

---

# Appendix G

---

## **Lessons Learned in the Major Cities Initiative**

---

These insights gained through experience with the Major Cities Initiative can be helpful to individuals working to adopt a similar approach in their communities.

### **1. What must be done to get this initiative going?**

Local leaders must identify and contact all community agencies receiving substance abuse funds and explain the purpose of this initiative. A meeting should be scheduled to determine a working agenda. Additionally, all agency directors, local leaders, and key individuals should be invited to attend this important first meeting to discuss the formation of a Major Cities Initiative and to sort out the particulars of how all the partners can work together toward a common purpose.

Points of contact from each agency should be identified and invited to participate on the city's Steering Committee and any Working Group or Task Forces that emerge. Ideally, the Steering Committee should be chaired by the highest-ranking official in the city, e.g., mayor, director of health and public safety, or county executive.

Other important actions include:

- Present a data snapshot of the most pressing issues malleable to reduction efforts.
- Identify citywide resources dedicated to substance abuse, where possible.
- Create a matrix of existing resources programs.
- Identify strategies and action plans to get the most out of existing resources and address specific needs, gaps, and problems.

### **2. Be clear on the purpose for engaging specific individuals. As the initiative and its goals evolve, re-evaluate to determine if the current mix of personalities and levels of expertise is appropriate for the tasks at hand.**

The Steering Committee should include local substance abuse experts, community leaders, and key government officials. It is important to ensure that there are appropriate representatives from the various sectors of the city. Working Group members should be selected based on their commitment, capacity, and wherewithal to follow through on the agreed-on commitments developed in this initiative. The Steering

Committee will have responsibilities for convening Working Group subcommittees and Task Forces to strategize, plan implementations, and provide updates of progress and effectiveness.

The Steering Committee should be the driving force, keeping all members engaged and actively working on implementation, evaluation, and refinement of the initiative.

As the initiative moves forward, the Steering Committee should continually examine who has been contacted in the city to ensure that individuals from various sectors (i.e., the mayor's office, county officials, prevention and treatment providers, law enforcement, coalitions, the schools, etc.) remain involved.

Tasks for each member of the Steering Committee and Working Group should be clear, with consistent lines of communication set up among all concerned. These links can be facilitated by appointing a committee chair to serve as the central node for communication and dissemination of information. Members should be empowered to make decisions and follow through on decisions made by their respective Working Group and Task Forces.

Information on the status of the action plans should be shared on a regular basis. These meetings can help in problem-solving and keeping the initiative focused and moving forward. Regular, productive meetings of the Steering Committee, Working Group and Task Forces are crucial to the development and implementation of successful strategies.

### **3. Coordinate your efforts with city power brokers (mayor, city planner), and make sure they give the green light before you move ahead with detailed planning of the project.**

Engage the mayor and city executives early in the process to give them a sense of ownership and to help ensure local leadership. Draft a letter from the mayor and/or county executive to each agency head outlining the Major Cities Initiative and laying out the general plan of action. Describe the work done to date. Attach a list of individuals, agencies, and systems that are or will be involved during the 12- to 18-month project.

If possible, have your initiative's key leader or a designee meet with the heads of all local agencies funding supply and demand programs in the city to discuss their ideas regarding involvement in the initiative.