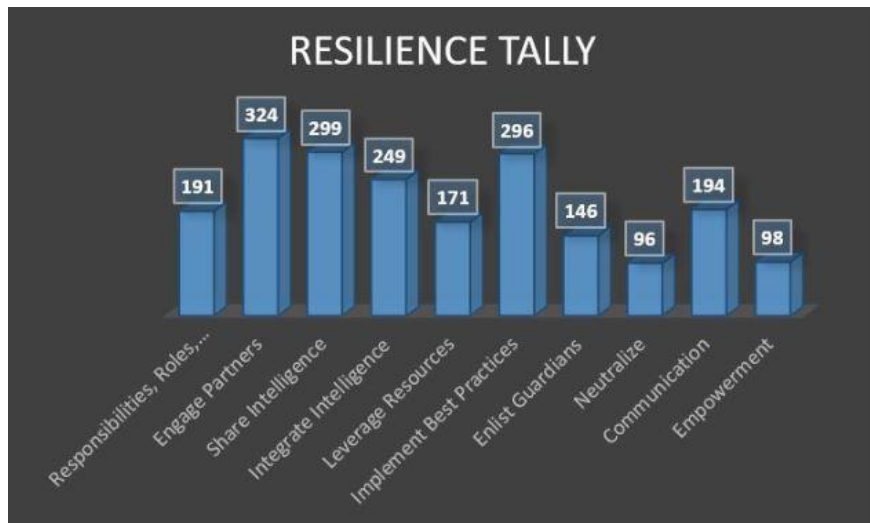


## Pillar 2: Engage Partners

### About:

The second pillar of the R.E.S.I.L.I.E.N.C.E. model is “Engage Partners.” This focuses on creating relationships with the citizens, congregation, and communities (C3) as well as engaging all members, including existing partners, stakeholders, and federal organizations. The goal is to build trust among all affected individuals and unify them against the common enemy – perpetrators of violent extremism. According to analysis of the 31 conducted interviews, this is an important aspect of protecting Houses of Worship. Of the 10 pillars, “Engage Partners” has the highest count at 324 mentions (as shown in the graph below). “Engaging Partners” is the most important pillar in the R.E.S.I.L.I.E.N.C.E. model, and it should be followed through immediately.



### Importance:

“Engaging Partners” is highly important in building resilience within Houses of Worship as well as the surrounding community. Not only was it mentioned a total of 324 times in 31 interviews, but it was stressed and emphasized by multiple panelists and speakers during the “Building Resilience in the New Threat Paradigm” conference. As one speaker said, by creating good relationships with good people, it makes it easier so that in bad times, you can pick up the phone and call for help. There are many members of the community and organizations that are willing to provide assistance, you just have to reach out and build bridges with them.

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*“Relationship-building makes for stronger communities, it makes for safer communities.”*

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Trust and partnerships are critical when handling an incident of violence extremism, both during the event as well as the aftermath. Before an incident can occur, it is important to build bridges

with local law enforcement as well as within the community. This is for protection and security during occasions such as prayer services, Sunday church (or other religious schooling), and get-togethers. During an incident, partnerships play a vital part in contacting first responders for help. This can ensure timeliness in a situation.

Having others to depend on is also very important during the aftermath of an incident. A few panelists from the “Building Resilience” conference stated that the hardest part of dealing with an act of violent extremism was not the act itself, but the aftermath. This is because it is difficult to change the mindsets of the congregation and practice security. Many congregants also needed psychological counseling in order to cope. “Engaging Partners” could help in providing these services as well as preparing the mindset of the congregation before an incident may occur.

Pillar 2 is important for the following reasons:

1. Ensuring protection and security before an incident has the chance to occur.
2. Having partners such as first responders arrive in a timely manner in the event of an incident.
3. Being able to depend on a network to cope and provide services for healing after an incident occurs.

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*“There’s real value in networking with other faiths and obviously they do have different religious beliefs, but in terms of security issues, and how to protect your houses of worship, there are a lot of commonalities that I think they can really profit from talking to each other about.”*

- John Farmer

### **Recommendations:**

To “Engage Partners,” you should optimize any existing partnerships, expand on these partnerships both internally and externally, and join or form a coalition or faith-based counsel. By doing the following, relationships can be established and strengthened so that in the event of an act of violent extremism, the community will have the proper resources they need.

#### **Optimize Existing Partnerships**

If you already have existing partnerships, whether it be internal or external to your community, you are already on the right track. Existing partnerships within a House of Worship may include full-time staff, volunteers within the community, ushers, and even the head of the congregation. Existing partnerships outside a House of Worship may include law enforcement and other first responders. It is important to solidify these existing partnerships and create lasting bonds. Do so by having regular get-togethers, such as coffee or luncheons, or even chatting on

the phone. By optimizing these relationships, members of the community will get to know each other more and trust is built.

## **Expand Partnerships Internally**

If you do not already have existing partnerships, it is highly recommended that you start building them. Expanding partnerships internally, for example, within the congregation, will create a more resilient community to withstand acts of violent extremism. You can build partnerships with retired law enforcement members and any cyber experts among the parishioners. They will be more than willing to protect their place of worship. They can provide their expertise on keeping the community safe and possibly reach out to their contacts for help. It is important to create bonds within the local community because each member will be able to rely on each other should an incident arise. Remember that you are not in this alone.

## **Expand Partnerships Externally – Locally, Federally, and Internationally**

It is also important to expand partnerships externally, from local to state and to federal levels; from DHS to EMS and even abroad. While doing so, also ensure that all partnerships know of your emergency plans. Meet with them regularly to discuss safety and security issues, such as threats, crime, fire, safety issues.

At the local level, form pre-crisis relationships with law enforcement through events such as “coffee with a cop” or “tea with the chief.” Events like these would create trust within the community, and congregants will learn to rely on local police. Another recommendation would be to have a liaison between the religious communities and the police, or police chaplains. They would be appointed to represent each religion and have meetings with the police to share intelligence and build relationships.



In addition to local police, an important partnership to have would be with your local First Responders, such as EMS. Invite them to go over your assessments, plans, and protocols. Doing so would give them a sense of how to best respond in the event of an incident.



Meet with partners nationally as well as internationally. It is important to learn what others are doing in terms of keeping their Houses of Worship safe and secure. Engaging with national partners such as DHS would help with the funding in security. There are many resources available to help in securing Houses of Worship against targeted violence, just reach out and ask. Engaging with international

partners would help not only in sharing information about rising threats, but also in creating a sense of unity against the common enemy.

- While it is important to create partnerships with external organizations, make sure that these institutional relationships are not personal. Communities should have a folder that they can pull out to know who they should contact. If the partnerships were personal and something happened between faith-based leadership and the organizational leadership, it would be harder to call for help. By making these relationships professional, it would be easier for other members of the community to take out a phone and call.

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*“Be a part of your communities. Step out. Teach your kids. We’re all in this together and when we’re all in this together, you have a resilient community.”*

- Deputy Secretary  
Russ Deyo

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### **Form a Coalition or Faith-based Council**

If there isn’t one already, form a coalition between partners in law enforcement, schools, and religious leaders to talk about common ground and collaborate. There is a need for open dialogue to share information and train citizens. “It takes a network to beat a network.” It is important to educate them about the new threat paradigm and prepare them in the event that violent extremism occurs.

In addition to a coalition, join or create a Faith-based Council with all Houses of Worship. “An attack on one house of worship is an attack on all.” Build interfaith relationships with them and discuss safety and security. It is important to stand united against the common enemy and put any differences aside.

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*Houses of Worship “should be building relationships with those in their community. Threat’s aren’t isolated typically to one house of worship or one faith or one type of organization. And so a house of worship can’t be an island of its own, and just pray for safety and security and trust God to take care of them, they should have a responsibility on them as well, to be an active participant in their own well0being they should know organizations around them”*

- Andy Jabbour

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