- What types of expertise or experience does the group need?
- How much weight will their advice carry?

Conducting Background Research: Ask Yourself

- Are there programs that decision-makers in our jurisdiction already support or consider peers?
- What do we want to learn from peer jurisdictions that would help us design our program?
- Which questions can we answer with available materials and which answers require talking to peers?

Analyzing Data: Ask Yourself

- What questions do we need our [call data to answer](#)?
- Can we do this analysis or do we need outside help?
- [Which agencies](#) do we need data from?
- Who needs to be involved in these conversations?

2. Program Home: How could we decide where to house our program?

Please refer to publication pages 7-9 for more information.

Assessing Support: Ask Yourself

- Who in the community is advocating for this program?
- What are they asking for?
- Which government leader or department is advocating for this program?
- Where is this program on their list of priorities?

Evaluating Placement Options: Ask Yourself

Work with your team to fill out this worksheet for each placement location you are considering. Successful locations will have more “Yes” answers than “No” answers. For each “Maybe” or “Unsure” answer, consider what it might take to turn those answers into a “Yes.”

Prompt: “If we placed a new program in the _____...”
(Insert potential placement option)

		QUESTIONS	SELECT YOUR ANSWER			
STABILITY	...	...would it be responsive to what our community has asked for regarding an alternative public safety option?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...would it be seen as equal in stature to existing public service entities?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could it remain a permanent part of the city structure?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could it maintain stable funding?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could it focus primary goals and daily actions on connecting community members to care?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
TECHNOLOGY	...	...could we easily integrate into the existing 911 system?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could we access existing communication technology for public safety responders?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could we collect the data we need to be able to pivot and adjust our approach?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
OWNERSHIP	...	...could we make decisions without approval by leaders outside alternative response?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could we quickly iterate on our program model and solutions without approval from leaders outside alternative response?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could we develop and implement strategy focused solely on the goals of alternative response?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could we maintain our own database?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE
	...	...could we define roles and directly hire our own staff?	YES	NO	MAYBE	UNSURE

3. Staffing Model: How could we decide whether to staff our team with city employees or work with a contracted provider?

Please refer to publication pages 10-11 for more information.

Determining Local Needs: Ask Yourself

- What [911 calls exhibit a gap](#) between the caller or client's needs and the responder's skill set?
- What skills and services are needed to respond to these types of calls?
- Which professions have those skills and provide those services?

Assessing Service Landscape: Ask Yourself

- What social service organizations already exist in our area?
- Do those organizations provide the 911 response options we want for our program?
- Do they have the capacity to handle the volume of calls we expect to divert to alternative response?
- Have they shown a willingness to work with other stakeholders?

Determining Staffing Decisions: Ask Yourself

- How important is creating and managing our program's staffing and team culture?
- How much oversight of day-to-day operations do we want to have?

4. Team Structure: How could we approach hiring and developing an organizational structure?

Please refer to publication pages 12-15 for more information.

Creating Organizational Structure: Ask Yourself

- What are the core functions of our program?
- How can these functions be grouped logically considering factors like duties, the need to collaborate, and the final decision-maker?

5. Funding Sources: How could we fund our program for the long term?

Please refer to publication pages 16-17 for more information.

Securing Long-Term Funding: Ask Yourself

- What long-term funding sources are available to us?
- What are the timelines of these funding sources?
- How can we prepare for budget changes over time?

Appendix A: Setting ourselves up for success in budget conversations

Please refer to publication pages 18-20 for more information.

Providing Ongoing Reporting: Ask Yourself

- Who are the decision-makers for the budget in our jurisdiction?
- What is the best way to provide decision-makers with key program information?

Designing Visibility Strategies: Ask Yourself

- What information does our community most need to know?
- How can we get them that information?

Creating Budget Requests: Ask Yourself

- Do our funding requests clearly state the potential benefits of the funding and provide supporting data?



The [Government Performance Lab](#), housed at the Taubman Center for State and Local Government at the Harvard Kennedy School, conducts research on how governments can improve the results they achieve for their citizens. An important part of this research model involves providing hands-on technical assistance to state and local governments. Through this involvement, we gain insights into the barriers that governments face and the solutions that can overcome these barriers. By engaging current students and recent graduates in this effort, we are also able to provide experiential learning.

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