



SAFER PLACES PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Thinking about applying for a Safer Places grant? This fact sheet is here to help you write a strong application. It explains the **key ideas behind good crime prevention** in plain, everyday language. You don't need to be an expert. You just need to understand *why* your project will make your community safer, so you can explain it clearly in your application.

What's inside:

- **The four main approaches** to preventing crime, with simple examples of each.
- **How each one works** the "mechanisms" that make a project effective.
- **The principles that apply to every approach**, whichever one you choose.
- **A worked example** showing how it all comes together in a real application.

How to use it:

1. **Read it before you start writing.** It will help you spot which approach best fits the problem you've identified.
2. **Pick the approach (or two) that matches your project.** Most strong projects use one or two -- you don't need all four.
3. **Use it to strengthen your "Evidence" section.** This is where the Advisory Group looks for a clear reason your project will work, so lean on these ideas to explain your thinking.
4. **Keep it simple.** Write the way you'd explain your project to a neighbour.

Good luck – we're looking forward to reading your application!

The four main crime prevention approaches

Most crime prevention approaches belong to one of four broad families. They complement one another, since each addresses a different kind of cause, and strong projects may draw on two of them at once. The question your application needs to answer is which of them is doing the real work in your project.

1. Situational crime prevention

A crime needs three things to come together at the same time and place: someone willing to offend, a target worth taking, and no one around to stop them. Situational prevention assumes someone wants to offend. Instead of changing that, it helps remove the chance to do it. The key idea is simple: crime is often a choice, and that choice depends on the situation. So, if you change the situation, you can change the choice.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is the most familiar term for this approach. It works through natural surveillance (*can people be seen?*), access control (*who can get in?*), territorial reinforcement (*is it obvious whose space this is?*), maintenance (*does anyone appear to care for it?*) and activity support (*is the space actually being used?*).





Situational projects operate through five mechanisms. Identifying which of them your project relies on will be useful for your application.

Mechanism	What it changes	Examples
Increase the effort	Makes the act physically harder	Locks, bollards, fencing, controlled access, removing climbing points, target hardening
Increase the risk	Makes it more likely someone is seen	Lighting, clear sightlines, CCTV, place managers, natural surveillance from windows and footpaths
Reduce the reward	Makes the payoff smaller	Rapid graffiti removal, property marking, removing or concealing targets
Reduce provocation	Removes the triggers for conflict	Managing crowding and queuing, seating, reducing frustration at pinch points, noise and alcohol management
Remove excuses	Makes rules and expectations clear	Signage, clear boundaries between public and private space, codes of conduct, prompts to conscience.

Strengths: Fast to implement, easier to measure, and works well for problems at a specific location. **Limits:** it leaves the underlying reasons for offending untouched and is less likely to work where crime isn't opportunistic or tied to a location.

2. Social and community crime prevention

Crime is usually lower in places where neighbours know each other, use their public spaces, and are ready to speak up when something is wrong. Experts call this mix of community spirit and willingness to step in 'collective efficacy'. It is one of the strongest signs of how much crime an area will have – even after you allow for things like income and population.

A related idea explains why the appearance of a place matters so much. Visible neglect, whether broken windows, graffiti, dumped rubbish or overgrown landscaping, signals to everyone who passes that nobody is paying attention. That signal reduces the community's willingness to use and look after the space, which in turn reduces the informal surveillance the space benefits from. Restoring a place sends the signal in the opposite direction.

Typical projects to fix this include placemaking and street activation, community events, neighbourhood networks, volunteer programs, shared gardens, and lighting or maintenance work framed as an act of care instead of control.

Strengths: Likely to be long-lasting, generates local ownership, and improves perceptions of safety alongside actual crime. **Limits:** effects emerge slowly, are harder to measure, and depend on genuine community participation, including in how the project is designed.

3. Developmental and early intervention

Whether someone offends can be influenced by the balance of two things as they grow up. Risk factors can push them towards crime – like dropping out of school, isolation, family stress, unstable housing and unmet needs. Protective factors can pull them away from offending – like a trusted adult, a sense of belonging, purpose, cultural identity, and a job. This crime prevention approach targets the path into crime, rather than places or opportunities. It usually starts well before any crime has happened.





Typical interventions include mentoring, youth diversion, connection to sport, culture, education or employment, family support, and programs that offer young people a role and a reason to be somewhere.

Strengths: Addresses causes rather than symptoms when systems change is included, and its benefits reach well beyond crime. **Limits:** outcomes are longer term and will rarely become visible within a grant period, so measurement needs to focus on movement in the protective factors themselves rather than on counts of crime.

4. Criminal justice and regulatory approaches

Criminal justice responses to crime that are consistent, visible and fair deter offending and reassure the community. Evidence suggests that the likelihood of being caught deters offenders more than the punishment. At the same time, the perceived fairness of a response has a strong bearing on whether a community is prepared to cooperate with authorities.

In a grants context, typical ways to increase the likelihood offenders will be caught include strengthening reporting pathways, incident dashboards, safety apps, regulatory compliance activity, coordination with police, and licensing or place-management conditions.

Strengths: Valuable for visibility, coordination and community reassurance. **Limits:** Many of these levers sit outside the control of community groups, and heavy-handed approaches risk eroding the trust on which community-based prevention depends.

Principles that apply to every approach

- **Crime concentrates.** A small number of places, times, victims and offenders account for most of the crime in any area. Prevention effort spread lightly across a whole suburb is less likely to work, so it is worth identifying the hot spot and concentrating your resources there.
- **Fear of crime and crime itself may be different problems.** A place can be statistically safe while still feeling unsafe. Both are valid issues that can be tackled through these grants, but they may call for different solutions, different evidence and different measures. Your application should indicate how you hope to address either or both.
- **Fix the cause, not just the symptom.** Better lighting won't help much if the real issue is people feeling disconnected and a mentoring program won't be effective if the problem is a property that's easy and attractive to break into. So, take a moment to work out what's really driving the problem before you choose your solution.
Think about whether crime might just move – but don't assume it will. Sometimes crime shifts to a nearby spot, a different time of day, or a new method. The good news? Research shows that when this happens at all, it's usually only partial – and in many cases, it doesn't happen at all. So, plan for it, but don't let it hold you back.
- **Watch for the ripple effect (it's often a bonus!).** Improvements have a habit of spilling over into the surrounding area, because would-be offenders tend to think the changes reach further than they actually do. If you measure the nearby area as well as your project site, you'll have an even stronger story to tell.
- **Design it with the people it's for, not just for them.** When you genuinely design the solution *together*, you get a better result – and people are far more likely to use it, care for it, and keep it going.
- **Show the difference you made, as well as the steps to achieve this.** Counting the number of lights you installed tells us where the money went. But a drop in reported incidents – and neighbours





happily using the laneway after dark again – tells us it actually worked. That's the story we love to see.

- **Be creative and evidence-based.** Strong applications take an approach that's known to work and apply it in a fresh way: a new setting, a new partnership, or a new way of delivering it. Creativity is a real plus – just make sure there's a clear reason behind it, so your great idea rests on solid ground.

Putting it together in your application

The table below offers a starting point for matching your problem to an approach. Having identified it, set out your reasoning in the form of a theory of change.

If your problem is...	The likely principle is...	Because the mechanism is...
Break-ins in an unlit, unwatched car park	Situational / CPTED	Increasing the risk of being seen
A park few use, so few watch it	Social / community	Building informal social control through use
Young people with nothing to do and nowhere to go	Developmental/early intervention	Strengthening protective factors
A hotspot where rules are unclear or unenforced	Criminal justice / regulatory	Certainty and visibility of response
A place that is safe but feels unsafe	Both situational and social	Changing cues that signal disorder or neglect

In the “How will this project make people feel safer?” field, complete the following sentence:

Because [problem] is driven by [cause], our project will [activity], which will [mechanism], leading to [outcome]. This approach is supported by [evidence].

Worked example:

Because car break-ins near our community centre happen mostly after dark in a poorly lit and unsupervised street, our project will install external lighting out the front of the centre and adjust screening vegetation, which will increase the risk of offenders being seen and improve natural surveillance from the centre, leading to fewer opportunistic break-ins and a greater willingness among locals to attend courses and programs after dark. Improved lighting has been found to reduce crime across a range of settings, and it appears to work by signalling that a place is cared for and by improving visibility at night.

Where to go for more detail

- [Community Crime Prevention Victoria](#), for fact sheets on CPTED, lighting, placemaking and risk and protective factors
- [Crime Statistics Agency Victoria](#), for data down to local government area and postcode level
- [Australian Institute of Criminology](#), for evidence on effective local crime prevention
- [Crime Reduction Toolkit](#), College of Policing (UK), for interventions rated by strength of evidence
- Your own local insight. Safety audits, surveys, consultation and lived experience all count as evidence where they are gathered systematically and reported honestly.

