

Promise Neighborhoods:

A Comprehensive Approach to Expanding Opportunity for All Children

A strong and vibrant America requires children who are educated, healthy, and ready to enter the workforce. Yet, 16 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.

Children facing educational, health, and safety challenges can be found in neighborhoods across the country, in cities, suburbs, rural, and tribal areas. The challenges facing these children are tough and no quick fix exists. Multifaceted 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.

Every child deserves a Promise Neighborhood.

Key Components of the Promise Neighborhoods Program

Inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone, Promise Neighborhoods are place-based efforts to wrap children in integrated, coordinated, high-quality academic, social, and health programs and supports from the cradle to college to career. Strong schools are core to every Promise Neighborhood, as is family and community engagement.

Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, some of the key features of the program include:

- The Importance of Planning and Implementation.** The U.S. Department of Education has awarded three cycles of competitive Promise Neighborhoods grants since 2010. In the first year of funding (FY 2010), 21 diverse communities received planning grants between \$400,000-\$500,000 to develop a plan to create their Promise Neighborhood. In December 2011, five communities were awarded up to \$5 million to implement their Promise Neighborhoods plan, and 15 additional communities were awarded up to \$500,000 for planning. In December 2012, another seven communities were awarded up to \$6 million for implementation and 10 communities up to \$500,000 for planning. Promise Neighborhoods was funded at \$60 million in FY 2012, a sum that was held level in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015 but was subject to a 5 percent cut as a result of sequestration. In FY 2016, Promise Neighborhoods was funded at \$73 million. Increased resources are needed in FY 2017 to meet the overwhelming interest from communities engaged in planning and implementation—an essential step in improving the educational outcomes for poor children in America.
- 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. Planning grant 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). Implementation grant applicants are required to obtain matching funds equal to at least 100 percent of the award (unless they applied as a rural or tribal community, in which case the matching requirement is 50 percent). Additionally, at least 10 percent of the matching funds must be cash or in-kind contributions from the private sector.



Some key results of the Harlem Children's Zone include:

- For the ninth year in a row, 100 percent of children who participated in HCZ's original Harlem Gems® pre-K program were school ready. In FY 2011 across all four of the Gems programs, 100 percent of children attained a school readiness classification of average or above.
- Participants in the HCZ Asthma Initiative have missed fewer days of school (9.1 percent vs 29.7 percent) and have fewer emergency-room visits (16.1 percent vs. 47.2 percent) due to asthma. This is critically important in a neighborhood where 28.9 percent of children 12 and under have asthma, compared to national averages of 5 to 7 percent.
- 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.

- **Diverse Communities Targeted.** The Department of Education carved out three separate priorities for applicants from distressed communities, including a unique priority for both rural and tribal communities.
- **Evidence-Based, Results-Focused.** Promise Neighborhoods grantees must propose strategies based on the best available evidence of improving outcomes for children and the surrounding community.
- **School Partnerships.** Lead agencies can be either nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education or Indian tribes that must team up with one or more schools in their neighborhood. At least one school must be either a persistently lowest-achieving school or a low-performing school.

The Federal Landscape for 2016

- **Funding History.** In 2010, Congress appropriated \$10 million for planning grants. In 2011, Congress tripled this appropriation to \$30 million for both planning and implementation. In 2012, Congress appropriated \$60 million for one-year planning and five-year implementation grants. For FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015, the program was level funded under the continuing resolution. In FY 2016, Congress increased the Promise Neighborhoods program's appropriation to \$73 million.
- **FY 2017 Budget Request.** President Obama requested \$128 million for Promise Neighborhoods implementation grants in the FY 2017 federal budget, signaling continued support for the program.
- **Promise Neighborhoods Legislation and ESEA.** In 2015, the Promise Neighborhoods program was incorporated into the Every Student Succeeds Act (S. 1177)—the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

About the Promise Neighborhoods Grantees

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink—and its partners, the Harlem Children's Zone and the Center for the Study of Social Policy—provide a system of support to a network of more than 60 sites (federally funded sites) to plan and implement the cradle-to-career continuum. The plans developed and implemented will highlight how Promise Neighborhoods can successfully carry out their comprehensive approaches for children by leveraging public and private sector support and coordinating the services and resources of local nonprofits, schools, health centers, universities, and foundations.

Promise Neighborhoods funding totals approximately \$280 million awarded to over 50 urban, rural, and tribal communities representing more than 700 schools across the country. They all have a commitment to focusing on great schools as central to their revitalization efforts and to creating strong systems of support for all children. Increased resources are needed now to help scale and sustain Promise Neighborhoods so that all children grow up healthy and well-educated. The children of today are the teachers, engineers, and community leaders of tomorrow. The Promise Neighborhoods program is one of the most important investments we can make as a nation.

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