Every Child Initiative

Reducing Youth Gun Violence in Chattanooga
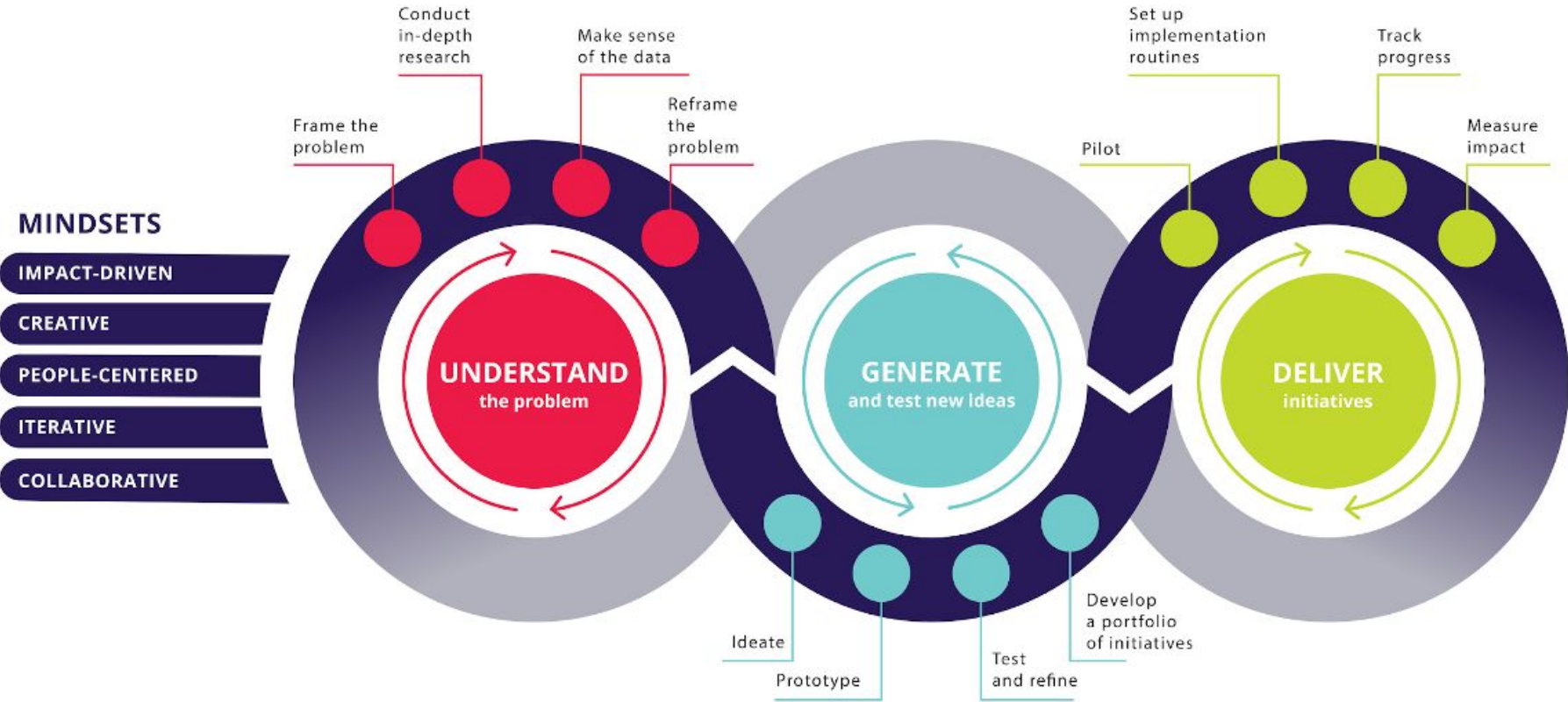
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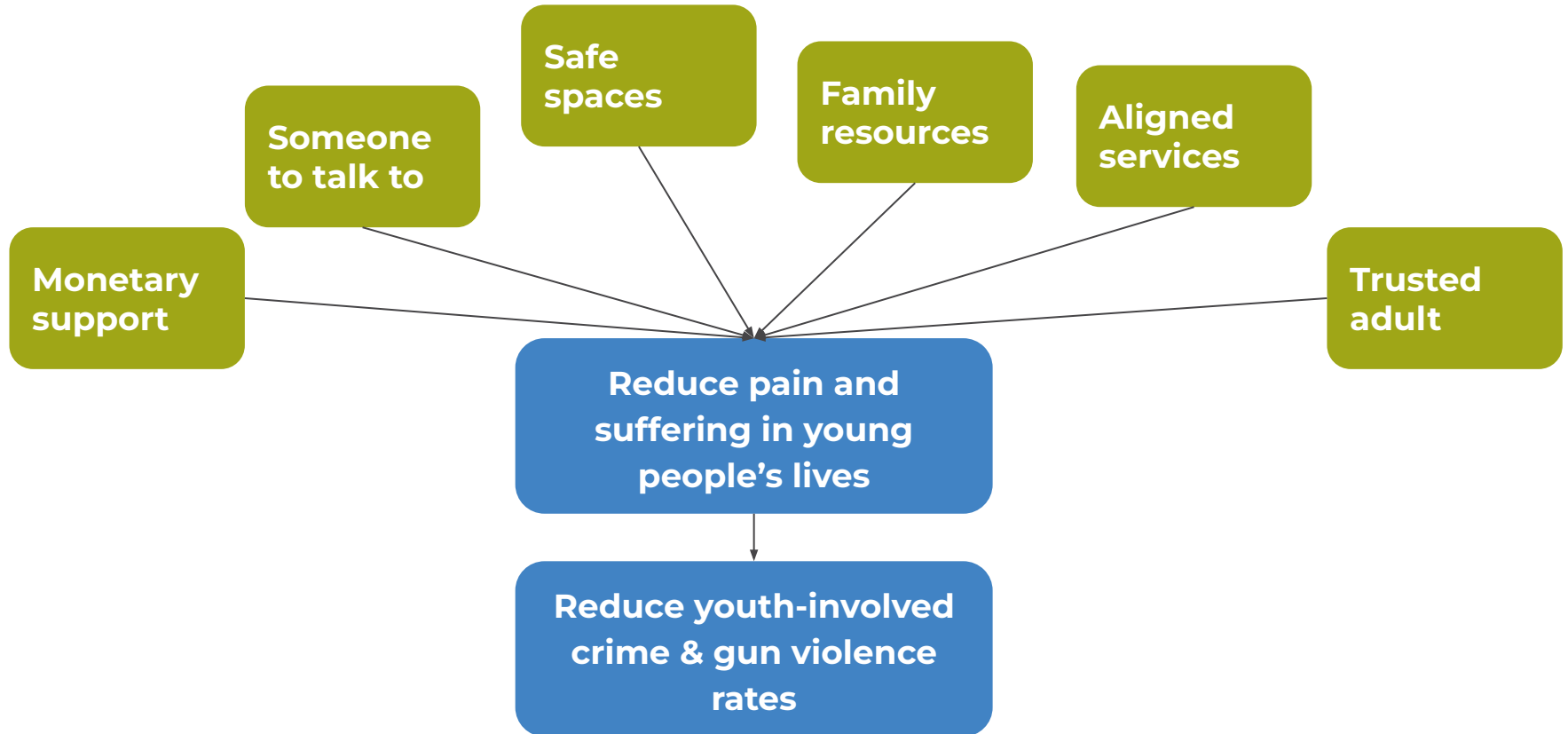
Path to Innovation

The Problem

Youth violence is a symptom of complex problems. But at the core, we know there are young people in pain.

There is no magic pill, but we have ideas on how to positively impact young people's lives.

The Approach: With, not for, Residents

The Approach: Themes We Heard

Safe spaces

Someone to talk to

Family resources

Aligned services

Monetary support

Trusted adult

Reduce pain and suffering in young people's lives

Reduce youth-involved crime & gun violence rates

Every Child Initiative — Portfolio

Host a **conference for local mentorship organizations**

Build and launch a **mentor matchmaking portal** that redefines mentorship for Chattanooga

Work with partners to build and launch a **helpline designed with and for kids**

Trauma-informed training programs for teachers, mentors, communities, and parents

Scale up creation of **safe spaces for kids**, especially during the most violent weeks

Resource and amplify the City's **Community Forward program**

Extend hours and services at specific, high-demand community centers (one-stop shops)

Every Child Initiative — Portfolio

- Reflects the vision and voices of Chattanoogans closest to the issue of youth gun violence.
- This portfolio emerged from 100s of ideas that were surfaced during **5 ideation sessions with over 260 Chattanoogans**, including elementary, middle, and high school students and teachers.
- These 7 initiatives reflect ideas that are most:
  - **Potentially impactful**, in terms of transforming people's lives
  - **Feasible**, given current resources, time, and capacity
  - **Innovative**, in that they avoid duplication of existing efforts or they expand and amplify innovative ideas that are working today

Every Child Initiative — Guiding Principles

- Co-design with those closest to the issue of youth gun violence by meeting them where they are at

- Reach families not just youth — a whole family approach

- Maintain a learning mindset when working with young people

- Challenge yourself and be willing to fail and be uncomfortable

- Be sincere and authentic, bringing candor and humility to the work

- Challenge our biases and assumptions to ensure we are consistently reflecting on our power, identities, and relationship to the community

- Every child is an opportunity

- Be trauma informed and aware — mentorship should be as diverse as the trauma that exists

- Create a culture of trust and respect — It is not our job to change a community, it is our job to serve it

Host a [conference for local mentorship organizations](#)

What we heard:

Stakeholders (potential mentors, mentoring organizations, teachers etc.) are unsure of who is all doing the work.

The disjointed ecosystem of mentorship organizations creates significant overlap in services and hinders collaboration.

Goals:

- **Strengthen community among mentors and mentor service providers.**
- **Develop new pathways for mentors.**
- **Empower organizations to learn to work WITH data and not to be overwhelmed by data collection methods or interpretation.**
- **Increase collaboration between mentorship organizations by encouraging continued lines of communication.**

Build and launch a mentor matchmaking portal that redefines mentorship for Chattanooga

What we heard:

There is a significant need for more adults in our community to volunteer as mentors. Organizations expressed the need for additional mentors to increase capacity; youth continually asked for a trusted adult to turn to in critical moments.

Adults who are interested in working with youth are often unaware of how to become a mentor or what organizations exist in their field of interest(s). Potential mentors also are unaware of what mentorship looks like outside of the traditional model.

Goals:

- **Redefine "mentorship" for the City of Chattanooga**
- **Improve the ability to connect young people in need with positive influencers in their lives**
- **Create a new simpler, streamlined, and approachable means for becoming a mentor**
- **It diversifies the pool of mentors so that it matches the diverse needs of our youth**
- **Non-traditional organizations and individuals are allowed access to a larger pool of potential mentors/mentees**

Work with partners to build and launch a helpline designed with and for kids

What We Heard:

Youth we spoke with are commonly asked to fill in the gaps not being met by the adults in their lives (e.g., sibling care, assist with rent and bills, feeding themselves, etc.)

A recurring theme was that youth did not feel aware of what resources and assistance are available to them. Additionally, they expressed a need for someone to call in difficult moments, for advice, and to feel heard.

Goals:

- **Create a more centralized resource connecter for youth to go to when seeking support or needs**
- **Serves as a way to directly connect youth in need with the resources they are looking for, alleviating the burden of searching**
- **Ability to text is a highly-needed method from the feedback during prototyping**
- **Improved chance to more immediately connect youth with resources that allow them to not become involved in youth gun violence**
- **Increased referrals by helpline callers**
- **Reduced effort and strain on parents and schools**

Trauma-informed training programs for teachers, mentors, communities, and parents

What we heard:

Teachers are not receiving training on how to identify trauma or it is disparate, and they desire to better understand and serve children affected by trauma. There's a significant gap in knowledge among those who are closest to children affected by trauma.

Goals:

- **Create a program that aids in training local teachers on trauma**
- **Can be expanded to serve mentors, parents, and community members**
- **Find an online trauma (ACES) training program and certification that City departments can recommend to all adults working with or mentoring youth.**
- **The ultimate goal is to have all adults who work with Chattanooga youth be trauma-informed and trained.**

Scale up creation of safe spaces for kids, especially during the most violent weeks

What we heard:

Young people are desperate for a place to feel comfortable and safe - somewhere to be kids.

When there are no designated spaces for youth to spend their time during weekends and school breaks, they become more susceptible to negative outside forces.

Goals:

- **Enhance and expand programs that create safe spaces for youth who are most at risk of falling victim to, or committing, violence.**
- **Provide an event or program to all Chattanooga youth during school breaks and weekends.**
- **Use down time for youth as an opportunity for learning, building community, and creating positive relationships.**
- **Continue to lower the rate of violent crime during historically violent weeks.**

Resource and amplify the City's Community Forward program

What we heard:

There is a need for parents, families, guardians, and students to receive wrap around supports.

From CF staff: there is a need for more monetary support.

Community Forward is an initiative which connects and coordinates community based organizations and partnerships that offer programs, resources, and services at the school to help aid in improving the academic growth of the students and to meet the holistic needs of students and families to help the family thrive as a unit through the Department of Early Learning.

Goals:

- **Extend monetary resource to alleviate emergency barriers**
  - **Emergency bill assistance**
  - **Emergency housing and transportation**
  - **Emergency food assistance**

Extend hours and services at specific, high-demand community centers (one-stop shops)

What we heard:

Youth people need a place to spend time during the evening hours when crime –especially violent crime– most often occurs.

When there are no productive places for youth to spend their time, they are much more susceptible to negative influences.

Community centers are not always viewed as viable options for youth because of hours of operation.

Goals:

- **Extend operating hours for community centers in the zip codes with the highest rates of violent crime: 37404, 37402, 37411, and 37412.**
- **Create more partnerships with organizations to provide services and programming in community centers. (e.g., Dynamo at South Chattanooga CC, YCAP at Brainerd CC, and travelling nurse navigators)**

Every Child Initiative — Success Measures

Helpline for Kids — Working Draft

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Creating new helpline service to serve young people	Helpline usage (call/text counts and request categories)	"Customers" feel better (emotional change) — Random satisfaction surveys; % who report improvement	Youth-involved gun violence rates decrease (CPD measurements)
Tracking data on usage and coordinating responses to emerging issues		"Customers" needs met — Random satisfaction surveys; % who report needs met	Youth-involved crime rates decrease (CPD measurements)
		Use data to understand trends, gaps, and unmet needs to improve service and coordinated response	Aggregated youth-incident data (on both sides of an incident, with age ranges)
		Demand and availability of youth-focused services growing and diversifying over time	Truancy data by grade
			Stories on what could and is working to reduce gun violence — In-situ interviews at youth events

Every Child Initiative — Success Measures

Mentor Matchmaker Portal — Working Draft

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Number of new levels of mentorship	Number of mentors who sign to become mentors	Increase in number of young people signing up for mentors	Youth-involved gun violence rates decrease (CPD measurements)
Coordination hours of relevant actors	Number of touchpoints with mentee per mentor	Self-reported strength of connection with mentor — mentee surveys or interviews	Youth-involved crime rates decrease (CPD measurements)
Hosting mentor matchmaking portal and managing back end		Increase in trust levels of mentor programs among young people	Aggregated youth-incident data (on both sides of an incident, with age ranges)
		Average length of mentor/mentee relationship (increase over time)	Truancy data by grade
		Increase in quality of mentor (genuine care, empathy, good advice) as reported by mentees — mentee surveys or interviews	Stories on what could and is working to reduce gun violence — In-situ interviews at youth events

Every Child Initiative — Success Measures

Scale Up of Safe Spaces — Working Draft

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Increasing the number of youth events hosted across city	Participation rates in youth events (correlation to youth-involved crime/violence rates over same time period)	Follow up check-ins with expelled and absent school-aged youth	Youth-involved gun violence rates decrease (CPD measurements)
		Year-to-year comparison of violence rates during key weeks	Youth-involved crime rates decrease (CPD measurements)
			Aggregated youth-incident data (on both sides of an incident, with age ranges)
			Truancy data by grade
			Stories on what could and is working to reduce gun violence — In-situ interviews at youth events