

Shared Principles of Agreement — Public Safety Leadership Convening

Introduction

On March 4, 2026, leaders from federal, state, and local law enforcement; national law enforcement labor organizations; prosecutors' offices; and state and local governments convened for a facilitated, solutions-focused discussion about the future of intergovernmental public safety cooperation.

Participants recognized that immigration enforcement is a legitimate federal responsibility and an important component of the nation's public-safety framework. At the same time, they noted that the manner in which enforcement activities are conducted, particularly with respect to deconfliction, operational tactics, communication with partners, and awareness of community

impacts, can affect officer safety, public trust, and the effectiveness of joint operations.

The purpose of the convening was not to question federal authority or oppose enforcement activities. Rather, participants sought to identify practical and principled ways to improve cooperation in a rapidly evolving environment; ensure constitutional, predictable, and safe operations across all levels of government; and reduce avoidable operational conflict. Although participants represented a wide range of jurisdictions, missions, and perspectives, the discussion revealed substantial common ground. Participants expressed a shared commitment to strengthening relationships, clarifying expectations, and working together to enhance community safety.

A central theme emerging from the discussion was the importance of renewing and reinforcing working relationships and expectations among federal, state, and local partners. Participants observed that communication and coordination have faced challenges in recent years and that several recent high-profile immigration operations have highlighted opportunities to improve how agencies coordinate and support one another.

The principles outlined below reflect areas of broad agreement identified during the convening and are intended to serve as a constructive foundation for continued dialogue, collaboration, and shared problem-solving.



POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM



Foundational Principle: Refocus Relationships and Expectations

Participants agreed that it is vital that all enforcement tactics align with constitutional policing and community trust. They further agreed that strengthening and maintaining intergovernmental cooperation requires a renewed focus on relationships and shared expectations across policing, public safety, and criminal justice sectors. This should also include engaging in conversations with elected officials, community partners, and the public. This is not a one-time adjustment but an ongoing commitment to restore reliable operational communication; clarify and respect roles, authorities, and limitations; and ensure that enforcement tactics align with constitutional policing and community trust.

This refocusing acknowledges that while some partnerships remain strong, others require immediate attention to rebuild the predictability, mutual understanding, and confidence necessary for effective joint operations.

PRINCIPLE 1: COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, AND COLLABORATION

Consistent, transparent communication is the single most important factor in restoring effective intergovernmental cooperation. In order to achieve this desired flow of communication, all parties must understand and agree that communication must flow in both directions equally. Participants described the current environment as one in which the absence of early notification, clear expectations, and consistent federal engagement has led to operational confusion, strained relationships, and unnecessary risk. Local agencies frequently learn about federal operations in their community only after they begin or when they are asked to provide protection or logistical support with limited briefing.

In many jurisdictions, particularly small and rural ones, local agencies lack personnel dedicated to federal liaison roles and the staffing capacity to absorb sudden federal operations,

leaving them unprepared to answer media inquiries or community questions. Early notification and predictable operational planning are therefore essential to avoid overwhelming already-thin staffing models.

Additionally, sudden or unexplained enforcement actions can erode community trust, discouraging victims and witnesses from reporting crimes or accessing services, which could contribute to violent offenders remaining at large. The group agreed that there is an urgent need to reframe communication practices, including routine planning, deconfliction, and shared operational understanding.

Federal, state, and local partners are interdependent; each brings tools, expertise, authorities, and perspectives that are unique to their specific roles. When these components operate in silos, confusion and duplication follow. While recognizing that not all situations allow for advance notice or coordination in exigent circumstances, when transparent and frequent communication occurs on the ground, prior to and throughout critical incidents, collaboration strengthens, outcomes improve, and officers and communities are safer.

PRINCIPLE 2: OFFICER AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Officer safety and community safety are inseparable. When operations occur without coordination or deconfliction, there is a risk of inadvertent and potentially dangerous conflict between law enforcement officials from differing agencies, especially in complex, multi-agency environments. Federal and local agencies bring different training backgrounds, particularly in areas such as de-escalation, crowd management, and community engagement. Without aligned expectations and shared protocols, inconsistent tactics can escalate tensions and create an unsafe environment for both officers and residents. Policies that broadly prohibit interagency

communication or collaboration across levels of government further undermine these efforts, sacrificing both community and officer safety by preventing the very coordination required to avoid harm. Participants also stressed that officers must always be able to respond when fellow officers are in danger and that no governing body should impose restrictions that prevent agencies from providing immediate assistance in those critical moments. Officers also face heightened stress when public backlash to controversial actions by federal or local agencies falls on those men and women working on the street. Community trust is a protective factor. When people feel safe engaging with the police, officers gain allies, reporting improves, and crime becomes easier to prevent and solve. Sustaining this trust requires joint planning, accountable and constitutional tactics, and a shared commitment to safeguarding human dignity.

PRINCIPLE 3: TARGETING THOSE WHO COMMIT VIOLENT AND OTHER SERIOUS OFFENSES

All organizations were strongly aligned around the need to focus enforcement efforts on violent criminals, repeat offenders, and identifiable threats to public safety. While immigration enforcement is a legitimate federal responsibility, broad statistic-driven operations are counterproductive and divert resources, undermine trust, and can result in the apprehension of individuals who pose no threat to public safety. Agencies should concentrate on detaining individuals who unlawfully re-entered the country after being previously removed, individuals who have committed serious crimes, and people presenting clear threats to national security and public safety. Participants agreed that coordinating enforcement through jails can reduce the need for street-level operations that increase risk to officers, community members, and bystanders. Integrated intelligence, case coordination, and appropriate charging processes help ensure serious

offenders face consistent consequences. Participants also underscored that district attorneys and prosecutors play a critical role in this process and that law enforcement cannot be the only entity working to address violent crime; consistent charging decisions and follow-through by prosecutors are essential to ensuring that violent and other serious offenders face meaningful consequences. Centering enforcement on violent criminals, rather than collateral populations, offers a path to safer communities, more efficient resource use, and improved legitimacy across all levels of government.

PRINCIPLE 4: TONING DOWN THE RHETORIC

Harmful and overly political rhetoric has become a destabilizing force that fuels mistrust, heightens polarization, and complicates collaboration. Responsible, measured communication is a core public safety function. When rhetoric mischaracterizes officers or inflames fears within immigrant communities, cooperation declines and misinformation spreads; officers also face increased hostility and emotional strain. Conversely, rhetoric that dismisses concerns about unethical tactics

or community impact erodes legitimacy and reinforces perceptions that policing lacks transparency and accountability. Associations, community leaders, and all government partners should model factual, apolitical communication that centers constitutional principles, community well-being, and a shared responsibility for creating public safety. Coordinated, accurate messaging helps correct misinformation, reduce community anxiety, and create space for pragmatic solutions.

Shared Principles of Agreement

Participants expressed strong alignment around the following practices:

- Recognizing the public safety benefit, value, and legitimacy of properly coordinated federal immigration enforcement operations.
- Refocusing operational relationships and expectations, where needed.
- Preventing the risk of inadvertent and potentially dangerous conflict between law enforcement officials from differing agencies and enhancing community safety through clear incident leadership and interoperable communications.
- Prioritizing the apprehension of violent and other serious offenders and national security threats while minimizing collateral impacts.
- Treating community trust and human rights as operational requirements.
- Committing to cross-training, supervision, and transparent processes for investigating allegations of misconduct and/or law enforcement-involved critical incidents.
- Communicating consistently to reduce polarization and confusion.
- Promoting responsible, fact-based communication grounded in accurate, verified information to support officer and public safety, strengthen credibility, counter misinformation, and build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.