



Resources for Youth Programming and Policy

DESCRIPTION

- Successfully passed a dedicated permanent funding stream for youth programming
- Conducted a citizen visioning process to involve the community in strategic planning and goal setting
- Fostered collaborative relationships within the Little Rock community
- Created targeted programming efforts based on research and recommendations made by citizens

Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (PIT) Initiative in Little Rock

Creating a Dedicated Local Revenue Stream

Overview

The Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (PIT) Initiative in Little Rock, Arkansas actively promotes collaborations between public and private organizations, citizen groups, and other community-based organizations with its youth-oriented programming. Through a multi-faceted approach, PIT programs seek to reduce crime levels over time while encouraging the potential of local youth. Specifically, its programming components include (1) prevention by “breaking the cycle of failure” early; (2) applying intervention strategies for at-risk youth; (3) offering substance abuse treatment services; and (4) increasing funding for law enforcement in the city. The wide range of PIT programming encompasses services for education, health, safety, and employment for young people.

History and Development

In the early 1990’s, the citizens of Little Rock became concerned with the crime levels in their community and began thinking of ways to combat the rising trends and provide youth with alternative activities. Through an extensive eighteen month planning process called FUTURE-Little Rock, the Little Rock Board of Directors galvanized local citizens to think about changes that could be made to enhance public safety. Community-wide meetings, steering committees, issue-based task forces, and a telephone survey of 400 residents gathered input from the community. Out of this process emerged a list of recommendations to improve education

and economic opportunities for local youth to be funded by a tax initiative. They also outlined four tenets of the “PIT” approach: prevention, intervention, treatment and law enforcement. These critical initial steps culminated into a big political and economic win when the citizens overwhelmingly supported a half-cent sales tax and established a dedicated permanent funding stream for PIT programming in 1994.

In the early stages, the city, Little Rock School District, state agencies, non-profit groups, and businesses came together to establish two non-profit entities with the help of seed funding from private foundations. These initiatives were created to help the city create a clear and compelling mission and make recommendations on how to implement PIT’s components with the newly created funding stream. One of the non-profit organizations, *Fighting Back*, was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, administered by the city, and focused on substance abuse treatment programming options. They recommended that almost one-third of PIT funding be allocated toward a free out-patient substance abuse treatment system for youth younger than 18. The second entity, *New Futures for Little Rock Youth*, was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and concentrated on improving outcomes for youth identified as at-risk in terms of academic achievement, teen pregnancy, and unemployment—their recommendations were focused on the need to target services for underserved areas of the

city while using programs that were already familiar with the neighborhoods and its needs. New Futures also recommended that funding be used to launch ten youth initiative projects in areas with high youth crime rates. The group steered the focus of programs toward long-term youth development rather than quick solutions and their suggestions were fundamental to PIT's original design.

The open forum created by FUTURE-Little Rock fostered an environment where the community understood the value of allocating funds toward public safety and recognized the link between positive youth programming and future improvements. Improved youth outcomes were also documented as evidence of the effectiveness of PIT programming. Between 1993 and 2004, the city experienced a 62% decline in juvenile arrests and 75% decrease for juvenile arrests for violent crimes. New Futures for Youth continues to monitor crime trends and gather relevant statistics for evaluation purposes and to provide the community with feedback on the programs' effectiveness. PIT's leaders cite these evaluations and monitoring strategies as critical to properly revisit and modify the program's goals to meet the changing needs of the community over time. The city is also working on a similar community goal setting process called VISION-Little Rock with a focus on reinforcing and enhancing the community's commitment to PIT programming. Funding will go toward needs of older youth via Intensive Case Management Programs.

Financing

Building Partnerships

A major contributing factor to the success of PIT programs is the intentional collaboration between public and private agencies and citizen groups in the planning and execution of the initiative. Various agencies have contributed to the evolution of the PIT initiative. For example, since its initial role in assisting the city to write the Request for Proposals and develop contract processes for PIT, *New Futures for Little Rock Youth* continues to serve as an intermediary organization by offering their expertise on at-risk youth and providing recommendations on how funds should be allocated for PIT programs. Knowing that the community considered public safety a high priority, PIT leaders sought to actively include law enforcement in their efforts to combat youth crime. Along with PIT's provisions of recreational afterschool programs, identification of at-risk youth, and substance abuse programs, the planners realized the need for additional law enforcement officers and included annual increases in the police force budget to hire up to an additional 40 officers a year.

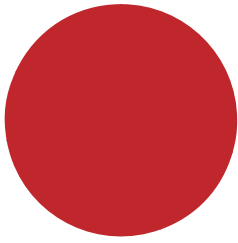
In another effort to continue the vision of FUTURE-Little Rock, in 2002, the Little Rock Board of Directors merged several advisory committees creating the unified Children, Youth and Families Commission. This new single commission is increasing coordination and communication between key stakeholder with overlapping interests in children and youth issues. The new entity is housed within the city's Department of Community Programs and serves an advisory function for the City of Little Rock Board of Directors, ensuring that the original goals set forth for the PIT programs continue to be a high priority.

Financing Strategies

- Making Better Use of Existing Resources
- Maximizing Federal, State, and Local Revenue
- Creating More Flexibility in Existing Streams
- Building Public/Private Partnerships
- Generating New Dedicated Revenue

PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, AND TREATMENT (PIT) INITIATIVE IN LITTLE ROCK

Funding for Little Rock's Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment Project



■ 100% Half-Cent Sales
Tax Revenue

✓ **Generating New Revenue**

Funding for the PIT Initiative comes directly from the permanent dedicated funding stream approved in 1994. This half-cent sales tax provides \$3.5 million annually for PIT programs and covers both youth services and programming and expansion of law enforcement and other emergency services in the city. This combination of both long-term prevention/intervention approaches along with the more immediate treatment/enforcement components were appealing to the community at large, allowing this critical source of revenue to pass.

Next Steps and Future Challenges

Little Rock is currently looking to expand the PIT programming to the county level. This will require new sources of funding. Revenue for the program has remained virtually constant for the past 10 years since the passage of the half-cent sales tax. Leaders are working to increase the amount generated from the tax as well as seeking additional funding to supplement an expansion of services. They will continue with data collection measures to promote crime prevention as one of the most significant outcomes from the PIT initiative.

Keys to Success

Since its inception, the PIT Initiative has garnered national attention for its successful efforts, including recognition by the National League of Cities in 2001.

- **Careful Planning**

An integral part of the PIT program involved careful planning and research prior to implementation. At each juncture, PIT leaders took a strategic look at how to best use resources, data and partners to meet the agreed upon goals.

- **Community Engagement**

FUTURE-Little Rock laid the groundwork with its massive citizen-based process, creating community ownership over the development of ideas and solutions to the crime wave. Strong community engagement and a focus on community priorities have been a key ingredients in raising the revenues need for PIT.

- **Results Oriented**

Success and sustainability rely on demonstrated results. Regular reports reflecting the PIT initiative's impact on crime are provided to key stakeholders and the public to maintain interest and support for the project.



The **FINANCE**
PROJECT

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