

Module 05

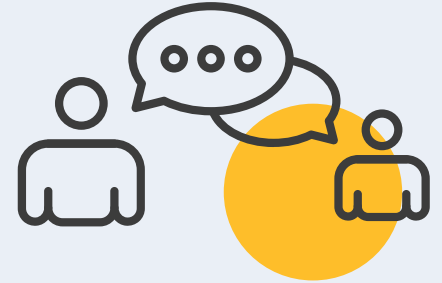
Coordinating with External Public and Community Partners

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Coordinating with External Public and Community Partners

Community organizations, nonprofits, and resident associations can be great allies in achieving code compliance.



These organizations offer insights on how to effectively engage owners and residents, can provide additional capacity to support enforcement efforts, and can offer critical knowledge about historical and cultural dynamics within a neighborhood. Strengthening relationships with these partners is essential to crafting an approach to compliance that is effective, equitable, and less likely to cause unintended harm like displacement.

MODULE OVERVIEW

GOAL	Inspectors know which public, nonprofit, and community partners also deal with problem properties and can appropriately involve them in enforcement decisions/actions; inspectors understand important historic and current neighborhood context to make informed equity-focused decisions
AUDIENCE	Code enforcement inspectors and staff
TRAINING STAFF	Designated external partners; Code Enforcement leadership
TIMING	At onboarding (60 minutes) and at a refresher course every two years for existing inspectors (60 minutes, could be done alongside onboarding); periodic trainings on communication process/protocol updates as needed
TOPICS	Key partners (tailored to inspectors' geographic location, if applicable); directions for how to contact and coordinate efforts to address problem properties; important historic and current neighborhood context
MATERIALS	List of other governmental and community partners that includes contact information and directions for how and when to contact

Key Training Components

1 Identify Key External Partners

Examples of potential partners could include:

- Community Development Corporations, especially those CDCs that engage in code enforcement
- Cuyahoga County Land Bank
- Cuyahoga County
- Vacant and Abandoned Property Action Council
- Tenant advocacy organizations
- Senior advocacy organizations
- Housing court specialists

2 Establish a Clear Communication Process

Work with the identified departments to systematize coordination:

- **Designate Contacts:** Identify appropriate points of contact at each department and clarify when inspectors should contact them.
- **Define Roles:** Determine whether any inspector can reach out or if only a senior leader should coordinate communication.

3 Training and Knowledge-Sharing

Partner Presentation to Inspectors: Ask partner entities to provide an overview of their missions, how they interact with the types of properties and owners inspectors frequently encounter, and key programs and services they offer that could help inspectors achieve compliance.

Coordination: Discuss current and future opportunities to interact with Code Enforcement and opportunities to coordinate services and funding to meet shared goals.

Onboarding Materials: Ensure new hires receive training on these partner organizations during onboarding.

4 Understand Neighborhood and Historical Context

Prioritize partners that can provide critical context about neighborhoods. Inspectors often work in neighborhoods that have experienced economic hardship and disinvestment, the roots of which can be traced back to historic laws and policies based on race. Helping inspectors understand how history has shaped the neighborhoods where they work, and how those dynamics play out today, is critical to finding appropriate code enforcement strategies that help residents achieve compliance. Understanding neighborhood context includes:

- Neighborhood changes over time (e.g., racial, demographic, and market shifts)
- History of local policies and laws that have intentionally and unintentionally segregated, discriminated against, or otherwise targeted disinvestment in communities of color, and how these policies and laws have shaped Cleveland neighborhoods today
- Current neighborhood needs as presented by neighborhood association or resident representative, such as Concerned Citizens



Field Spotlight: Syracuse, New York

In 2020, the City of Syracuse launched a program to fund positions within certain neighborhood nonprofits to serve as part-time Community Ambassadors. Ambassadors help educate community and neighborhood partners on how to report code violations and methods to bring properties into compliance. This program helps City officials and Code Enforcement leadership build relationships with various neighborhoods and constituencies. Ambassadors could potentially train inspectors on neighborhood history and cultural dynamics.

Additional Resources

- [Webinar: Strengthening Code Enforcement and Community Connections Featuring the City of Syracuse' Ambassador Program](#), SCEMA
- [Community Ambassadors Program](#), City of Syracuse
- [Residents Code Academy](#), City of Dallas

Implementation Steps

Short Term

1. Contact key CDC or VAPAC leaders, such as Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, to brainstorm how they or their neighborhood partners could present to Code Enforcement on what they do, how they could support code enforcement work, and when and how to engage them.

Long Term

1. Establish trainings every two months featuring a new neighborhood partner to educate appropriate Housing Bureau or other staff on the neighborhood partner's operations, the cultural history of a particular neighborhood, and opportunities to partner to address vacant property issues.
2. Develop a list of community and neighborhood partners with information on which areas or populations they serve and appropriate process for making referrals or connecting owners with relevant partners.

