SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS
PROGRAM
GUIDEBOOK

SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS
Orange County, Florida

ORANGE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT
FLORIDA

POLIS
INSTITUTE

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About Safe Neighborhoods

History

In 2000, Orange County Neighborhoods Services Division (NSD) launched the Safe Neighborhoods (SN) program to create and support voluntary neighborhoods associations that "reduce crime through projects that enhance the safety and beauty of each location." Three neighborhoods were recruited as the first to be a part of the program (Azalea Park, Pine Hills, and Lee Road), with five more joining in subsequent years (Orlo Vista, Pine Castle, South Apopka, Tildenville, and South Goldenrod).

This guidebook outlines program requirements, policies, and procedures for Safe Neighborhoods program grantees. Additional tools and resources for program leaders can be found in the companion document, *Safe Neighborhoods Organizational Planning Guide*.

Purpose/Mission

The purpose of each safe neighborhoods organization is to foster positive community involvement and physical change in their community. Through the creation of a voluntary neighborhoods association, with financial and strategic support from Orange County, the Safe Neighborhoods program aims will increase neighborhoods safety and well-being. The Safe Neighborhoods program is intended to incubate SN associations with the mid-term goal of creating thriving, self-sustaining organizations.

Political and social changes are important community issues but are beyond the scope and purpose of this program. Elected officials, candidates, and political activists should be welcomed and encouraged to participate in safe neighborhoods meetings but should not be encouraged to use this venue as a campaign platform for or against anyone or any issue.

Neighborhoods wishing to participate in the Safe Neighborhoods Program shall demonstrate a need for the program, have program champions, and form and run a voluntary neighborhood organization as precursors. Details for adding prospective neighborhoods to the program can be found in the companion document, *Orange County Safe Neighborhoods Best Practices and Recommendations Report.*

Orange County's Commitment

Through the Safe Neighborhoods program, Orange County is helping to build the capacity of SN leaders to organize for safe, clean, and connected communities. The Safe Neighborhoods initiative is best implemented in communities where leaders are willing and able to grow the organization to become self-sustaining within five years. The Neighborhoods Services Division provides guidance and resources to support the successful implementation of Safe Neighborhoods programs, with the goal of gradually reducing support over time as organizations grow their capacity for independent leadership.

The Safe Neighborhoods Network

There are many people who are part of the Safe Neighborhoods program, each of whom plays a critical role in its success. The Safe Neighborhoods Network includes SN programs and leadership teams, the Program Liaison, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, and Orange County Code Compliance. Orange County is committed to creating connections across neighborhoods and government leaders within the Safe Neighborhoods Network to ensure access to resources, support, and ideas.

The Safe Neighborhoods Network (cont.)

The Program Liaison is the first point of contact for SN leaders and County staff, serving as a bridge between government and community. The liaison can provide guidance and support for project implementation, and create connections to a department or division at the County. It is expected that the level of support required of the liaison for a given Safe Neighborhood will significantly decrease after year two of operations, given the goal of working towards organizational sustainability. The liaison will also help facilitate neighborhoods communications with the Orange County Sheriff's Office and Code Compliance. These two County partners serve an important role in supporting safe and healthy neighborhoods.

The Safe Neighborhoods Executive Leadership members represent dedicated volunteers from diverse communities across Orange County. The County will host two (2) Leadership Council meetings each year. This will include representation from each SN's executive board, Orange County program staff and Neighborhoods Services Division leaders, and the Sheriff's Office and Code Compliance. The goal of these meetings is to bring leadership teams together for networking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Neighborhoods-Level Data and Information

Every two years, the County will provide an updated SN brief on each Safe Neighborhood, including land-use designations, code updates, infrastructure, census data, and crime and code violation trends over time, etc. The brief will also include any Safe Neighborhoods-funded projects completed within the past five years with relevant details such as location and costs.

The Orange County Sheriff's Office and Code Compliance teams will also provide updated crime and code violation data to Safe Neighborhoods programs on at least a semi-annual basis (every six months or twice a year). Safe Neighborhoods leaders can use this information to develop or update their project action plans as needed, using an asset-based approach. For more information on asset-based community development, please see the Safe Neighborhoods Organizational Planning Guide.

Safe Neighborhoods Funding

Eligible Expenses

Funding under Safe Neighborhoods is restricted to projects related to safety and the built environment. Eligible project types and examples are listed below. Note that some projects must be completed in collaboration with other County departments, such as Public Works, and may require additional documentation and planning. For any questions about what can or can't be funded under Safe Neighborhoods, please contact the program liaison or a County representative.

Eligible project types and examples funded by the Safe Neighborhoods program

1. **Community workshops, trainings, events with a safety and community development focus**
   - ☐ Youth activities with safety focus
   - ☐ Leadership training (local)
   - ☐ Accounting services (IRS Processing)
   - ☐ Self- defense training

2. **Consultant services for projects supported by the Safe Neighborhoods Program**

3. **Infrastructure projects, in coordination with Orange County Public Works**
   - ☐ ADA crosswalk ramps
   - ☐ Art and anti-graffiti coatings on public infrastructure (traffic signal control cabinets, utility poles)
   - ☐ Street lighting (installation, MSTU process)
   - ☐ Traffic calming projects

4. **Neighborhoods signage**
   - ☐ Community Identification signs
   - ☐ Reader board signs
   - ☐ Removal of damaged signs
   - ☐ Directional signs (with Public Works)

5. **Community outreach**

☐ Safe Neighborhoods communications tools (i.e. newsletter, postcards, website, surveys)

☐ Community events support (facility use fees, printed materials, giveaways, instructor fees)

☐ Litter clean up supplies (safety vests, nabbers)

☐ Shirts for elected officers (2 year frequency)

6. **Community Amenities (limited to commonly owned or public property, not private property or businesses and in conjunction with Public Works)**

☐ Community gardens with a project team for ongoing maintenance

☐ Common area amenities – benches, trash cans

☐ Decorating traffic signal cabinets

☐ Community landscaping – subdivision entrances, neighborhoods streets, community areas, consistent with Neighborhood Beautification Grant guidelines.

☐ Little Free Libraries (stewardship agreement required)

7. **Giveaways at events**

☐ Educational materials (crime prevention and neighborhoods safety literature)

☐ Safety related items (solar powered flashlights, motion bulbs, carbon monoxide detector, fire extinguishers etc.)

☐ National Night Out items

8. **Training, materials, and organizational/administrative work**

☐ Costs related to pursuit of 501(c)3 status (i.e. state fees, IRS filing fees, accounting fees)

9. **Activities contributing to acceptable, existing Community Safety or Crime Prevention Programs (COPS, CERT)**

☐ Neighborhood Watch

Ineligible Expenses

1. **Organizational Expenses**
   - Salaries or payments to neighborhoods organization leaders
   - Hiring personnel
   - Travel expenses
   - Non-local conference or training
   - Purchasing equipment (televisions, computers, cell phones, etc.)

2. **Project and Activity Expenses**
   - Items to host an event such as tables, chairs, speakers, food, entertainment, etc.
   - Gift cards
   - Items for resale or raffle
   - Food/drinks
   - Summer camps
   - Social services related projects

3. **Neighborhood Improvement Expenses**
   - Improvement to private property or businesses
   - Projects requiring Orange County's ongoing maintenance. Maintenance of any project is the sole responsibility of the Safe Neighborhoods group
   - Ongoing/recurring expenses
   - Certain roadway improvements (County Capital Improvement Program projects)
   - Sidewalks
   - Utility projects (sewer, water connections, septic systems)
   - Any other project as determined by the Neighborhoods Services Division Manager

Safe Neighborhoods Organizational Structure

This section outlines the organizational standards that each SN grantee must adopt and maintain to remain in good standing with the Safe Neighborhoods program.

By-Laws

All Safe Neighborhoods associations are required to have an approved set of organizational by-laws that outline officers, committees, executive board powers, minimum meeting times and places, election processes, and membership requirements. The organizational by-laws must be reviewed for changes every two years.

For help writing or rewriting organizational bylaws, please visit https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/organizational-structure/write-bylaws/main.

Executive Board

All Safe Neighborhoods must have at least nine (9) monthly executive board meetings. Meeting minutes should be submitted to the SN coordinator within one week of a meeting.

The executive board must include a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. *See descriptions in the Appendix.

A democratic election process, either through simple majority or consensus, must be held for officers and board positions for all Safe Neighborhoods organizations. The election process should be outlined in your organizational by-laws and require elections every two years.

Community Meetings

All Safe Neighborhoods organizations must hold at least four (quarterly) community-wide meetings a year. The quarterly meetings are an important mechanism to engage neighbors in the program. Meetings can be used to inform the community of the programs, projects, and sub-committees that are available to join. Each community must submit a proposed community and organizational meeting schedule to the program liaison for each fiscal year by October 1. The County's fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30.

Accessibility should be a consideration when planning and hosting community meetings. If you are struggling to find a suitable meeting location, the SN liaison can help to identify partnerships with local government spaces (such as through Parks & Recreation), public libraries, or community partners (non-profits or churches) that are centrally located in the neighborhoods.

Safe Neighborhoods may also want to consider providing a virtual Zoom or web-based option to help those with mobility or transportation challenges be a part of the program. Virtual options may also increase participation for parents who lack childcare, but who could otherwise participate from home.

Organizational Responsibilities

The following section describes the responsibilities of grantees to ensure successful program implementation, to be overseen by the Safe Neighborhoods executive board.

Grantees are responsible to complete the following:

» 1-year action plan

» Communications and engagement strategy

» Succession plan

These may be completed by designated sub-committees as needed, but the executive board must approve and adopt the plans on an annual basis.

Strategies and plans should align with the program benchmarks, which have been developed using research evidence and best practices in neighborhood association impact. Benchmarks help organizations plan for and assess progress. Two sets of benchmarks guide the Safe Neighborhoods program. **Program Benchmarks** provide guidance for the successful implementation of projects and activities at the neighborhoods level. **Organizational Benchmarks** are intended to support organizational capacity development so that programs can identify progress toward self-sustainability. The Organizational Benchmarks can be found in the Organizational Planning Guide.

Program Benchmarks are shown on page 10. Program Benchmarks are based on four pillars of safe and connected neighborhoods. For each pillar, a descriptive goal provides guidance on what success looks like. Finally, related Safe Neighborhoods Program services and activities are provided for each pillar to help leaders decide how to begin making progress toward these benchmarks. Most Safe Neighborhoods organizations will begin by focusing on Place Identification and Attachment, but activities may span the pillars and may include elements of Social and Civic Infrastructure in the work.

Safe Neighborhoods Program Benchmarks

Pillar: Place Identification & Built Environment

- ◆ **Benchmark:** Residents are able to identify and have an active awareness of their neighborhoods name and boundaries.
- ◆ **Safe Neighborhoods Program Services:**
  - » Community engagement
  - » Signage
  - » Branding

Pillar: Place Attachment & Beautification

- ◆ **Benchmark:** Neighbors have an attachment to their neighborhoods and opportunities to engage in the neighborhoods. This includes a publicly accessible space where neighbors choose to spend time (park, neighborhoods center, library, etc.) along with everyday facilities or services within or nearby the neighborhoods.
- ◆ **Safe Neighborhoods Program Services:**
  - » Parks & Rec partnership
  - » Neighborhood clean-ups
  - » Beautification

Pillar: Social Infrastructure

- ◆ **Benchmark:** Neighbors have a sense of belonging in their neighborhoods and choose to spend time, money, and assets within the neighborhoods. Engagement in social/civic life is inclusive, represents the diversity of the neighborhoods, and is open to social diversity.
- ◆ **Safe Neighborhoods Program Services:**
  - » Leadership training
  - » Connections to County services & community partners
  - » Events such as National Night Out, block parties, etc.

Pillar: Civic Infrastructure

- ◆ **Benchmark:** Neighbors have accessible, inclusive opportunities to collaborate with neighbors along the democratic process and access to meaningful participation in neighborhoods affairs.
- ◆ **Safe Neighborhoods Program Services:**
  - » Leadership training
  - » Active neighborhoods group or nonprofit

Safe Neighborhoods Grantee Sub-Committees

Each Safe Neighborhoods should have at least two to four sub-committees, focused on the benchmark pillars. Early-phase Safe Neighborhoods programs may elect to focus only on Neighborhoods Identification and Attachment. The Organizational Planning Guide has additional resources and supports for those organizations who are ready to focus more on Social and Civic Infrastructure. Review the Program Benchmarks for more information on each of the committee focus areas and related Safe Neighborhoods support services.

- » **Neighborhoods Identification** - Residents know the name of their neighborhoods and who belongs to it (geographic boundaries).

- » **Neighborhoods Attachment** - Neighbors have an attachment to their neighborhoods and opportunities to engage in the neighborhoods.

- » **Social Engagement** - Neighbors have a sense of belonging in their neighborhoods and choose to spend time, money, and assets within the neighborhoods.

- » **Civic Engagement** - Neighbors have opportunities to collaborate and have meaningful participation in local affairs.

Organizations have the discretion to form additional sub-committees as needed, such as Communications, Events, Outreach & Engagement, etc.

Safe Neighborhoods Grantee Action Plan

The action plan is a one-year road map that guides the implementation of Safe Neighborhoods activities. As a planning tool, it should be regularly consulted and compared to real-time project progress. The Action Planning guidelines are provided here.

As Safe Neighborhoods programs build capacity over time, their action plan may include targets in each of the four sub-committee focus areas. However, early-stage organizations should focus on only one or two goals related to neighborhoods identification or attachment. The Safe Neighborhoods liaison and other county staff will help you accurately identify and set priority goals for your neighborhoods.

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Running an effective Safe Neighborhoods program takes a lot of time and effort. To be successful, groups should plan to engage with other neighbors and provide opportunities for them to become involved in the work. With this in mind, each Safe Neighborhoods program must develop an annual communications plan and engagement strategy. This may be completed by the executive board or a committee.

A template for starting your communications and engagement strategy can be found in the Organizational Planning Guide.

Remember that all Safe Neighborhoods communications must have a strong focus on safety.

The communication plan should include multiple forms of communication, such as print, email, social media, or text messaging. Bulk text and email applications are quick and effective ways to send updates on meeting times and locations, as well as opportunities for residents to get involved. However, it takes time to build a mailing list; programs may want to start with a mailer that includes a link or QR code to sign up for electronic communication.

Communication is an important component of engagement. Safe Neighborhoods programs should consider how to offer opportunities for neighbors to get involved through a variety of one-time and ongoing volunteer options. For example, a clear and consistent communication strategy can support increased turnout at a neighborhoods clean-up event. The Organizational Planning Guide includes additional strategies for engagement through volunteerism. These opportunities should be integrated into the communications plan.

Safe Neighborhoods Grantee Succession Plan

By the end of one year from program launch, Safe Neighborhoods programs are required to have a completed succession plan. Initial guidance to get your neighborhoods started on succession planning is provided in the Safe Neighborhoods Organizational Planning Guide. The succession plan should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis thereafter.

Succession plans may look different from neighborhoods to neighborhoods based on their current levels of participation. At a minimum, the succession plan should assess current talent and skills, identify gaps for targeted recruitment, and create a plan for training and mentorship of new program participants.

Annual Neighborhoods Review

At the close of the Annual Action Plan cycle, each neighborhoods leadership team will meet with the SN program liaison to review successes and challenges in implementing the plan over the past year. The goal of the Annual Review is to ensure that each neighborhoods has the support and resources needed to continue to make progress on both the program and organizational benchmarks. Identifying where challenges occurred when implementing the prior action plan helps neighborhoods and County staff identify how to make improvements prior to the development of the next Annual Action Plan.

Organizational Responsibilities

☐ Program Benchmarks

☐ Sub-Committees

☐ Communications and Engagement Strategy

☐ Action Plan

☐ Succession Plan

☐ Annual Neighborhood Review

Eligibility for Program Funding

Funding through Safe Neighborhoods is not guaranteed. Organizations must meet or show reasonable progress toward the requirements outlined above to be eligible for program funding. A completed Annual Action Plan and Project Outline form are required prior to initiating any projects.

Program funding can and should be used to develop the organizational skills and abilities to navigate government processes, manage finances, plan and implement projects, and build resident engagement with the goal of becoming self-sufficient. Safe Neighborhoods programs are expected to gradually reduce their reliance on funding and support from the program liaison over time. Within five (5) years of entry, Safe Neighborhoods should be prepared to graduate from the program as a self-sustaining organization.

Orange County's goal is for all Safe Neighborhoods programs to have the tools and resources to successfully graduate from the program. Should SN programs fail to make progress towards the benchmarks at the annual review, the Orange County Safe Neighborhoods program staff will work with that SN organization to develop a corrective strategy based on identified strengths and weaknesses. If SN organizations fail to demonstrate progress on benchmarks for two consecutive years, the SN program staff may recommend the neighborhood exit the program. Programs will be eligible to re-apply for program support after one year with the submission of a written plan to address prior challenges.

Annual Action Plan

About the Action Plan

The Annual Action Plan is a one-year guide for SN leaders to develop goals and projects that support the development of the four pillars of Safe Neighborhoods. It should be used as a tool to collaboratively identify priority areas of work over the next calendar year. Viable projects identified through the action planning process will be further refined in the Project Application. All Safe Neighborhoods teams should aim to submit at least two Project Applications to the County each year. However, not all funding requests under the Safe Neighborhoods program will require a full Project Application. For example, items required for the successful functioning of the organization, such as communication tools or IRS filing, do not require project applications. Upon review of the Annual Action Plan, the program liaison will provide guidance on which proposed activities will require a project application.

Pre-Planning

Each SN organization should identify a meeting time for the executive leadership team to create the Annual Action Plan. To do so effectively, plan at least 1.5 hours for this activity.

Research has shown that neighborhood safety is created through the following four pillars:

- **Neighborhood Identification** - Residents know the name of their neighborhoods and who belongs to it (geographic boundaries).

- **Neighborhood Attachment** - Neighbors have an attachment to their neighborhoods and opportunities to engage in the neighborhoods.

- **Social Engagement** - Neighbors have a sense of belonging in their neighborhoods and choose to spend time, money, and assets within the neighborhoods.

- **Civic Engagement** - Neighbors have opportunities to collaborate and have meaningful participation in local affairs.

Action Plan Worksheet

To create your one-year action plan, start by ranking your neighborhood on each of the above pillars using a scale of 0-7.

Place Identification

Most neighbors I meet know the name of the neighborhood and it's geographic boundaries.

1 - not at all true	2	3	4	5	6	7 - always true

Place Attachment

Most neighbors care about the neighborhood and would be sad if they had to move away.

1 - not at all true	2	3	4	5	6	7 - always true

Social Infrastructure

Most neighbors participate in social events in the neighborhood.

1 - not at all true	2	3	4	5	6	7 - always true

Civic Infrastructure

Most neighbors would be willing to work with others on something to improve the neighborhood.

1 - not at all true	2	3	4	5	6	7 - always true

Action Plan Discussion

For each of the indicators, discuss with your Safe Neighborhoods team the following questions and take notes of each response. It will be most helpful to answer each question for a single pillar before moving on to the next.

1. What ranking did you give this pillar?

2. What positive factors caused you to rank this one higher? For example, If you ranked it a 6, why didn't you choose 5?

3. If you did not select a score of 7, what negative factors or gaps caused you to choose a lesser score?

4. What would it take in your neighborhoods for this pillar to move up a single number? What positive attributes, strengths, or assets could you build upon to increase this pillar?

5. How confident are you that your responses are similar or match your neighbor's perception of the neighborhoods? How might you better understand your neighbors' opinions and ideas on these pillars?

Create the Action Plan

Based on the discussion, choose one or two of the pillars you would like to focus on this year and write them below.

Worksheet

Pillar #1 _____

- List 1-2 projects (*planned infrastructure improvements, activities, events, or engagements)* that we could do to strengthen this pillar.

For each project, answer the following questions:
- What would be different in our neighborhoods if we were successful in this pillar?

- How will we know if we were successful?

- Who else (neighbors, local businesses, community partners) would be interested in supporting us or being involved in this goal?

- What resources (people, supplies, venues, communications tools, etc.) do we need to implement these ideas?

    o Which of these are funded under Safe Neighborhoods guidelines?

    o Which will need additional funding or in-kind support?

Pillar #2 _____

- List 1-2 projects (*planned infrastructure improvements, activities, events, or engagements)* that we could do to strengthen this pillar.

For each project, answer the following questions:
- What would be different in our neighborhoods if we were successful in this pillar?

- How will we know if we were successful?

- Who else (neighbors, local businesses, community partners) would be interested in supporting us or being involved in this goal?

- What resources (people, supplies, venues, communications tools, etc.) do we need to implement these ideas?

    o Which of these are funded under Safe Neighborhoods guidelines?

    o Which will need additional funding or in-kind support?

Safe Neighborhoods Project Application

Pillar and Goal: _____

Name of event, activity, or engagement: _____

Who in the Safe Neighborhoods Association is willing to work on this goal?

What talents or skills will they contribute?

What skills or resources do we need that are not listed above?

Which neighbors or community organizations have these resources that we could partner with?

Align the action plan with SMART Goals. For more information, see Page 9 in the *Organizational Planning Guide*.

What are the first two action steps to be taken? (SPECIFIC)

    1.

    2.

How will we know if we were successful? (MEASURABLE)

What is the tangible outcome of this project? (ACHIEVABLE)

How will success on this project support progress on the selected indicator? (RELEVANT)

What is the timeline for the goal? When will this be accomplished? (TIME-BOUND)

Please complete the project budget worksheet and submit it with your completed application.

Who will be the primary contact for this project?

Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

Project Budget Worksheet

A. Project Costs:

Materials .... $ _____

Labor .... $ _____

Delivery .... $ _____

Equipment Rental .... $ _____

Professional Services .... $ _____

Permits/Impact Fees .... $ _____

TOTAL PROJECT COST .... $ _____

B. Project Resources:

Safe Neighborhoods Funding Request .... $ _____

Other Funds .... $ _____

In-Kind Services .... $ _____

TOTAL RESOURCES (should match total project cost) .. $ _____

C. Vendor Quotes:

Business Name	Quote

*Three quotes are required when the vendor cost is $1500 or above. Projects under $1500 need one quote.

Attach original itemized quotes. All quotes must be identical in nature (materials, measurements, quantity, permit fees, etc.). Contractor quotes and the project budget summary should reflect all necessary permits, surveys, site plans, engineering, and impact fees required for the project. Sales tax should not be listed.

All vendor quotes must include the correct date, itemized costs, project locations, vendor contact information, and the "Bill To" address as: Orange County Neighborhoods Services Division, 450 E. South St. Ste. 332 Orlando FL 32802-1393.

Grantee Requirements Checklist

For All Programs

- Create By-laws

- Elect Executive Board members

Monthly

- Hold Executive Board meetings (minimum 9 meetings per year)

- Submit meeting minutes to Safe Neighborhoods program liaison

Quarterly

- Hold community meetings

- Submit meeting minutes to Safe Neighborhoods program liaison

Annually

- Create and approve:
  - Action Plan
  - Communication & Engagement Plan
  - Review and update Succession Plan

- Submit proposed community and organizational meeting schedule by October 1 (for fiscal year October 1-September 30)

- Complete annual Neighborhoods Review with Safe Neighborhoods program liaison

Every two years

- Review and update by-laws

- Elect officers

APPENDIX

Executive Board

The following is a brief description of the tasks and duties of the board members.

1. President – The executive board president is responsible for overseeing board and executive committee meetings, serving as ex-officio member of all sub-committees, calling special meetings if necessary, working with the current board to recruit new board members, and periodically consulting with board members on their roles and helping them assess their performance.

2. Vice President – The vice president is responsible for attending all meetings, serving on the executive committee, carrying out special assignments as required by the board chair, understanding the responsibilities of the board chair, and being able to perform these duties in the chair's absence, participating as a vital part of the board leadership.

3. Secretary – The secretary should attend all meetings, serve on the executive committee, maintain all board records and ensure their accuracy and safety, review board minutes, assume the responsibilities of the board chair in the absence of the board chair and vice chair, provide notice of meetings of the board and/or committee when such notice is required.

4. Treasurer – The board treasurer must maintain knowledge of the organization and personal commitment to its goals and objectives, understand financial accounting, serve as financial officer of the organization, and ensure that appropriate financial reports are made to the board on a regular basis.