

**Promise Neighborhoods:
Recommendations for a National Children's Anti-Poverty Program
Inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone®**
Revised May 18, 2009

Opportunity

Create a comprehensive childhood anti-poverty program that is based on the application of five core principles that embodies the HCZ theory of change:

1. **Achieve Neighborhood Scale:** By focusing on an entire community and blanketing it with services, HCZ works to: a) transform the physical and social environments that impact child development; and b) reach thousands of children at a scale required to change the outcomes for the entire community, not just of a few children.
2. **Build Community:** HCZ engages residents, institutions, and stakeholders including schools, faith-based institutions, health care organizations, tenant and block associations, cultural organizations and corporations, to come together to rebuild the fabric of the community to be a supportive place for children.
3. **Create a Pipeline of Programs:** HCZ employs a pipeline of accessible, linked, best practice programs and high quality schools for children and young adults from 0-23 years old, starting when parents are pregnant and finishing when children graduate from college. The pipeline is enveloped by programs that serve families and the larger community as they have crucial impacts on child development. This integrated pipeline and supports ensure that children cannot fall through the cracks at any point.
4. **Evaluate:** Program outcomes are consistently tracked and evaluated, to create a feedback loop that cycles data back to program management to improve and refine program offerings. Having evaluation in-house builds organizational capacity by keeping the intellectual capital within HCZ staff.
5. **Cultivate Organizational Culture:** HCZ focuses on developing a culture of passion, accountability, leadership, and teamwork.

Recommended Promise Neighborhoods Program Core Mission/Purpose: The Promise Neighborhoods program must provide poor children with every possible chance to succeed through the combined development of high-quality, comprehensive, coordinated, neighborhood-based programs for children, youth, young adults, and parents, combined with efforts to rebuild the fabric of the community.

Program: Over time, each designated Promise Neighborhood would create a pipeline of accessible, linked, best practice programs and high quality schools for neighborhood children and young adults, starting when parents are pregnant and finishing when children graduate from college. The pipeline should be enveloped with additional programs to support parents, families, and the larger community.

Getting Started: Each Promise Neighborhood would build the comprehensive pipeline starting from the program(s), the age group(s), and/or the geographic area in which the lead agency and any partners are already strongly established.

Eligible Places: To become a Promise Neighborhood, an applicant would have to show the proposed area has a childhood poverty rate of at least 30%, with additional indicators of childhood disadvantage, or a childhood poverty rate of at least 40%. Neighborhoods would be defined using social, economic, and geographic boundaries that need not be restricted by census tract boundaries. A minimum number of children would need to reside in the neighborhood. (HCZ started the HCZ Project in a 24 block area where 3,000 children live and now serves over 8,000 annually in the 97 block HCZ and an additional 2,000 in its programs outside this catchment area.).

Eligible Anchor Entities: To become the responsible anchor entity of a Promise Neighborhood, an entity would need to be a nonprofit, with a 501(c)(3) designation. Several organizations could apply as a partnership, but one organization would be designated as the lead and have responsibility for overall accountability and coordination. The experience of a proposed anchor entity would be evaluated based on neighborhood-related factors such as: evidence of long-term engagement in the community; evidence of vision and capacity to launch successful initiatives; and an ability to partner with organizations, corporations, and community leaders.

Leadership and Staffing: The anchor applicant and supporting organizations would have a positive track record and experience in direct service work, specifically towards combating childhood poverty.

Program Design and Structure: Applicants would clearly articulate their program goals and show how they plan to adhere to the Harlem Children's Zone five core principles of:

- 1) achieving neighborhood scale;
- 2) building community;
- 3) creating a pipeline of high-quality, coordinated, accessible programs;
- 4) evaluating programs to facilitate continuous improvement; and
- 5) cultivating an organizational culture of passion, accountability, leadership and teamwork.

Federal Leadership and Oversight: As part of the Department of Education (DOE), we recommend that the Promise Neighborhoods program have the following characteristics:

- Multifaceted and Comprehensive Approach – DOE must provide a clear identity, leadership, and ethos for the Promise Neighborhoods program by ensuring that it is as multi-faceted as the HCZ model itself. This would involve a comprehensive approach that is place-based and integrates child and youth services, early childhood programs, education, college and career preparation parent education, social work services, and community building programs.
- Accountability - Leadership for the program should report directly to the Secretary of Education to ensure that the program receives attention, does not get lost in the government bureaucracy, and has the needed flexibility not available if it is made to fit in a narrowly defined program area.
- Cross-agency Advisors – As a way to ensure a cooperative, multifaceted approach, DOE should create and request a mandate for an interagency advisory role for several other departments including the Federal Department Heads of the Departments of: Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency. This interagency group should develop the requests for proposals; as well as conduct grant review, approval, and allocation processes for implementation of the Promise Neighborhoods program.
- Access to and Coordination with Other Federal Programs – Promise Neighborhoods will need to coordinate with and access other federal programs such as: Head Start, Child and Adult Care Food Program, 21st Century Schools, Title V (after-school), National Endowment for the Arts, Workforce Investment Act, and YouthBuild USA.

These programs' resources will be needed in addition to the funds provided for participating in the Promise Neighborhoods program. A streamlined process will be required for Promise Neighborhoods to access the range of appropriate federal programs and revenue streams for a comprehensive approach.

Technical Assistance Provider(s): High quality technical assistance providers would support planning, development, implementation, and cross-site learning. There is important knowledge of promising practices and peer networks related to Promise Neighborhoods outside of government. To tap field experience and leadership, DOE should contract with an intermediary to do training, technical assistance, and evaluation.

Promise Neighborhood Grants: Federal funding for Promise Neighborhoods would be awarded in phases. First, an applicant must submit a Letter of Intent for a planning grant based on one of three categories of readiness to launch a Promise Neighborhood:

- 1) "Ready" – those organizations that have a multi-year plan that adheres to the five core principles and are ready to implement or whose operations are already adhering to the five core principles;
- 2) "Capacity Builders" – those organizations that are in advanced stages of preparing a 10-year plan that adheres to the core principles, are already providing services, but are not yet operating under the core principles, and who need to build capacity and/or need to re-align their programs and mission to meet the Promise Neighborhood principles; and
- 3) "Planners" – those organizations that need significant time to create a 10-year plan to meet the Promise Neighborhood principles, in addition to building capacity and beginning implementation.

In addition to the Letter of Intent, an applicant would submit a commitment letter from a funder(s) or partner(s) willing to provide matching resources for an approved Promise Neighborhood. Of those organizations who received a planning grant, 80 organizations would be eligible to apply for the next application phase by articulating how they would meet eligibility criteria, serve children through high-quality programs/services in its beginning stages, and provide a plan for how it would build out the pipeline of services over time to serve 65 percent of all children ages 0-23 within the geographic boundaries of the designated Promise Neighborhood (either by growing the program to provide more services to more children or expanding their service area to include more children).

Federal Funding: Promise Neighborhoods requires a commitment of long-term, sustainable funding to realize positive outcomes. DOE should determine reasonable short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes, and educate and seek support in Congress for funding over multiple years. Each local Promise Neighborhood will need to combine the resources it receives from the national program with funds from other federal programs, as well as with local and state resources, and philanthropic contributions.

The first year grant would be part of a 10-year grant award process for those in the first two categories ("ready" and "capacity builders") and it would be a six-month grant (with extensions up to 12-months) for those who are in the "planners" category. Initial grant awards would range from up to \$500,000 for "planners" to up to \$20 million for those prepared to or who are already fully implementing the Promise Neighborhoods program. Applicants in the "ready" and "capacity builders" categories would be required to have secured multi-year matching private funds of at least one-third of their federal grant award.

A federal categorical grant with a minimum 10-year commitment would include, but not be limited to support for:

- Direct programs and services to children and families
- Capacity building
- National and local evaluation systems, including building human capital within local staff
- Technical assistance and peer learning for local sites

- Information technology and database systems to develop national and local technology infrastructures, including the building, staffing, and content management of a national website and database system
- Administrative overhead for federal management and oversight.

Selection Criteria: Applicants would be selected based on criteria linked to the core principles, community needs, the potential impact of proposed programs, the breadth and comprehensiveness of the proposed programs, and the ability to provide effective pathways to post secondary education.

Continuous Improvement and Evaluation: Success of the Promise Neighborhoods program is contingent upon ongoing tracking of the program, feedback about its performance, assessment of its impact, and the ongoing use of this information over time to determine and implement needed program adjustments. Both local and national assessments would be required in order to serve the needs of each Promise Neighborhood and to examine the impact of the interplay of programs over time on children’s lives.

Research on Modeling a National Program on HCZ

For almost two years, PolicyLink and the Harlem’s Children’s Zone have conducted extensive research to examine the possible directions and components for a national Promise Neighborhoods program. This has included:

- Quantitative research and analysis of child poverty data for major U.S. cities;
- Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of poverty data for major U.S. cities;
- Modeling of potential child poverty characteristics and sizes for a Promise Neighborhoods program in major cities;
- Meetings with experts on a range of policy issues to review and discuss research;
- Interviews with service providers in poor rural communities and with rural poverty experts;
- Scan of smaller cities and rural areas to review child poverty and GIS data;
- Research on several federal programs to explore potential governance, funding, staffing, and implementation issues; and
- Review of HCZ information—practices, lessons learned, data, and history—relevant for a potential national Promise Neighborhoods program.

Based on this research, we have developed our recommendations for a national Promise Neighborhoods program.

Conclusion

The HCZ model of multifaceted, comprehensive best practice approaches for education, health, and social services for children from birth through college graduation holds the framework, the inspiration, and the principles for a new national paradigm of place-based initiatives to help poor children succeed. PolicyLink and HCZ provide this summary and stand ready to help shape the development of a National Promise Neighborhoods Program.

Contact Information

PolicyLink

Angela Glover Blackwell, Founder and CEO, ablackwell@policylink.org

Judith Bell, President, jbelle@policylink.org

Kay Fernandez Smith, Associate Director, kay@policylink.org

T: 510-663-2333; www.policylink.org

Harlem Children’s Zone

Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO, gcanada@hcz.org

Kate Shoemaker, Director of Policy, kshoemaker@hcz.org

T: 212-534-0700; www.hcz.org