

The Promise Neighborhoods Program:

A Comprehensive Approach to Expanding Opportunity for All Children

1 in 6 children in America live in poverty

\$500 billion dollars in yearly costs to the U.S. associated with childhood poverty (nearly 4 percent of GDP)

17 and 22 percent of poor children who score at or above proficient in reading and math (respectively) by the 4th grade

12.8 million school days missed annually due to asthma among the more than 4 million children with asthma

A strong and vibrant America requires children who are educated, healthy, and ready to enter the workforce. Yet, thirteen million children live in poverty and less than a fifth of poor fourth graders are proficient in reading and math. These children lack the opportunity and resources to achieve their full potential.

The challenges facing these children are tough and no quick fix exists. Multi-faceted approaches are needed so that all children have access to resources that ensure they are healthy, their families are strong, and they live in safe homes and supportive neighborhoods.

The Promise Neighborhoods Program seeks to create a comprehensive pipeline of educational and community supports to make certain that children reach their full potential. It is a crucial step in ensuring that children across urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities can become successful adults.

What is the Promise Neighborhoods Program?

Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, and building on decades of knowledge, Promise Neighborhoods is a competitive grant program focused on:

- **Improving academic success** and life outcomes for poor children
- **Creating a college-going culture** in poor neighborhoods
- **Building a continuum of academic programs** from the cradle through college to career
- **Integrating existing programs** in neighborhoods, filling gaps, and breaking down agency “silos”
- **Sustaining and “scaling up”** what works
- **Building capacity in local communities** by supporting a lead organization that collaborates with local governments and others to deliver effective programs
- **Undertaking rigorous evaluation** to measure progress towards improving the life prospects of poor children

What are the key components of the Promise Neighborhoods Program?

Some key features of the program include:

- **The Importance of Planning and Implementation.** In the first year of Promise Neighborhoods funding (FY 2010), 20 communities will receive planning grants between \$400,000-500,000 to develop a plan to create their Promise Neighborhood. Planning grantees and other communities will apply for implementation funds in FY 2011. Increased resources are needed in FY 2011 to help communities begin implementation—an essential next step in making Promise Neighborhoods a reality.
- **Leveraging Local Resources for Maximum Impact.** Promise Neighborhoods grantees have the support of the public and private sectors, which have committed matching funds for the federal grants received. Applicants are required to obtain matching funds equal to at least 50 percent of the award (unless they applied as a rural or tribal community, in which case the matching requirement is 25 percent of the grant award).
- **Diverse Communities Targeted.** Applicants can apply under one of three priorities: multiple indicators of distress including low levels of academic achievement or high poverty levels; distressed communities in rural areas; and distressed tribal communities.
- **Evidence Based, Results Focused.** Applicants for Promise Neighborhoods funding must propose strategies based on the best available evidence of improving outcomes for children and the surrounding community.
- **Eligible Entities.** Lead agencies can be either nonprofit organizations or institutions of higher education that must team up with one or more school/s in their neighborhood.

FY 2010 Planning Grants

\$10 million was made available for **20** Promise Neighborhoods planning grants.

Applications for the **20 grants** were submitted by **339 communities** representing **48 states**.

The Promise Neighborhoods Program will help poor children reach their full potential, while improving the communities in which they live. It is a key strategy for fostering national competitiveness by building the next generation of educated workers. It is one of the most important investments we can make as a nation.

We urge Congress to provide \$210 million in funding for Promise Neighborhoods in the FY 2011 budget.

Promise Neighborhoods is inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)—a unique, comprehensive approach to changing the odds for poor children by focusing holistically on outcomes. Some key results include:

- For the seventh year in a row, 100 percent of children who participated in HCZ's original Harlem Gems® pre-K program were school ready. In FY 2010 across all four of the Gems programs, 99.4 percent of children attained a school readiness classification of average or above.
- Participants in the HCZ Asthma Initiative have missed fewer days of school (6.8 percent vs. 25.7 percent) and have fewer emergency-room visits (14.8 percent vs. 45.7 percent) due to asthma. This is critically important in a neighborhood where over 30 percent of children 12 and under have asthma.
- A Harvard University evaluation of HCZ's Promise Academy Charter Schools concluded HCZ "is enormously effective at increasing the achievement of the poorest minority children. Taken at face value, the effects in middle school are enough to reverse the black-white achievement gap in mathematics and reduce it in English Language Arts. The effects in elementary school close the racial achievement gap in both subjects."
- An average of \$5,000 per year per child is spent on HCZ programming to achieve these and other results, compared to over \$200,000 per year per young person in the New York Juvenile Justice System.

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