

### Narrative:

The Village Lansing understands the complexities involved in impacting gun violence. Our mission is focused on attacking it from every angle, through prevention, intervention and interruption, and support. We center those that are most impacted, whether that is as a victim, perpetrator, or both. Since our founding, our intervention/interruption efforts have included street outreach, one on one and group trust building, relationship building, and mentorship. Through our street outreach and trust building, we are able to build and strengthen relationships that result in mentorship. Through these processes, we are able to interrupt their current trajectory by offering mediation amongst conflicting individuals and groups, and providing tools and techniques centered on de-escalation, conflict avoidance, and conflict resolution. These supports come from individuals from the impacted communities that are uniquely qualified, respected, and trusted. This then puts us in a position to sustain regular contact with these individuals to continue building trust and stronger mentorship focused on offer individualized and pertinent resources and referrals specific to the individual and what they need to avoid violent conflicts. These Rapid Response funds were intended to support The Village Lansing's ongoing efforts to interrupt the cyclical and retaliatory shootings, to address the challenge of sustaining street outreach, and to support the need to provide additional resources to keep young people at the center of gun violence engaged in de-escalation, conflict avoidance/resolution, mediation, and mentoring efforts.

### **New Partnerships With Service Providers**

During this contract, new partnerships developed with several service providers for the purpose of creating avenues for service referrals to non-police, culturally competent, trauma-informed social worker supports for victims, witnesses, impacted families and friends and shooters. These included:

Coat of Many Colors- Offers confidential, person-centered, culturally-competent, trauma-informed counseling services. They have 21 years of experience working with grief and loss, stress, depression, anxiety, trauma, addictions and major life transitions.

The Firecracker Foundation- Provides our community with a healing-centered response to child sexual abuse, the foundation is a vibrant organization that serves as a model of what is achievable through community-based, grassroots organizing that is survivor-led, trauma-informed and focused on healing as the main priority for children, teens, and their families. Although The Village Lansing had an existing relationship with this organization, during this contract we began a new endeavor of learning the practice of Restorative Justice and Healing Circles, to ultimately be able to hold our own healing circles for our Village clients.

Nedra Canon and Associates- Specializes in working with complex trauma and problems related to racial trauma and is dedicated to providing those impacted by racial trauma, generational trauma, and survivors of sexual trauma the highest level of care. Attention is

given to cultural, racial, and sexual diversity and the issues related to them. They provide a safe environment that allows you to learn to be self-aware and mindful of destructive behaviors, feelings and thoughts.

### **New Partnerships with Providers of Mediation/Conflict Resolution Services**

We began different forms of partnership with existing members of The Village Lansing that have extensive life experience in conflict mediation and conflict resolution tools and techniques derived from their own lived experiences directly related to and relevant to the individuals currently at the center of conflicts, and at highest risk of being impacted by gun violence. During this contract they heightened and evolved their services to support our street outreach, mediation, and conflict resolution efforts to address the spike in both fatal and non-fatal shootings we were seeing.

Aaron Blankenberg (AB)- AB was born and raised in Lansing, MI, he grew up and has lived most of his life in the Churchill Downs neighborhood, known to some as “murder hills” and where many of the young adults at the center of conflict grew up and/or live. AB served 8 years in a federal penitentiary, came home, and has been coaching youth football and remaining engaged and active in the Lansing community, specifically the South side of Lansing. AB is very unique in the sense that his life experiences, time spent in prison, and his ability to remain very connected to the youth and families in Lansing while staying out of trouble with the law, have given him unmatched credibility in what many lovingly refer to as “the hood”. AB has over 40 years of time and experience navigating the neighborhoods that the young adults central to gun violence in Lansing are from. He is very well respected by young and old alike, this gives him the ability to be present across all sides of town, in all different types of situations, and dealing with many different types of people, often referred to in our city as Chief. He recently acquired a position with Everett High School as a Teen Support Staff actively working to mitigate conflict within the school. This gives him insight and is creating and strengthening relationships with the younger high-risk individuals not only within Everett, but other schools through their relationships and conflicts with Everett students that he used to heavily support The Village’s efforts through this contract and beyond.

Sheri Pruitt- Sheri is the Program Director for Angelos Gift Foundation and is pursuing her bachelors degree in Human Services. She started the Foundation in 2014 after her 17 year old son was the victim of a homicide, naming it in his honor; Angelo was her son’s nickname and he was a Gift of Life donor. Her goal is to help crime victims and their families while they maneuver through the grief process. In 2020 she partnered with The Village Lansing and Angelos Gift became one of our programs offering phases of support to those impacted by gun violence, This can be financial services, available community resources, counseling referrals, or whatever current needs are, on a case by case basis. Sheri is personally a 24/7 resource to families impacted by gun violence and at the beginning of this contract she began leading a monthly in-person grief support group, and managing an online grief support group, giving her access to, and consistent contact with those impacted by fatal shootings. She is known to many youth and young adults in our community as a mother figure and has built a high level of respect, trust, and credibility within the community and those most impacted by violence. She has her ear to the streets and throughout this contract (and beyond) has

provided mediation amongst grieving families that are at high risk for retaliatory violence, and has used her trust and credibility to refer individuals at highest risk of violent conflict to our trusted individuals doing street outreach and mentorship, and refer individuals and family members to our mental health partner (Coat of Many Colors).

### **De-escalation Supports Provided:**

The Village Lansing's street outreach efforts involve using existing relationships and trust within the impacted community, our work with prevention, intervention, and support allows us to maintain relationships and communication with an array of people that are at varying proximities to the violence that our community is experiencing. These relationships garner us access to the most crucial component of de-escalation; people. Our outreach and engagement is vast in our quest to identify, engage, and impact those at the center of conflicts. We must garner and retain the trust of those peripheral to the violence, those that are actively involved in it, and those that have been impacted by it. This is vital to the way that we uniquely use pod mapping methods in relation to violence intervention; looking at violent conflicts and the main parties, and mapping out who is at the center, who is directly involved/ closest to the center, and mapping out from there identifying all parties as we work outward on who is negatively impacting this conflict, who can have positive impact, who simply has information, and who will aid in supporting our efforts to de-escalate the conflicts that are influential to this individual. We use this same method to understand the conflicts; the number of people involved, who are involved, how/why they're involved, whether the incident was related to retaliation, and to attempt to identify who is at highest risk to be the next victim and/or perpetrator. We leverage every single network and resource that we have in these efforts and have now engaged 15 individuals consistently, we have also been able to engage many family members that have been impacted through our Angelos Gift Program (supporting those that have lost loved one to violence) in varying levels of de-escalation as the time immediately after a murder is the highest risk for retaliatory violence.

Throughout this contract we were able to confidently offer additional resources to aid in our de-escalation efforts to a core group of 15 young men at the center of the violent conflicts in Lansing; this included many fellowship sessions, the means to leave the city at crucial times, advocacy of active court cases, referrals to barrier free counseling, support to gain employment, resources once they obtained employment, the ability to incentivize their consistent engagement with us, and being a trusted means of support at any moment for anything they need to assist with avoiding violent conflicts. Through our one on one mentoring, we attempt to identify their conflict risk by talking through the many factors contributing to their proximity to violent conflicts, understanding those factors, and providing tools that are specific to them to minimize the affects of said factors. This can mean the way that they are approaching social media, offering different perspectives and ways to think about the conflict, offering alternative decisions and actions, and offering discussion around the realities of the current trajectory and it's potential outcomes as it relates to their happiness, families, job, freedom, and life. We also held weekly group fellowship sessions in an effort to change the way they are approaching conflict. We focused on conflict avoidance and conflict resolution tactics, we allow them to express their views free from judgment or

criticism, and seek to allow everyone to contribute to acceptable solutions to avoid violent conflict.

We consistently have parents/family members contacts us regarding a family member that they are concerned is at risk for engaging in or being a victim of gun violence. Through our community engagement and outreach our name is known as the organization that deals specifically with these issues. When we are apprised of potential conflicts arising we immediately began our pod mapping to identify those we can engage outside of whoever contacted us, we then make phone contact with as many parties as possible to gauge interest in de-escalation and to gather information on the conflict, the severity, and possible solutions to resolution. We then offer in person mediation that can start with each individual/family separately, and then bringing them together when all parties are ready. This is often with those engaging in beefs that are in the early stages; on social media, via text/messenger apps, word of mouth, etc. We aim to interrupt this trajectory by engaging them discussion on how they have ended up here (often they were previously friends/grew up together/families know each other/etc.), we then discuss realities of where this may end up and what that means for them.

Through our supports of families that have lost loved ones to violence, we are often in consistent communication with them at a high risk time.

### **Outreach and Engagement Efforts:**

Our resource center is available as a drop in site for individuals on an on-call basis, the goal is to be available consistently for each individual that we have created a mentorship relationship with to meet up and talk through any current issues, needs, and most importantly; a time for them to relax, eat, and have some safe, supportive, stress free time to relax in. We also hold weekly group sessions on different days which allows for those that are consistently with each other, to come together for fellowship. Throughout this contract we also held several “family dinners” with different groups that had been consistently engaging with us, using the de-escalation tools they were learning, and staying out of trouble, at a restaurant of their choice. We held a Know Your Rights Workshop, attended 4 community leader meetings discussing violence solutions, held an employment resource workshop with Capital Area Michigan Works, an Employment Resource Day with several large local employers, tabled a Lansing School District enrollment event, began our monthly grief support group, held a discussion with parents of young men recently killed by gunfire, and began working with the Lansing School District Equity Steering Committee. We promoted our intervention/interruption efforts at every event attended, held, and at every meeting we held or attended. We used social media, our website, flyers, email, and word of mouth to promote our supports.

### **Metrics Under This Contract:**

- We contacted at least 67 youth and young adults through these outreach efforts. This was through our core group of individuals with an existing relationship with The Village, our

2a21 program, our Chess Club, our Know Your Rights Workshop, and our Employment Workshop and Resource Day.

- 96 individual sessions were held with youth/young adults. This was achieved through a combination of in person and FaceTime sessions.
- 20 group sessions were held with youth/young adults.
- At least 50 other individuals were engaged; this includes parents, siblings, and friends of those impacted by gun violence through our grief support group and discussion with families of those impacted by gun violence, community and faith leaders, the principals and several coaches and teachers employed at Sexton, Everett, and Eastern, city and state elected officials, and many concerned community members.
- 32 referrals were made to community services, this included counseling, Capital Area Community Services for rent and utilities assistance, and Ingham County Health Department for insurance support.
- Knowing how many conflicts were mediated is extremely difficult to truly track. We were engaged in efforts to mitigate tension between parties that parents had concern of it becoming violent on 2 occasions. We were able to engage different sides of an ongoing conflict on 3 occasions to ease the high risk of retaliatory conflicts. Countless conversations with individuals at the center of conflicts are had and are ongoing, it is a 24/7 struggle to continue to engage these at-risk individuals and continue to offer de-escalation tools. Because we are dealing with all layers involved, victims, perpetrators, family/friends of both, there are many conversations and engagement efforts that happen all the time.
- 99 de-escalation supports were provided to those at the center of armed conflicts, this included our individual sessions, group fellowship sessions/events, and 3 relocations (2 temporary, 1 permanent). We also provided support (gas cards to individuals or family members) to support leaving the city for a night or a weekend to help ease tensions and support de-escalation.

#### Highlight of Successes:

During this contract, we had an individual that we were working with; 22 year old Black male, victim of an unsolved shooting last year and was in an intense retaliatory mindset when we begin actively working with him. He began attending our weekly group sessions and committed to consistent individual touch base contacts with Mike. During this contract we were able to become a trusted support system for him, refer him to a therapist after he admitted that he may have PTSD, assist him with preparing to find employment, provide gas cards for interviews, and the ultimately for him to be able to get to work when he started a new job, purchase

the necessary items he needed for this job, and help him to pay for half of his move-in costs for a new apartment outside of the area he was in that was at the center of violent conflicts, and a source of identified danger and stress for him. He is still actively engaged with The Village, employed, not incarcerated, and alive.

We also had a parent contact us regarding their son and another young man (both in high school) concerned because their “beef” had escalated to threats of violence on social media and through text. We were able to use our network to contact the other parents and all parties agreed to an in person meeting. We were able to talk with the parents separately, the young men separately, then together and get to the bottom of what started the conflict and what was escalating it. The young men were once friends and the discussion surrounded around the realities and consequences of what was being said between them online. They both began to realize and admit that it had gone to far, they just didn’t know how to stop it. We made some agreements around social media and text communications, and around what they would do if they felt like they were headed towards conflict again. They and their families know that they have access to The Village at any time and currently they haven’t had any further conflicts.

Another success that is very unique in being that it is inherently sad and trauma filled, is that through our street outreach efforts, along with our prevention and support efforts, many families that have lost sons to gun violence are in relationship with Village members. We are able to de-escalate tensions surrounding retaliation, refer them to support services, offer our support services, and they actively offer crucial information about many of the conflicts that only those directly impacted could. They have unfortunately through their own tragedies and losses become advocates for interrupting the violence, and dedicated to supporting our efforts in intervening.

### Description of Challenges:

One of the major challenges we encountered specifically during this contract is the amount of time that it takes to gain trust and build relationships, before we get to a point of finding out what resources and supports are specifically needed for each individual that we are working with to interrupt their proximity to the violent conflicts. Another major challenge was the difficulties that surround offering mental health supports. Aside from the inherent stigma that seeking support for mental health issues carries in the Black and brown communities, there is also a deep rooted distrust that is carried for anything that is perceived to be a part of the “system”. A system that many from the communities that we serve believe is not designed or set up for us, feel very judged by, and/or have been failed by. These same barriers make it difficult to bring in “professionals” that deal with de-escalation. In fact, a consistent challenge for us is bringing in *anyone* that is perceived to not be a trusted individual in our communities, anyone that they don’t feel can be trusted with information pertaining to the conflicts that they are at the center of, or that could be perceived to being even remotely close to or related to law enforcement. Although this is something that The Village Lansing ultimately succeeds with at varying levels, due to the time constraints of this contract being a roughly 3 month snapshot of our work, the number of referrals, and types of referrals are not as high as they are currently.

## Detailed Financial Report:

Final Report to the County of Ingham		
Submitted by The Village Lansing		
PROECT EXPENSE REPORT: July 1, 2021--September 30, 2021		
EXPENSES	Total Budgeted Expenses	Actual Expenses
<b>Personnel</b>		
Michael Lynn Jr.- Program Leader (340 hours at \$27.17/hour)		\$9,238
Erica Lynn- Executive Director (60 hours at \$27.17/hour)		\$1,630
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>\$10,868</b>	<b>\$10,868</b>
<b>Subcontractors</b>		
Aaron Blankenberg- Street Outreach Support		1000
Sheri Pruitt- Program Leader		1000
<b>Total Subcontractors</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Nonpersonnel</b>		
Fellowship Sessions/Events (food/refreshments)		\$661.63
Relocation Supports		2146.50
Outreach/financial support to impacted community (funeral costs, etc.)		1880.12
Promotion; printing costs, flyers, banners, Facebook advertising		405.97
Refreshments for community meetings		38
<b>Total Nonpersonnel</b>	<b>\$5,132</b>	<b>\$5,132</b>