

# Convening County, Court & Justice Leaders: A Framework for Cross-System Collaboration

The *Convening County, Court & Justice Leaders: A Framework for Cross-System Collaboration* is supported by the [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo), [Rulo Strategies](#), and [Praxis Consulting](#), with funding from the [State Justice Institute](#).

## Introduction

Maintaining safe and secure communities is one of the most important functions of county governments. Counties are involved in almost every aspect of the justice system. As an example, counties operate 91 percent of all jails in the United States and support more than 3,000 local police and sheriff's departments. County jails provide supervision and services to the 11 million people who cycle through jails each year. Counties are also integral to America's community health systems, including behavioral health services that provide substance use and mental health treatment to justice-involved individuals and their families. Effective collaboration between the county, the local court system, justice system partners, and community-based organizations can improve the lives of a community's most vulnerable residents and make it easier for people to access the services they need. The *Convening County, Court & Justice Leaders: A Framework for Cross-System Collaboration* initiative is designed to support court and county leaders as they partner to establish local strategic priorities and align resources to achieve their justice and public safety goals.

This initiative is offered at a key point in time when local governments across the country are planning for how they will use federal funds available under the American Rescue Plan (ARP). These funds provide a unique opportunity to better understand the needs and opportunities in one's community and enhance the justice system's capacity to increase public safety and improve people's lives. Communities with varying justice strategic planning experience and capacity are encouraged to apply. Examples of solutions include innovative and/or proven practices for reducing rates of eviction; increasing services for crime victims and their families; enhancing community violence interventions; implementing mobile crisis services, behavioral health support and diversion programs; creating pretrial release and post-incarceration reentry services; and other approaches.

## Opportunity and Objectives

The *Convening County, Court & Justice Leaders: A Framework for Cross-System Collaboration* initiative will support up to 10 counties with an interest in working together to achieve better outcomes, enhance justice systems, and improve public safety. More specifically, this is an opportunity for counties, courts, and justice system partners to identify and prioritize local needs, consider evidence-based approaches (e.g., policies, practices, programs) to

address these challenges, and develop strategies and align resources for bringing about system improvements. The initiative will provide opportunities to:

1. Establish a collaborative and sustainable relationship between county leaders, judges, and justice stakeholders.
2. Participate in a structured and facilitated process of identifying gaps and prioritizing strategies and solutions to address key local justice issues.
3. Learn from subject-matter experts and peers from other jurisdictions about evidence-based approaches and other innovative strategies.
4. Learn about how ARP dollars and other federal funding can be leveraged to increase access to justice, reduce the number of individuals with mental health and substance use disorders involved in the justice system, enhance community trust, and reduce reliance on incarceration.

At the conclusion of the initiative, participating counties will have created and begun to implement a written implementation plan addressing their top justice-related priorities.

Participating counties will receive expert facilitation and technical assistance over the course of the project at no cost to them. We anticipate each county will use the expertise and assistance offered through this initiative in different ways based on their unique needs. There is no direct funding offered to sites selected through this opportunity.

### **Benefits for Participants**

Selected counties will engage in the following starting January 2022 through December 2022:

- **Technical Assistance:** A liaison will be assigned to each site to assist in identifying and prioritizing local justice activities based on a shared understanding of the community's needs and evidence-based practices. Cross-site support will be provided by the initiative's project leads, including experts from NACo, Rulo Strategies, and Praxis Consulting.
- **One Virtual Kick-off and Three Peer Exchanges:** The project leads will host one virtual kick-off event and three virtual peer learning opportunities, one each quarter. These exchanges will last approximately 2 hours each and will be hosted by NACo. The peer exchanges will provide sites the opportunity to network with, and learn from, county officials, judges, and other justice system partners participating in the initiative.
- **Showcasing Site Results:** Selected sites will be featured in a nationally disseminated toolkit and other publications to showcase progress, accomplishments, and lessons learned.

### **Focus of the Initiative**

Each selected site will identify and work on their justice-related priorities over the course of

the project period and develop and begin to implement strategies to address existing gaps, needs, or opportunities. Examples of potential priorities can be found in the application. Selected sites will work on the justice-related issues that are of greatest priority to their community. This may include a focus on adult, juvenile, and/or family populations that interface with the criminal, civil, family, juvenile, or probate courts and justice partners.

### **Desired Applicant Criteria**

The initiative's project leads will select up to 10 sites that are diverse in jurisdictional size, geographic spread, population density, and justice-related priorities. The project leads anticipate that the selected sites will have varying degrees of demonstrated justice planning capacity. Priority will be given to jurisdictions committed to making systemic changes rather than those focused solely on implementing specific programs. Interested applicants need to identify and engage a minimum of four cross-system stakeholders within their community that support this project. Each stakeholder needs to demonstrate their dedication to this project (e.g., meet regularly, allocate staff to participate in related activities, etc.) (see *Applicant Selection Criteria* below).

As part of their application, jurisdictions must identify:

- One or more justice-related priorities that will be the focus of your local strategic planning efforts that you would like assistance with from subject matter experts. Applicants who have not identified their priorities and want to use this project to assess needs/gaps and identify their top priority area for improvement are also eligible to apply.
- A minimum of four (4) individuals who are committed to engaging in this opportunity. One (1) of these individuals should be an elected county official (county commissioner, supervisor, executive, etc.) and one of these individuals should be a local judge. Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage additional partners, as appropriate.

The specific composition of each applicant's team may vary across sites. It is recommended that the local team include diverse leadership aligned with the priorities your team identified or is considering.

### **Required Letters of Commitment**

As part of the application process, communities must provide a letter of commitment from an elected county official (county commissioner, supervisor, executive, etc.), a judge (preferably a leadership judge), and a minimum of two (2) additional entities appropriate for the focus of your local priorities. Applicant letters of commitment should reference their agreement to the following:

- Provide local leadership for the initiative from county government (a

county elected official such as a commissioner, supervisor or executive) and the judiciary (a judge). It is anticipated that these two entities will co-lead the project at the local level. Each site will also identify a local project coordinator.

- Convene regular local planning meetings that will occur at least once every four to six weeks for a minimum of six months to a maximum of 12 months to complete a written implementation plan that addresses local justice-related priorities.
- Participate in ongoing communication with their site liaison throughout the course of the 12-month initiative. The site liaison will assist the local project coordinator in convening local stakeholders, facilitating local meetings, identifying technical assistance needs, coordinating training resources, and developing the final written plan.
- Actively engage in the virtual kick-off and three virtual peer exchanges (approximately 2 hours each). Further details about dates and times will be provided to communities selected to participate.

A template for a letter of support can be found [here](#).

Applicants are also required to submit a form letter signed by the state court administrator or his or her designee. A copy of this form can be found [here](#).

### **Applicant Selection Criteria**

Up to 10 counties will be selected to participate in this 12-month project based on the following criteria:

1. Commitment and capacity to hold regular local convenings that will occur at least once every four to six weeks for a minimum of six months, up to a maximum of 12 months, to develop and begin implementation on a local plan.
2. Commitment to consistently engage in the technical assistance and peer learning activities over 12 months, expressed via a letter of commitment from county elected leadership and the judiciary. Preference will be given to sites with demonstrated support from the Chief Judge/Presiding Judge.
3. Strength and clarity of the application.
4. Demonstrated collaboration of county agencies and their judicial partners and cross-sector composition of proposed local planning team.
5. Demonstrated need and potential to benefit from technical assistance.

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## Applicant Information Form

Due Monday, December 6, 2021, at 5pm ET

Applicants may choose to apply using the fillable PDF form below or electronically using the following [form](#).

If you use the form below, please submit your completed application, along with your letters of commitment, to Tara Kunkel at [tara@rulostrategies.com](mailto:tara@rulostrategies.com). If you have questions about completing the application, please contact Nastassia Walsh [nwalsh@naco.org](mailto:nwalsh@naco.org).

### Part 1: Applicant Information/Contact

Name of your county:

State:

The population of your county:

Please indicate how you would describe the geographic composition of your county (check all that apply).

Rural

Urban

Suburban

### Primary Contact for Matters Related to This Application

Name:

Title:

Office/Agency:

Phone:

Email:

## Part 2: Leadership and Commitment

Each team must, at a minimum, be composed of two (2) lead representatives from county government (a county elected official such as a commissioner, supervisor or executive) and the judiciary who will co-lead the project.

### Team Lead One: Elected County Official (commissioner, supervisor, executive, etc.)

Name:

Title:

Office/Agency:

Phone:

Email:

### Team Lead Two: Judge

Name:

Title:

Office/Agency:

Phone:

Email:

Is this individual currently the Chief Judge/Presiding Judge of your court?

Yes

No

If no, has the Chief Judge/Presiding Judge of your court been consulted in preparing this application? *Applicants are encouraged to submit a letter a support from the Chief Judge/Presiding Judge with their application. Applicants are also required to submit a form letter signed by the state court administrator or designee. A template for this letter can be found [here](#).*

Yes  
No

Please indicate the types of court matters the applicant judge routinely presides over (check all that apply)

Criminal  
Civil  
Family  
Juvenile  
Probate  
Other:

**Who will serve as the local project coordinator in your community? This person will be responsible for handling day-to-day project activities, organizing and convening your local team, and ensuring you meet the milestones laid out for this initiative.**

Name:

Title:

Office/Agency:

Phone:

Email:

Does this person have previous experience coordinating a planning process or cross-sector activities? If so, please describe.

Why is this person a good fit for this particular project?

### **Part 3: Project Planning and Letters of Commitment**

We are seeking counties and courts with little to no experience participating in justice planning and communities that may have some minimal experience with planning. Applicant jurisdictions with either an inactive criminal justice planning body like a criminal justice coordinating council, or a newly formed planning body that has demonstrated a commitment to become active and take action are eligible to apply.

**Does your community have an existing criminal justice planning group (e.g., criminal justice coordinating council) and/or task force focused on justice-involved individuals? If so, how will this proposed project be integrated with their work? If your community does not have an existing planning group, what strategies will be used to ensure meaningful participation of the relevant stakeholders?**

Does your county have an existing criminal justice plan? *If yes, please send a copy with your completed application.*

Yes

No

**Has your county or justice agencies participated in any criminal justice system mapping (e.g., Sequential Intercept Mapping or systems flow analysis)? If so, how long ago was your last map created?** *If yes, please send a copy with your completed application.*

**Is your county currently involved in other justice-related planning initiatives (e.g., Stepping Up, MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge, Data-Driven Justice, etc.)? If so, which ones? If so, how will stakeholders balance their commitment to other efforts and this project?**

**Which issues do you anticipate will be priorities for your project team?**

*Please identify up to six priority areas. The purpose of understanding your areas of interest at this time is to help us prepare to support your community through this initiative. Applicants that have not identified their priorities who want to use this project to assess needs/gaps and identify their top priority areas for improvement are also eligible to apply. If this fits your community, please check the applicable box and provide additional information about how you want to use this process to assist your county.*

Establish an early intervention program to reduce contact with the juvenile justice system

Develop comprehensive wrap-around services for youth and their families

Divert youth who commit status offenses

Divert youth from secure detention before adjudication

Improve cross-system collaboration between child welfare, juvenile justice, and the courts

Implement family-based interventions for parents who have a substance use disorder

Reduce racial and ethnic disparities among justice-involved individuals

Expand recovery housing

Implement or expand peer recovery support for people involved in the justice system

Establish or expand law enforcement diversion programs

Establish or expand prosecutor diversion programs

Address the mental health needs of individuals who come into contact with law enforcement or the justice system

Address the substance use treatment needs of individuals who come into contact with law enforcement or the justice system

Reduce overdose deaths among justice-involved individuals

Reduce technical violations for people on community-based supervision

Establish or expand reentry programming for people leaving jails

Implement community violence intervention programs

Implement or expand court diversion programs

Implement jail-based medication-assisted treatment

Implement community-based medication-assisted treatment

Improve data collection with our justice and public safety agencies

Improve information sharing between our justice and public safety agencies and their community-based treatment providers

Implement trauma-informed practices and/or trauma-focused services

Reduce stigma associated with being justice-involved and/or having a substance use or mental health disorder

Implement court navigators

Reduce the number of evictions/address the needs of the unhoused

Implement remote/virtual court services

Implement teleservices/telehealth

Other (please describe):

We have not identified our priorities but want to use this project to assess needs/gaps and identify our top priority areas for improvement. (Please describe how you will use this process to improve county and court coordination).

**Why were these priorities selected? What data, if any, do you have to support the selection of these priorities?**

**Based on your areas of interest, which additional agencies (e.g., county, court, criminal justice, public safety, and/or behavioral health) will be a part of your planning team?**

**You must submit at least two letters of commitment from relevant agencies, in addition to the letters of commitment from both county leadership and a judge.**

Additional Representative 1:

Name:

Title:

Office/Agency:

Phone:

Email:

Additional Representative 2:

Name:

Title:

Office/Agency:

Phone:

Email:

**How do you anticipate gathering input from community representatives and/or including individuals with lived experience in your planning efforts?**

**What do you hope to accomplish by participating in this initiative? What tangible products/outcomes do you anticipate/are you seeking?**

### **Required letters of commitment**

In addition to the application above, please submit a minimum of four (4) letters of commitment from relevant agencies, including a letter from a county elected official/board member, a letter from at least one judge AND the letter signed by the state court administrator or designee. The letters of commitment must include the following information:

- The individual's name who will be a part of the planning effort on behalf of the court, county, or agency.
- A statement of commitment:
  - a. to participate in regular local convenings that will occur at least once every four to six weeks for a minimum of six months up to a maximum of 12 months.
  - b. to complete a written implementation plan, based on county and court cross-system collaboration, that outlines priorities and activities within 12 months of project initiation.
  - c. that the project team's co-leads will participate in up to four virtual convenings of the 10 sites selected. These meetings will be approximately 2 hours in length.

A template for the letters of commitment can be found [here](#). A template for the required form letter from the state court administration can be found [here](#).