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Designing the Next Generation of Federal Place-Based Policy

Insights from Past and Ongoing Programs

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The places where we live shape both our day-to-day quality of life and our prospects for upward mobility. Our nation's history of racist policies and practices has created profound inequities in place-based resources, blocked intergenerational wealth building, and prevented low-income residents and people of color from fully accessing and participating in democratic processes. Advancing racial equity and upward mobility will require a robust (meaning well-funded, comprehensive, and sustained) national commitment to reversing the legacy of segregation and disinvestment, ensuring that every family can live in a community that supports its well-being and the long-term life chances of its children.

With support from Blue Meridian Partners, the Urban Institute and PolicyLink are collaborating to develop a blueprint for the next generation of federal place-based policy. The blueprint will draw upon community voices, research evidence, and practitioner insights to lay out principles and a structure for incorporating lessons from the past into future place-based policies that confront long-standing racial inequities and injustices. It aims to articulate the ecosystem of supports available to communities and accelerate progress by strengthening federal investments in place-based work.

URBAN INSTITUTE is a nonprofit research organization that provides data and evidence to help advance upward mobility and equity. We are a trusted source for changemakers who seek to strengthen decisionmaking, create inclusive economic growth, and improve the well-being of families and communities. For more than 50 years, Urban has delivered the facts that inspire solutions—and this remains our charge today

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POLICYLINK is a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works®. To advance equity, PolicyLink advocates for groundbreaking policy changes that enable everyone, especially people of color, to be economically secure, live in healthy communities of opportunity, and benefit from a just society. PolicyLink is guided by the belief that the solutions to the nation's challenges lie with those closest to these challenges: when the wisdom, voice, and experience of those traditionally absent from policymaking drive the process, profound policy transformations emerge.

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Contents

Acknowledgments iv

Executive Summary v

Designing the Next Generation of Federal Place-Based Policy 1

Federal Place-Based Programs in the Policy Scan 3

Insights from Past and Ongoing Place-Based Programs 9

A Framework for Designing the Next Generation of Place-Based Programs 29

Appendix A. Programs in the Policy Scan 35

Appendix B. Questions Addressed in the Policy Scan 42

Notes 45

References 49

About the Authors 52

Statement of Independence 54

Policy Working Group Members 55

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Executive Summary

Place matters. The neighborhoods, cities, rural communities, and metropolitan regions where we live shape both our day-to-day quality of life and our families' prospects for upward mobility. But our nation's history of racial discrimination in both public policies and institutional practices has built profoundly separate and unequal places, sustaining and exacerbating racial inequity and injustice.

To succeed, efforts to advance racial equity and boost upward mobility will require a robust national commitment to reversing the legacy of segregation and disinvestment that disproportionately harms low-income communities of color. The federal government can play a central role by catalyzing and supporting reparative work within communities, in partnership with local and state governments, regional coalitions, and philanthropy.

This report presents findings from a scan of 33 past and ongoing federal place-based programs to inform future federal place-based policies. It reflects advice and input from a policy working group made up of policymakers and civic leaders with broad and deep experience working in communities across the country. Members of this group envision that the next generation of federal policies focused on places will

- confront racial inequity and injustice,
- bridge sectors and policy domains and activate resources and policy levers at multiple scales,
- respect and build community voice and power,
- deliver sufficient resources and lasting system reforms to achieve meaningful change for people and places, and
- promote a culture of learning through evidence and evaluation.

With these principles in mind, the scan of current and prior programs offers seven main findings:

1. **Federal programs rarely center racial equity.** Few federal place-based programs have explicitly centered racial equity, although many programs have focused on economically disadvantaged communities and some have sought to address racial disparities by directing resources to communities and institutions of color. Barriers include policymakers' limited sensitivity to the pervasive impact of structural racism, political risks associated with explicitly

naming racial injustices, and in some cases legal constraints to making race an explicit factor in resource allocations.

2. **Definitions of "place" and goals for improving places vary widely across federal programs.** Place-based programs target areas as small as individual neighborhoods and as large as multicounty regions. Many focus primarily on conditions inside the boundaries of their target places, and few have engaged at multiple geographic scales by explicitly addressing the interconnections between neighborhoods, cities, and regions. Although all place-based programs ultimately aspire to promote the well-being and life chances of the people who live in the areas they target, most of these programs have invested primarily in improvements to the built environment.

3. **Bridging across multiple policy domains poses significant challenges.** Most place-based programs are housed in a single federal agency and focus their work on that agency's goals. Collaboration with other relevant agencies has generally been limited, despite important interconnections across their domains. Statutory, regulatory, and oversight constraints can all make coordination challenging. A handful of programs offer promising models for formally aligning and coordinating work across federal agencies in support of place-based work.

4. **Programs have invited community input but generally have not aimed to build community power.** Many place-based programs acknowledge the importance of community engagement activities by referencing "consultation" and "input" as elements of their implementation. Some go further, mandating inclusive planning processes that bring new voices to governance, decisionmaking, and resource allocation. In addition, some place-based program grantees have shared resources with community partners that invest in local power building.

5. **Funding for federal place-based programs has often been insufficient to achieve their goals.** Although the federal government has established ambitious and transformative objectives for many of its place-based programs, it generally has not provided sufficient funding to achieve those objectives. Despite some innovative models to make efficient use of scarce federal funds and streamline grantees' access to multiple funding streams, insufficient funding has largely impeded efforts to deepen, scale, or sustain place-based programs.

6. **Few federal place-based programs have advanced comprehensive systems change.** Most place-based programs strive for lasting improvements in community conditions, and many support activities that aim to strengthen or reform systems. Few, however, have pursued comprehensive systems change efforts—that is, efforts to identify the root causes of community problems and change policies, practices, relationships, and thinking to address

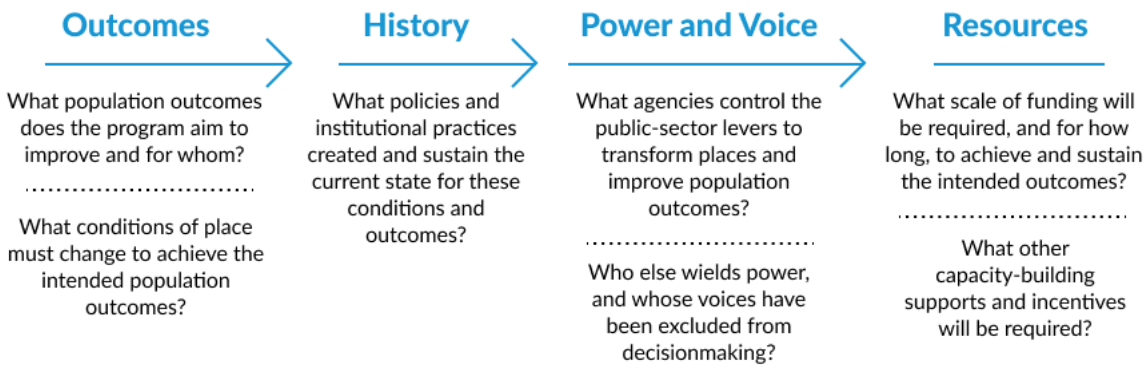
those causal forces. In fact, few programs have examined underlying issues like structural racism. And the federal government has not provided dedicated support to local organizations or intermediaries that could drive transformative systems change.

7. **Evidence about place-based program impacts and effectiveness is weak**. To date, only a handful of federal place-based programs have been independently evaluated, in part because conventional evaluation methods are not well-suited to their breadth and complexity. As a result, the field lacks definitive evidence about the impacts of these programs on people and places, particularly on low-income communities and communities of color. Some programs have required (and supported) grantees to collect data and use existing evidence. But few programs explicitly define desired outcomes or metrics from the outset, and data collection has focused more on process measures than on results. And few programs have effectively engaged community members in data collection or interpretation.

As policymakers and practitioners design a next generation of place-based programs, they should explicitly incorporate insights from current and prior federal place-based programs into an evidence-based theory of change that confronts long-standing inequities and injustices and ensures that every community supports its residents' well-being and the long-term life chances of its children. We pose a series of high-level questions that offer a disciplined framework for doing so (figure 1). These questions apply to the design of an entirely new place-based program or to the refinement of an existing program. They also have relevance to the design of programs that may not be considered place-based but that influence or are influenced by the places in which people live, work, and play.

FIGURE 1

A Framework for Designing the Next Generation of Place-Based Programs



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Designing the Next Generation of Federal Place-Based Policy

The places where we live shape both our day-to-day quality of life and our prospects for upward mobility. A robust body of evidence has demonstrated the indisputable power that *place*—a neighborhood, zip code, school district, or even an entire region—has on a person's ability to access economic opportunity. In fact, research finds that where we live has lasting impacts not just in a person's lifetime, but across generations. Moreover, people's power to demand more and better services and opportunities is rooted in place, as residents of low-income neighborhoods often find themselves isolated from the social and political networks that determine how decisions are made and resources are allocated in their communities.

America's history of racism has built profoundly separate and unequal places, sustaining and exacerbating racial inequity and injustice. From blatant forms of discrimination like redlining to subtle "race-neutral" measures like exclusionary zoning, public policies and institutional practices have systematically excluded Black, Indigenous, and other people of color from opportunity-rich neighborhoods. Communities of color have also experienced long-standing disinvestment by both public and private institutions, starving them of essential services, resources, and shared amenities.[1]

Despite substantial evidence documenting the importance of place for the well-being of people, many researchers and policymakers have debated the relative merits of place-based programs (that aim to strengthen communities) versus people-based programs (that provide direct assistance to struggling individuals and families). Proponents of the people-based approach question the effectiveness of investing in places, arguing that it is more efficient to help people access opportunities outside their immediate communities or move to better places. And, indeed, evidence about the effectiveness of place-based interventions is weak. Efforts to strengthen or revitalize disinvested places have not always achieved their intended outcomes, and in some cases, they have harmed the people of color and people with low incomes living in these communities.

But proponents of place-based policies argue that investing in communities that have experienced the greatest disinvestment and isolation is essential, that every community matters, and that all people, regardless of racial or economic background, should be able to live in a community of opportunity without being required to move to one. Increasingly, as evidence of the importance of place mounts, policymakers and practitioners are rejecting the dichotomy of people-based versus place-based policies as they seek to design interventions that improve people's well-being and upward mobility.

Advancing racial equity and upward mobility will require a robust (well-funded, comprehensive, and sustained) national commitment to reversing the legacy of segregation and disinvestment and ensuring that every family can live in a community that supports its well-being and the long-term life chances of its children. The federal government should play a central role in driving this national commitment, drawing upon the best available evidence to catalyze and support effective work within communities and working in partnership with local and state governments, regional coalitions, and philanthropy.

PolicyLink and the Urban Institute, with investment support from Blue Meridian Partners, are collaborating to develop a framework for the next generation of federal place-based policy. This framework will draw upon community voices, research evidence, and practitioner insights to lay out principles and a structure for incorporating insights from the past into future place-based policies that confront long-standing racial inequities and injustices. This effort is informed by a policy working group made up of policymakers and civic leaders working at the intersection of policy areas and across a wide range of geographies.

Members of the policy working group share a commitment to a core set of normative principles that should guide future policies and programs. Collectively, we envision that the next generation of federal policies focused on places will

- confront racial inequity and injustice,
- bridge sectors and policy domains and activate resources and policy levers at multiple scales,
- respect and build community voice and power,
- deliver sufficient resources and lasting system reforms to achieve meaningful change for people and places, and
- promote a culture of learning through evidence and evaluation.

With these principles in mind, the Urban Institute conducted a scan of 33 past and ongoing federal place-based programs to generate insights for the design and implementation of future federal place-based policies and programs.

The sections that follow describe the range of programs included in the policy scan and discuss the seven main findings that emerged, with illustrative examples from past and ongoing programs. The discussion is informed by the experience of policy working group members. The report's concluding section poses a set of key questions to guide the application of these lessons to the design of future policies and programs.

Federal Place-Based Programs in the Policy Scan

To guide our policy scan, we first sought to identify the defining characteristics of federal place-based programs. This identification proved more challenging than we originally anticipated. The only consistent requirement that researchers and policy analysts have used to identify place-based programs is that they target a discrete, geographically delineated area. Outside this very basic criterion, definitions and classifications have considered a range of factors:

- **Scale of place.** Does the program target a neighborhood, a city or county, or a larger region? Does that region include multiple local governments?
- **Program goals.** Does the program seek to modify and affect only the physical components of a geographic space, or does it also seek to affect elements related to community, such as social and cultural capital?[2]
- **Need-based targeting mechanisms.** If the program focuses on economic need or distress, how does it define need and target resources?[3]
- **Anchoring strategy or theory of change.** Does the program articulate a core logic for why a particular agency or investment should anchor place-based efforts?[4]
- **Program activities.** What policy domains do the program activities and investments address?
- **Financing models.** How does the federal government pay for the program? How does it distribute funding to grantees?[5]

Existing inventories of place-based programs generally focus on programs within specific policy domains, typically either economic or community development.[6] Our scan extended beyond the community and economic development fields, and because no universally agreed upon definition of place-based programs exists in the research literature, we selected programs that met three criteria:

1. They aim to improve multiple physical and/or social conditions in designated places (e.g., neighborhoods, towns, cities, rural counties, regions, and tribal lands) to support residents' upward mobility.
2. They channel resources to government or nonprofit institutions situated in places, rather than directly to individuals.
3. They explicitly address multiple predictors of upward mobility.[7]

Applying these criteria, we included programs that previous policy research had identified as place-based, community development, or economic revitalization programs.[8] We supplemented this initial list with knowledge from our team and policy working group members, generating a final list of 33 federal programs (see appendix A for brief descriptions).[9]

For each program, we reviewed published materials to answer a standard set of questions developed with input from the policy working group (see appendix B). Other Urban and PolicyLink experts who have prior knowledge and experience with these programs, reviewed and helped refine the draft answers. Policy working group members also provided evidence and insights based on their experience.

Place-Based Programs Span Agencies

The programs in our scan are, or were, housed across 10 federal agencies (table 1). Six programs were interagency collaborations. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has administered seven programs, and the US Department of the Treasury (Treasury) another six. Other programs have resided in the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the US Department of Commerce, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and the US Departments of Agriculture, Justice, Transportation (DOT), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education.

TABLE 1

Federal Place-Based Programs in the Policy Scan, by Agency

Agency	Program	Inactive
Appalachian Regional Commission	▪ Appalachian Regional Commission (multiple programs)	
Department of Agriculture	▪ Cooperative Extension System	
	▪ Regional Rural Development Centers	
	▪ Stronger Economies Together	x
Department of Commerce	▪ Economic Adjustment Assistance	
	▪ Economic Development Planning	
	▪ Economic Development Public Works	
	▪ Local Economic Development Technical Assistance and University Centers	
Department of Education	▪ Promise Neighborhoods	
Environmental Protection Agency	▪ Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Program	x
Department of Health and Human Services	▪ Community Services Block Grant	
Department of Housing and Urban Development	▪ Choice Neighborhoods	
	▪ Community Development Block Grant	
	▪ Jobs Plus Initiative	
	▪ Neighborhood Stabilization Program	x
	▪ Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency	
	▪ Section 4	
	▪ Sustainable Communities Initiative	x
Department of Justice	▪ Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction Program	
	▪ Operation Weed and Seed	x
Department of Transportation	▪ BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grants Program	
Department of the Treasury	▪ Bank Enterprise Award Program	
	▪ Capital Magnet Fund	
	▪ Community Development Financial Institutions Program	
	▪ Native Community Development Financial Institution Initiatives	
	▪ New Markets Tax Credit Program	
	▪ Opportunity Zones	
Interagency collaboration	▪ Empowerment Zones Program	
	▪ Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative	x
	▪ Partnership for Sustainable Communities	x
	▪ Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth	x
	▪ Promise Zones Initiative	x
	▪ Strong Cities, Strong Communities	x

Sources: Federal assistance listings available at https://beta.sam.gov/ (formerly known as the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance) and other sources, including federal statutes and appropriations bills, notices of federal funding opportunities, agencies' congressional budget justifications, Federal Register announcements, program evaluation documents, Congressional Research Service reports, and other program documentation from federal agencies or other authoritative sources.

Place-Based Programs Span Decades

In 1965, the federal government established the ARC and the EDA's Public Works program, the longest-running programs in our scan (figure 2). In 2017, the federal government launched the newest program in our scan, Opportunity Zones, as a program within Treasury.

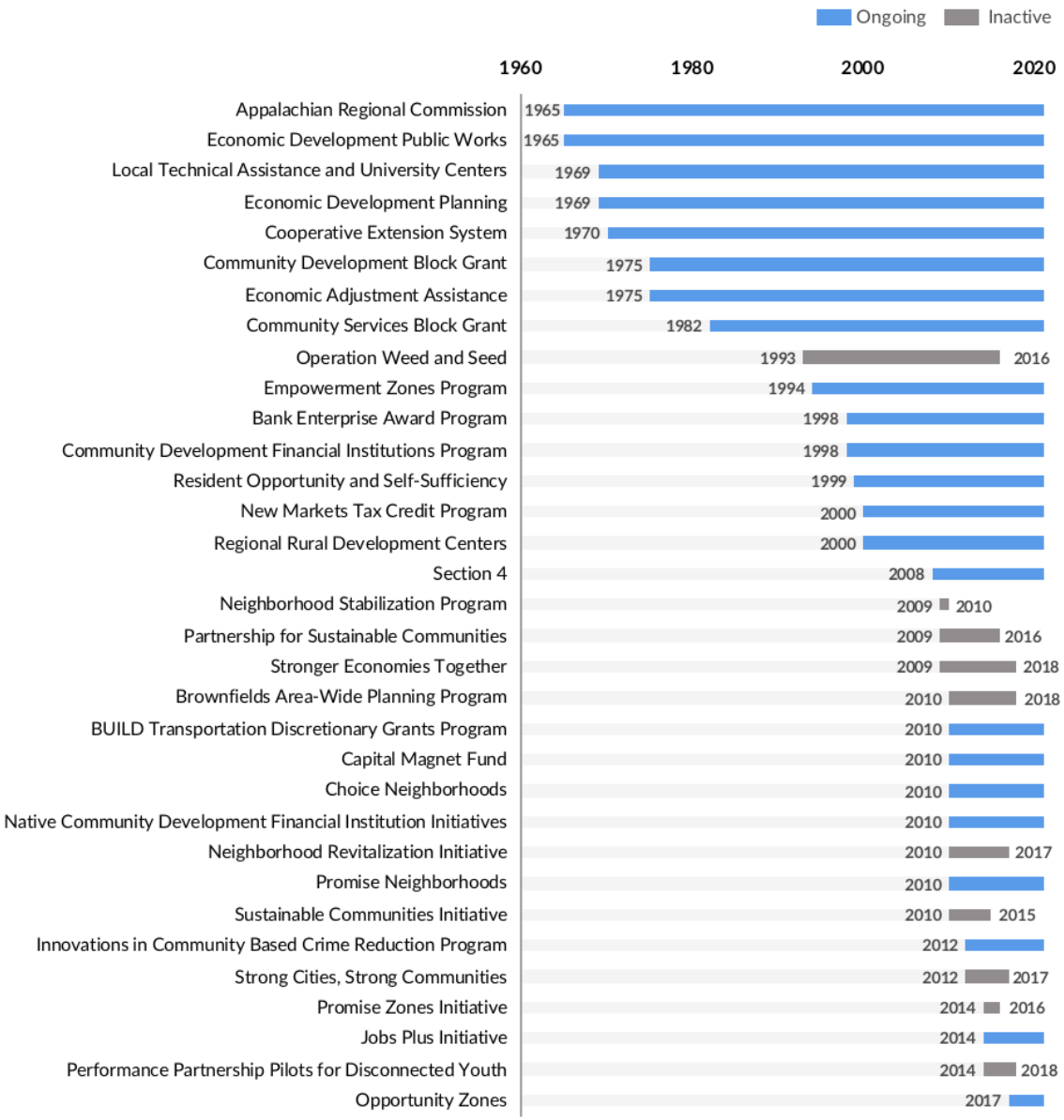
Twenty-three of the programs in our scan are currently active, including some of the oldest. All 7 programs established between 1965 and 1975 remain active. The 1980s was a relatively quiet era for establishing new place-based programming, largely because of federal efforts to downsize categorical project grants and streamline that funding into broader block grant systems, as it did with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program in 1975. The federal government established 10 of the programs in our scan between 1994 and 2009 (7 of which remain active) and 14 between 2010 and 2017 (8 of which are active). Among the 10 programs that the federal government has discontinued, 5 were interagency collaborations established between 2009 and 2014.

Most Place-Based Programs Are Project Based, but Block Grants Receive More Funding

The place-based programs in our scan follow the same pattern as broader federal aid to state and local governments: most programs deliver categorical grants to local entities on a competitive project basis, but most funding flows through block grants and tax expenditures (table 2). Among programs that are still active, the largest of the project-based programs is DOT's BUILD (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development),[10] which received a $1 billion appropriation in fiscal year 2020. But most categorical, place-based programs have been smaller. The Department of Agriculture's Regional Rural Development Centers, for example, received only $2 million in fiscal year 2020.

FIGURE 2

Timelines of Federal Place-Based Programs in the Policy Scan



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Sources: Federal assistance listings available at https://beta.sam.gov/ (formerly known as the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance) and other sources, including federal statutes and appropriations bills, notices of federal funding opportunities, agencies' congressional budget justifications, Federal Register announcements, program evaluation documents, Congressional Research Service reports, and other program documentation from federal agencies or other authoritative sources.

TABLE 2

Federal Place-Based Programs in the Policy Scan, by Funding Type and Amount

Funding type	Amount (millions of dollars)	Fiscal year
Block grant		
Community Development Block Grant	3,393	2020
Community Services Block Grant	740	2020
Categorical formula grant		
Cooperative Extension System	446	2020
Categorical project grant		
Neighborhood Stabilization Program	1,209	2010
BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grants Program	1,000	2020
Community Development Financial Institutions Program	221	2020
Appalachian Regional Commission	175	2020
Capital Magnet Fund	175	2020
Choice Neighborhoods	175	2020
Sustainable Communities Initiative	121	2011
Economic Development Public Works	119	2020
Promise Neighborhoods	80	2020
Community Development Block Grant	77	2020
Cooperative Extension System	72	2020
Economic Adjustment Assistance	37	2020
Section 4	36	2020
Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency	35	2020
Economic Development Planning	33	2020
Community Development Block Grant	32	2020
Community Services Block Grant discretionary awards	30	2020
Bank Enterprise Award Program	25	2020
Operation Weed and Seed	24	2010
Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction Program	17	2020
Native Community Development Financial Institution Initiatives	16	2020
Jobs Plus Initiative	15	2020
Economic Development Technical Assistance[a]	10	2020
Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Program	4	2017
Regional Rural Development Centers	2	2020
Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth	2	2016
Empowerment Zones Program	<1	2010
Tax expenditure		
Opportunity Zones	3,620	2020
New Markets Tax Credit Program	1,280	2020
Empowerment Zones Program	40	2020

Sources: "Enacted Federal Budgets," US General Services Administration, https://www.gsa.gov/reference/reports/budget-performance/enacted-federal-budgets; "Tax Expenditures," US Department of the Treasury, https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/tax-policy/tax-expenditures; and other sources, including federal statutes and appropriations bills, notices of federal funding opportunities, agencies' congressional budget justifications, Federal Register announcements, program evaluation documents, Congressional Research Service reports, and other program documentation from federal agencies or other authoritative sources.

Notes: Funding amounts from before 2020 are the most recent appropriation for programs that had been discontinued. Separate appropriations data were not available for the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, Partnership for Sustainable Communities, the Promise Zones Initiative, Strong Cities, Strong Communities, and Stronger Economies Together. All amounts are reported in inflation-adjusted 2020 dollars, to allow for comparisons of program scale.

[a] Includes national technical assistance, as well as local technical assistance and University Centers funding.

Insights from Past and Ongoing Place-Based Programs

The 33 federal programs in our policy scan provide a broad base of experience from which to draw insights. We grounded our analysis of this experience in the aspirations for future place-based policy shared by members of the policy working group. This analysis yields seven main findings, illustrated with specific examples from past and ongoing programs and informed by the experience of policy working group members.

Programs Rarely Center Racial Equity

Few federal place-based programs have explicitly centered racial equity, although many programs have focused on economically disadvantaged communities and some have sought to address racial disparities by directing resources to communities and institutions of color. By centering racial equity, we mean explicitly naming racial inequities and injustices, actively working to change the systems and structures that perpetuate them, and directing investments to remediate them. Barriers to explicitly advancing racial equity include policymakers' limited sensitivity to the pervasive impact of structural racism, political risks associated with explicitly naming racial injustices, and in some cases legal constraints to making race an explicit factor in resource allocation. President Biden's 2021 executive order on racial equity may help address these barriers.[11]

DIRECT AND INDIRECT APPROACHES TO RACIAL EQUITY

Another way to think about racial equity as it relates to place-based programs is by examining the extent to which, either directly or indirectly, a program aims to benefit disadvantaged communities, particularly low-income groups and communities of color (Montojo, Ross, and St-Louis 2016). Our scan revealed that most programs have not pursued racial equity as a goal or as a principle to guide programming, nor have they instituted practices to advance equity outcomes.

The Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI), however, stands out for its focus on racial equity. SCI required grantees to complete a Fair Housing and Equity Assessment addressing the legacy of segregation across multiple policy areas (including access to jobs and high-quality education) and focused on racially concentrated areas of poverty. A Fair Housing and Equity Assessment conducted by the City of Madison, Wisconsin, revealed significant racial disparities in access to opportunity and "gaps between African American and White outcomes in education, income and incarceration" (HUD 2015a, 11). In response, Madison launched a participatory budgeting pilot that gave residents power to decide how city funds would be spent to tackle multiple barriers to opportunity, developed an equity impact

model for city agencies to assess and account for the equity impacts of their plans and policies, and built a new neighborhood center in a high-need community (HUD 2015a). More broadly, SCI may have catalyzed efforts by communities and regions to pursue additional federal investments focused on race. According to one study, regions participating in SCI were more likely than non-SCI regions to pursue Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants that explicitly mentioned race and had an equity focus (Montojo, Ross, and St-Louis 2016).

Other programs have sought to address racial disparities by directing resources to communities and institutions of color. In the 1980s, several executive orders directed the EDA's Local Technical Assistance and University Centers programs to provide university grants to educational institutions that serve people of color. As of 2004, seven historically Black colleges and universities, five Hispanic-serving institutions, and one Native American–serving institution had received support through this program. In 2016, the EDA prioritized investments to "strengthen diverse communities that have suffered disproportionate economic distress and job losses"[12] in its Economic Development Planning Program. And in 2021, the EDA revised its investment priorities in response to President Biden's executive order, naming equity, including investments that benefit "traditionally underserved populations, including but not limited to women, Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders" as one of the department's top investment priorities.[13] Although the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods program does not prescribe any specific racial equity goals, many grantees view their work as instrumental in closing racial equity gaps. For example, Camden Promise Neighborhood in New Jersey aims to address a history of racist policies and practices that have limited Black and Latinx residents' opportunities to thrive in their city.[14]

HHS's Community Services Block Grants also address racial disparities indirectly. Because it is focused on low-income populations, the program disproportionately serves people of color. Additionally, this program's community engagement requirements give people with low incomes and people of color a voice in how program funds are spent locally. But these features fall short of explicitly addressing racial inequities.

Similarly, HUD's CDBG program does not require its local grantees to explicitly address racial equity. A 2016 community-based participatory research report exploring the CDBG program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, found that Black residents and Black organizational leaders believed projects did not value their input, did not use their talents or expertise, and did not empower them (Blanks 2016). The majority of organizations that received Milwaukee's CDBG funding for community organizing and crime prevention activities were not led by Black people and had minimal involvement from Black people on strategic planning or service prioritization.

Other federal programs have clearly failed to address persistent racial inequities and injustices. For instance, a 1974 study found that Black people did not benefit much from more than $2 billion in federal funds allocated to the ARC for economic development programs in the region between 1967 and 1972 even though approximately 1.3 million Black people lived in the region at the time and experienced significantly higher rates of economic insecurity than white residents did (Allen 1974; Pollard 2004). When asked about how the agency engages in discussion with Black people, Native Americans, and other people of color, former federal ARC cochair Earl Gohl described this as a weakness for the agency (Brookshire et al. 2016). He also noted that because the ARC focuses on government-to-government activities and relationships, it often misses initiating discussions with communities of color, therefore perpetuating the long-standing dismissal of the needs and interests of Black Appalachians.

BARRIERS TO CENTERING RACIAL EQUITY

Several factors may explain why most federal place-based programs have not explicitly centered racial equity. In some cases, the policymakers who designed these programs or the agencies responsible for implementing them may not have understood or appreciated the pervasive effects of structural racism, including how policy and funding decisions can perpetuate and exacerbate inequities. The lack of racial diversity at senior levels of federal agencies may contribute to a lack of awareness and attention to these issues. In other cases, even though the planners and implementers recognize their central importance, explicitly naming racial equity and justice as program goals may pose political risks, potentially triggering opposition to a program. Moreover, legal constraints that require the government to "treat citizens as individuals, not as simply components of a racial, religious, sexual or national class," may sometimes stand in the way of making race explicit in resource allocation.[15]

The unwillingness of federal policymakers to reckon with the history of racism in the United States and how it produces and sustains disparities today may also contribute to the limited attention to racial equity in place-based programs. Many national thought leaders and elected officials have emphasized the importance of "moving forward" on issues of race even though that means leaving decades of harm unaddressed. But given the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the US today, a generalized commitment to racial equity may not be meaningful or actionable. Federal policymakers need tools and a framework "that includes an analysis of historic laws and policies that have perpetuated racial inequities and defines bias and structural racism" (Chapple et al. 2017, 165).

Definitions of "Place" and Goals for Improving Places Vary Widely across Federal Programs

Place-based programs target areas as small as individual neighborhoods and as large as multicounty regions. Many programs focus primarily on conditions inside the boundaries of their target places; few have engaged at multiple geographic scales by explicitly addressing the interconnections between neighborhoods, cities, and regions. Although all place-based programs ultimately aspire to promote the well-being and life chances of the people who live in the areas they target, most have invested primarily in improvements to the built environment. Some, however, have focused on strengthening services that support the well-being of individuals and families.

GEOGRAPHIC SCALE

Federal place-based programs have defined place at differing scales. Some, like the Choice Neighborhoods and Promise Neighborhoods programs, serve places as small as a housing development or neighborhood. Others, like CDBG, serve whole cities or counties, though these jurisdictions typically target smaller areas for investment. A few place-based programs serve multijurisdictional regions, either urban or rural. For example, Congress established the ARC[16] to serve a 420-county, 13-state area. Within that broadly defined region, the ARC provides different kinds of assistance directly to multicounty, regional development organizations called Local Development Districts.[17]

Many of these programs focus primarily on conditions inside the boundaries of their target places, investing with the intention of producing better opportunities for the people living there. For example, the Choice Neighborhoods program funds the replacement or renovation of public housing developments and supports the development of mixed-income housing and the construction of community amenities—such as parks, streetscapes, community facilities, and retail development—on the original public housing site and in the immediate neighborhood. The Choice Neighborhoods program also provides funding for supportive services and relocation assistance for the original public housing residents.

A handful of federal place-based programs have engaged at multiple geographic scales, explicitly addressing the interconnections between neighborhoods, cities, and regions. For example, SCI integrated strategies for jobs, housing, transportation, environmental sustainability, and equity across neighborhoods, cities, and regions. SCI funded two distinct types of planning processes: (1) regional planning efforts that engaged residents in decisionmaking roles and used data to set goals and address regional issues and (2) community challenge grants that engaged neighborhood- and local-level

planning to promote approaches that included affordable housing and mixed-used development (HUD, DOT, and EPA 2014).

The ARC's theory of change argues that Appalachia's geographic isolation contributes to its economic distress. One of the program's first major investments was highway corridors connecting urban centers throughout the region, with the goal of linking smaller communities to urban centers with a broader array of social, vocational, and health services. The Local Development District Assistance component of the program was intended to help ensure local voice and decisionmaking were included in the regional development agenda (Bradshaw 1992).

Stronger Economies Together worked to develop and implement economic development plans for multicounty rural regions. Plans were developed by county officials, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders. These local leaders developed unified regional economic development blueprints that aligned with the diverse local needs of member counties (Trail of the Ancients Stronger Economies Together Region 2016). Maintaining a role for county- and community-level input ideally helped build community agency and promote a sense of belonging.[18]

GOALS FOR IMPROVING PLACES

Although all place-based programs ultimately aspire to promote the well-being and life chances of the people who live in the targeted places, many invest primarily in improvements to the built environment and measure outcomes accordingly. The founding ethos of many early place-based efforts—such as the ARC, the CDBG program, and programs administered by the EDA—held that economically distressed places required physical infrastructure investments to compete economically and boost opportunity for residents.

The EDA Public Works program, which remains the largest of the EDA's grant programs in terms of resources allocated, exemplifies an early infrastructure-focused effort. However, the agency was also an early adopter of local capacity building and strategic economic development efforts through its Planning and Local Technical Assistance grants, recognizing that public works projects would likely be more successful and efficient if situated in a larger conversation about local needs and goals (Lake, Leichenko, and Glasmeier 2004).[19] Although these capacity-building programs have been a pillar of EDA's program portfolio for decades, the agency only recently began developing methods for evaluating the economic impacts of its noninfrastructure investments the same way that it does for its infrastructure investments.[20] Assessments of the agency's portfolio of programs have continued to recommend that it broaden its conception of infrastructure to include additional soft investments in

local civil society, participation, and capacity, which some researchers define as civic or institutional infrastructure (Stephen, Ross, and Kalathil 2017).

Some place-based programs have focused not on the built environment but on investments in institutions and services that support the well-being of individuals, families, and children. For example, the Jobs Plus Initiative, though targeted to public housing developments, delivered a combination of job training, work supports, and work incentives aimed at substantially boosting employment and earnings among residents. The Promise Neighborhoods program focuses on relatively small and well-defined neighborhoods within cities and rural counties. Instead of addressing challenges of the built environment, it aims to strengthen the continuum of services and supports required for the healthy development and educational success of children from cradle to career.[21] One of the Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction Program's six key project strategies focuses on mending or building trust between residents in a target area and criminal justice agencies like police departments. Activities include employing victim advocates and using nontraditional court processing focused on local needs (Hipple and Saunders 2020).

Bridging across Multiple Policy Domains Poses Significant Challenges

Most place-based programs are housed in a single federal agency and focus their work on that agency's goals. Collaboration with other relevant agencies has generally been limited despite important interconnections across their domains. Statutory, regulatory, and oversight constraints can all make coordination challenging and time-consuming. A handful of programs offer promising models for formally aligning and coordinating work across federal agencies in support of place-based work.

SINGLE AGENCY DOMAIN OF FOCUS

Although all the programs in our policy scan address multiple predictors of upward mobility, most are organized around a single primary domain like housing, education, safety, or jobs. And they have almost all been administered by the federal agency (HUD, the Department of Education or Justice, EDA) with expertise and authority in the primary domain. In general, engagement and collaboration with other relevant federal agencies have been limited and informal. Data collection and evaluation efforts also have not typically been synchronized across agencies, adding to the difficulty of monitoring progress, making midcourse corrections, or rigorously assessing the long-term results of federal place-based initiatives.

Several factors stand in the way of more systematic bridging across agencies and their policy domains. Statutory definitions and regulatory requirements can complicate and even block agency efforts to collaborate. Congressional oversight and appropriations functions are also strictly siloed, which makes it harder for separately authorized agencies to work together formally. Further, agencies need structured and sustained mechanisms (such as formal task forces or working groups) to learn from one another, share information, and work through joint strategies for addressing community needs (EPA, HUD, and DOT 2010).

A lack of formal coordination at the federal level may pose challenges to effective collaboration across agencies and organizations in different policy domains at the local level. Moreover, because federal resources often flow through states to localities and neighborhoods, state policies and regulations can create additional barriers to work that spans policy domains at the local level. For example, states control many of the rules governing the allocation of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.[22] Their differing approaches have implications for whether these credits can effectively be layered with other resources like New Markets Tax Credits and Opportunity Zones to maximize their impacts in particular neighborhoods or communities. In other cases, states may lack either the commitment or the capacity to align the policies and programs they administer with community needs and goals.

MODELS FOR INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Despite the challenges, the federal government has advanced a handful of programs that offer models for aligning and coordinating work across federal agencies in support of place-based strategies and action. But they have often proved difficult to sustain because they require organizational commitment (both at the staff and leadership levels), continual focus on aligning efforts for impact, consistent communication between the agencies, and a culture of collaboration (Pendall et al. 2013).

The ARC pioneered an approach for bringing multiple federal supports into a single region that has served as a model for other place-based commissions and investment efforts. As an independent agency with responsibility for advancing outcomes across policy domains, the ARC built capacities to deploy resources from multiple agencies and get projects off the ground quickly; in contrast, other traditional federal agencies have often been mired in delays and bureaucracy. But the performance measurement and evaluation efforts of a public entity that administers an initiative spanning federal agency domains can be impeded if individual agencies' data collection efforts are not linked to a central monitoring database.[23]

The Promise Zones Initiative, though housed at HUD, mandated consultation and joint action with HHS, DOT, and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor.[24] This arrangement produced an interagency partnership at the federal level that enabled the designated Promise Zones to "benefit from intensive federal support at the local level to help them implement their economic and community development goals."[25]

SCI intentionally bridged multiple policy domains, including housing, transportation, and the environment. The program's approach assumed that fostering interagency collaboration and coordinating federal investments in infrastructure, facilities, and services would better advance communities' economic, environmental, and social objectives. Coadministering grants proved too difficult to sustain, but SCI's focus on interagency collaboration meant that HUD, EPA, and DOT leadership set shared policy goals that carried through into agency operations. DOT led the TIGER (which became BUILD) comprehensive grant program, which focused on infrastructure planning and investments, and the EPA led the Brownfields program. By working together on program design and aligning policy objectives, agencies resolved barriers to work on the ground, thus promoting livability and sustainability (Geevarghese 2020). For example, the EPA and Federal Emergency Management Agency had very different definitions of "environmental cleanliness," creating an obstacle for site reuse and stalling remediation efforts. The EPA ultimately provided the support necessary for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to update its contamination policy and make it easier for brownfield communities to access its Hazard Mitigation Assistance grants (HUD, DOT, and EPA 2014). Several of the grant programs developed through SCI also emphasized regional collaboration in housing and transportation markets to achieve a more efficient, equitable, and sustainable distribution of resources (Pendall et al. 2013).

The Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) program explicitly aimed to break down the silos between different agency funding streams and to foster partnerships between federal and local governments and between sectors (governments, local businesses, anchor institutions, philanthropy, and nonprofits).[26] An executive order formally established the White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities and called on the 19 participating federal agencies to work together to implement the program at the federal level. It named chairs at the Domestic Policy Council and at HUD to lead the effort. Each local government participating in SC2 worked with a dedicated interagency team to increase coordination and collaboration across relevant federal agencies and programs. These federal teams worked alongside mayors and across city agencies to break down silos at the local and federal levels (White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities 2013). In Memphis, Tennessee, for example, SC2 supported the mayor's neighborhood revitalization strategy to make the city more

competitive to receive and strategically align federal resources. As a result, Memphis received additional technical assistance from the Department of Justice, in collaboration with the Department of Education and HUD, to build capacity in target neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative aimed to strengthen collaboration across five place-based programs administered by different federal agencies. The participating agencies developed frameworks spelling out shared funding priorities and joint funding notices. They also aligned their language in funding notices and program evaluation metrics. An assessment of the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative found that it achieved some successes, including enabling "a shared framework and theory of change across agencies."[27]

Programs Have Invited Community Input but Generally Have Not Aimed to Build Community Power

Many place-based programs acknowledge the importance of community engagement activities by referencing "consultation" and "input" as elements of their implementation. Some of these programs have mandated inclusive planning processes that bring new voices to governance, decisionmaking, and resource allocation. However, most programs have not required grantees and their initiatives to be connected to and aligned with grassroots community leadership in comprehensive ways. And although some program grantees have built relationships and shared resources with community partners that invest in local power building, federal rules and practices typically channel resources to well-established organizations, rather than newer entities led by and accountable to community members.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS

Most federal place-based programs require some form of community consultation or input, often as part of the application process. At that stage, grant applicants engage community members to gain an understanding of conditions in target neighborhoods and gather feedback on proposed programming strategies. Such community engagement provides applicants with a basis to justify their site selection choices and align programming approaches with community needs. For example, the EDA Planning program requires grant applicants to conduct some limited forms of participatory planning, and they are evaluated on whether their planning process includes "broad-based representation and involvement of the region's civic, business, labor, minority and other interests in the proposed economic development activities."[28]

Some programs include mechanisms for greater influence of community members in the design and implementation of funded activities, including requiring governance boards to be representative of diverse community interests, engaging community members as service providers and champions, or delegating to residents decisions about where and how program funds are spent. The CDBG program, for example, requires grantees to create a citizen participation plan that outlines how they will engage community members—especially those with low and moderate incomes—in decisions about the allocation of CDBG activities and resources (HUD 2007). The Jobs Plus Initiative engaged some residents as community coaches. In this role, residents could draw on their knowledge of the community to shape program offerings, collect feedback from residents, and represent residents' voices in governance discussions with agency staff (HUD 2020).

Although these mechanisms for community engagement are promising, they often fall short of aligning programs with local needs and creating concrete opportunities for residents to be leaders in implementation. In some instances, community engagement mechanisms have produced planning and strategy documents that did not match community needs, and in others, programs did not adequately cover the costs required to sustain the community engagement mechanism (Reese and Fasenfest 2003; Verma et al. 2019). Moreover, until recently, federal programs had not supported community members to join decisionmaking tables or exercise meaningful influence. For example, a 2003 assessment of the EDA's Planning program found that the membership of its Economic Development District committees—a key decisionmaking body of the program—did not always reflect local communities (Lake, Leichenko, and Glasmeier 2004; Reese and Fasenfest 2003). Although business and government interests were well-represented on these committees, there was much less representation of diverse populations and neighborhood residents (Reese and Fasenfest 2003).

In contrast, SCI offers a contemporary example of a more effective effort to include community members in decisionmaking. SCI developed a reputation for appointing community leaders in resource-governing bodies. For example, Corridors of Opportunity, an SCI grant implemented in Minnesota's Twin Cities region, engaged people of color in senior governance positions, including on the policy board, Corridors of Opportunity's highest decisionmaking body. Similarly, an SCI grantee in the Puget Sound region of Washington state created an equity cochair position on its steering committee, a step that has helped bring issues of equity into focus throughout planning processes (Marsh 2014). The Twin Cities grant also established a community engagement team that facilitated community-led decisionmaking, creating "a powerful voice for low-income communities and communities of color to secure community benefits for [the] regional transitway system" (Arias, Draper-Zivetz, and Martin 2017, 106).

AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY POWER

When programs have engaged with communities in ways that build power, they have done so at the discretion of local grantees that see power building and systems change as crucial to their work, not merely as a response to federal requirements or encouragement. For example, in the Corridors of Opportunity initiative discussed earlier, traditional planning authorities relinquished some of their authority and decisionmaking power to the community engagement team, which, in turn, empowered the community engagement steering committee to distribute over $720,000 of program funds to local organizations in the community. This approach not only gave communities significant say in distributing program funds but also allowed for greater inclusion of community voice in planning processes. Examples like this are, however, more the exception than the rule.

Moreover, the federal government generally allocates funding to organizations with well-established operating systems and governance structures, so newer or less conventional organizations that may have stronger connections with community members have difficulty accessing federal support. Program eligibility criteria for lead grantees often exceed the capacity of less-established organizations in the community. Although intermediaries and organizations with strong operating infrastructure play critical roles in supporting work within communities, the absence of clear guidance or procedures on how resources are to flow from these organizations to newer organizations may obstruct efforts to distribute resources and power more equitably.

Funding for Federal Place-Based Programs Has Often Been Insufficient to Achieve Their Goals

Although the federal government has established ambitious and transformative objectives for many of its place-based programs, it generally has not provided sufficient funding for programs to successfully pursue those objectives. Many programs have started with low levels of funding or experienced dwindling appropriations over time, due in part to changes in administrations and federal priorities. Although some agencies have employed innovative models to make efficient use of scarce federal funds and the federal government has designed some programs to streamline grantees' access to multiple funding streams, insufficient funding has largely impeded efforts to deepen, scale, or sustain place-based program efforts.

FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

Limited or declining federal funding makes it difficult for agencies and their local partners to deepen, scale, or sustain place-based efforts. Conducting transformative work in a community is resource-

intensive, and the number of communities in need of such support is high. Some programs have managed to expand the number of eligible grantees, benefiting more places, even when total appropriations have declined. For example, the number of eligible entitlement communities under HUD's CDBG program has grown over time, as HUD is required to honor eligibility rules that the federal government established in 1975.[29] Federal appropriations for the program, meanwhile, have declined. Between 1980 and 2015, the inflation-adjusted, average award per entitlement grantee declined 85 percent (Theodos, Stacy, and Ho 2017).[30] Many local governments rely on CDBG as a predictable source of funding for critical infrastructure work, but declining support has made it difficult to pursue more resource-intensive community development work (Theodos, Stacy, and Ho 2017).

In other cases, programs serve only a small share of potentially eligible grantees, limiting support to communities that meet competitive criteria.[31] For example, since its launch in 2010, the Promise Neighborhoods program has received more than 900 applications but competitively awarded funding to just 74 sites.[32] Grantees can receive up to $30 million over five years to support the planning and implementing of a pipeline of "cradle-to-career" community development services.[33] Although this approach channels more resources to the participating communities, it provides no support to many other communities that face similar challenges.

Programs that provide highly targeted support, focusing resources on communities that must meet a competitive and narrow definition of need, may be less likely to garner broad-based political support than programs that serve a wider swath of communities. Both the CDBG and EDA programs for economically distressed communities have confronted this tension. The reliable and wide access to these programs across a large number of communities means that local governments and their boosters have effectively advocated for the programs for decades. Yet, because eligibility for EDA assistance and CDBG grants has expanded significantly over time, critics of both programs have claimed that the programs do not effectively target funding to communities in need.[34]

Few, if any, place-based programs have provided grantees with a sufficient level of sustained funding over time to fully meet demand and realize program goals. The federal government has often established place-based programs as pilots without permanent authorization or funding. For example, HUD operated the Jobs Plus Initiative as a demonstration program at six public housing agencies between 1998 and 2003, discontinuing the program even though early evaluations showed promising results and local actors continued piloting their own versions of the initiative (Riccio 2010). The federal government reauthorized the program in fiscal year 2015, allowing HUD to pilot the program at another nine sites, with funding for additional cohorts dependent on the annual appropriations process.[35] In 2019, HUD awarded four-year grants to its most recent nine-site cohort. Programs like

Jobs Plus, Promise Neighborhoods, and others provide funding for a limited period, after which grantees may struggle to sustain the activities they launched (Verma et al. 2019).[36]

Some programs impose caps or matching requirements on administrative costs to direct federal dollars toward actual community investment, rather than indirect administration and bureaucracy. For example, the CDBG program caps administrative expenses at 20 percent of program funds. However, as total federal funding for the program has declined, so has funding for administrative support, forcing local governments to downsize program staff and make organizational adjustments that reduce their capacity to pursue broader systems change work. A common refrain from place-based organizations implementing place-based programs is that they have not been provided enough funding for the operational or backbone support that enables long-term capacity building and changemaking in a place.[37]

COMBINING FUNDS FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES

Agencies and their grantees have experimented with both "blending" or more interdependently "braiding" federal funding streams to both leverage supports and fill gaps.[38] Also, many agencies require grantees to match federal program funds with additional resources, whether from other federal programs, state programs, local revenue, or private investment.[39] For example, funding from the EDA cannot generally exceed 50 percent of the total cost of proposed Public Works projects. However, the agency can adjust its local contribution requirements based on the applicant's average per capita income and unemployment rate. Flexible matching requirements allow the EDA to direct funding to localities that otherwise struggle to attract other sources of capital.

Successfully combining funds from different federal, state, and local sources is no easy task, however. Resources from existing programs and funding streams are often limited and may already be committed to other communities, organizations, or purposes. Moreover, as discussed in the context of interagency collaboration, funding streams from different sources generally have differing, and sometimes conflicting, objectives, reporting requirements, and periods of performance that pose multiple logistical challenges for the grantee attempting to braid or blend those funds.

Some federal place-based programs have provided direct training and support to help local leaders successfully draw upon multiple federal funding streams. Between 2011 and 2017, SC2 deployed federal interagency teams to distressed cities to build their capacities to identify, access, and blend federal funding streams. As part of this interagency teamwork, federal agencies also took steps to align their programs and reduce bureaucratic hurdles for grantees (White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities 2013).

In another example, from 2014 to 2018, the Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth modeled an interagency partnership between the Department of Education and the Departments of Labor, HHS, and Justice. The program allowed these agencies to waive federal statutory and regulatory requirements to help grantees draw on multiple federal funding streams to pilot more effective youth services. The program ultimately assisted three pilot cohorts, the first of which included nine sites (2015), the second just a single site (2016), and the third six sites (2017) (GAO 2017).

Other place-based programs have expressly encouraged layering by providing preferential eligibility or streamlined application processes for grantees across a selection of participating agencies. The City of San Antonio, Texas, for example, has made use of its federal Eastside Promise Zone designation to draw on funding from multiple federal place-based programs, including Promise Neighborhoods, Choice Neighborhoods, Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction,[40] and CDBG, among others.[41] This approach has the advantage of delivering more substantial support to places that have well-documented needs and implementation capacities. However, it also exacerbates the problem that many other communities with profound and long-standing needs receive little or no support.

Finally, although opportunities for layering federal program funds can be beneficial for grantees, the implementation details matter. Combining assistance from multiple programs may not make efficient use of federal resources if those funds are unnecessarily duplicative or could be leveraged for greater impact in communities that receive less support from other programs (GAO 2014). For example, some of Treasury's New Markets Tax Credit Program projects may have generated above-market rates of return for investors when other public funds, like housing tax credits, were used as leverage (GAO 2014). The program's stated objective is to catalyze investment in communities unlikely to attract private capital, but above-market returns suggest that projects may have already been likely to succeed without the full amount of public investment received.

Few Federal Place-Based Programs Have Advanced Comprehensive Systems Change

Most place-based programs strive for lasting improvements in community social and economic conditions, and many support activities with anticipated system-wide effects, such as local government capacity building and streamlined regulatory requirements. Some have informally linked multiple programs that, together, strive to address multiple system-wide needs. However, few programs have

made comprehensive systems change efforts to identify the root causes of community problems and accordingly change policy, practice, relationships, and thinking to improve those underlying conditions.[42] In fact, few programs have examined underlying issues like structural racism, and the federal government has not provided dedicated support to local intermediaries that could drive transformative systems change.

INVESTING IN SYSTEMS COMPONENTS

Most place-based programs strive for lasting community improvements across a related, though narrowly defined, set of social and economic conditions, and some programs have implicitly worked toward systems change–oriented goals for decades. For example, EDA's Planning program builds local governments' capacity for strategic economic planning, including an assessment of regional economic needs. In the early 1970s, the EDA championed efforts to integrate strategic planning into local decisionmaking, arguing that local planning and capacity building would help localities make better use of other federal economic development resources, such as EDA Public Works grants (Lake, Leichenko, and Glasmeier 2004). Since its inception, the program has aspired to help local governments examine root causes and plan and implement a host of economic development activities that include "systematic efforts to reduce unemployment and increase incomes."[43]

The EDA's Planning program is part of an informal program "constellation" that the agency has established over time to meet the different, but intertwined, needs of its grantees. For example, the Economic Adjustment Assistance, Local Technical Assistance, University Centers, and Public Works programs all reference and support one another's objectives and activities.[44] Similarly, the ARC offers a suite of complementary programs, including its own planning assistance, technical assistance, demonstration project, and regional infrastructure and highway development programs. These multipronged approaches recognize that grantees' success depends on a system of supports.

In another example of place-based capacity-building investments, the Treasury-administered Community Development Financial Institutions Program offers both financial and technical assistance grants to CDFIs. Financial assistance grants boost CDFIs' capital for investment in distressed communities; technical assistance grants invest in the CDFIs' organizational capacity. Together, these investments are designed to help CDFIs "achieve organizational sustainability, and contribute to the revitalization of their communities."[45] Similarly, the Department of Agriculture's Regional Rural Development Centers program builds the capacity of public land-grant universities to provide technical assistance and disseminate effective economic development practices to rural partners.[46]

Despite some attention to components of systems, few programs have pursued strategies to change the policies, practices, and relationships that drive place-based problems. Most programs, for example, do not acknowledge and integrate racial inequity and its root causes into their objectives and activities. When an agency or program does not identify and analyze how forces of structural racism—or other key drivers—underpin inequitable conditions and outcomes, then it has not approached its programming from a comprehensive systems perspective. In addition to fundamental flaws in systems-oriented framing, programs' capacity building and other systems-oriented supports often receive less funding than direct infrastructure investment, and at a scale unlikely to catalyze transformative change. For example, the EDA typically awards 320 to 450 planning grants annually, at an average of $70,000 per award (Economic Development Administration, n.d.).

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS CHANGE EFFORTS

Among the programs we scanned, only a few clearly articulated broader systems change objectives. Among them, HUD has described the SC2 interagency partnership, SCI (which HUD established as part of its participation in SC2), the Department of Justice's Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction programs, and HUD's Choice Neighborhoods as seeking systems-level change by coordinating multiple forms of assistance at a neighborhood level (HUD 2015b).

Several interagency collaboratives have focused attention on streamlining local access to and coordination among agencies' place-based program supports. Some have even achieved material policy changes, with impact beyond the limited number of grantees and policies executed at the outset of an initiative. For example, the federal interagency teams that SC2 assigned to work with local grantees observed that conflicting hiring requirements in the CDBG and Federal Highway Administration grant programs impeded grantees from braiding those funding streams.[47] To help resolve this underlying impediment to effectively using federal resources, national SC2 coordinators worked with DOT to launch a local hiring initiative that made it possible for localities to braid highway and CDBG funding. In so doing, SC2 demonstrated an ability to help identify specific underlying causes of local problems and then follow up to pursue concrete federal policy change.

Other programs have proposed a fundamental reorganization of relationships between actors within a community (and, at times, between the federal and state governments and those communities), with the expectation that relational change can catalyze long-term improvements across different domains within a community. For example, the Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction Program proposes that a more community-centric approach to neighborhood public safety, which builds and strengthens connections between residents and community-based organizations, can

increase social capital, encourage information and resource sharing, and support community members in mobilizing around a common public safety agenda. The program encourages local governments to form partnerships with federal and state attorneys general and local policymakers and to connect their programming with other local violent crime and community revitalization efforts.

Other programs have tried to identify and remove procedural or regulatory barriers to grantee success. The interagency Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth, for example, sought to improve coordination among the many systems that serve young people, drawing on service providers and expertise across multiple systems, including schools, workforce development, criminal justice, social services, and housing. The program streamlined regulatory barriers preventing localities from providing more integrated services. Similarly, the interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities focused on removing federal administrative, regulatory, and statutory barriers to building livable and sustainable communities. In 2010, DOT and HUD released an assessment of federal impediments to coordination between their agencies, following a "listening tour" and public comment period soliciting input and feedback from the public and program stakeholders (DOT and HUD 2011).

HUD's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing regulation requires localities receiving CDBG funding to systematically analyze impediments to fair housing and prepare plans for addressing those impediments. Although these Obama administration regulations were suspended soon after they were finalized, they have now been reinstated and may create an important catalyst for cities and counties to explicitly identify and address systemic barriers to neighborhood choice and vitality (Turner, Briggs, et al. 2020).[48]

LOCAL SYSTEMS CHANGE INTERMEDIARIES

Historically, the federal government has not provided dedicated support to local intermediaries that could orchestrate, coordinate, and connect both community and federally supported efforts to pursue transformative systems change. In fact, many programs impose a cap on funds available for administrative activities, which can make it more difficult to fund effective intermediary organizations. In addition, federal funding cannot be used for lobbying or advocacy, which may further impede systems change work as pursuing policy and practice changes requires engaging in federal, state, and local policy debates and advocating for policy reform. Moreover, many federal programs have not built avenues for authentic community engagement, although integrating community voices is seen as an essential element of systems change work.[49] Place-based programs that have invested in authentic relationships with community organizations and residents may potentially provide a foundation for robust and authentic root causes analysis that could be an input to larger, adaptive systems change efforts.

Evidence about Place-Based Program Impacts and Effectiveness Is Weak

To date, only a handful of federal place-based programs have been independently evaluated, in part because conventional evaluation methods are not well-suited to their breadth and complexity. As a result, the field lacks definitive evidence about the impacts of these programs on people and places. Recognizing the importance of data and evidence for program implementation, some programs have required (and supported) grantees to collect data and use existing evidence to assess needs, develop action plans, set targets, monitor progress, or make midcourse corrections. However, few programs explicitly define desired outcomes or metrics from the outset, and data collection has focused more on process measures than on results. And few programs have effectively engaged community members in data collection or interpretation.

EVALUATION CHALLENGES

As is true of many federal investments, few place-based programs have been rigorously and independently evaluated, although some have required local evaluations of participating sites. Traditional approaches to program evaluation are generally not compatible with place-based interventions. These programs are complex and multifaceted and are often tailored to the needs and priorities of individual communities. In addition, many place-based interventions adopt a saturation model or pursue policy and process reforms with the goal of achieving community-wide changes, meaning that they aim to benefit as many people in the community as possible. This practice makes identifying comparison groups or counterfactuals difficult because the program may affect even those who do not receive the program's services directly. And at their best, place-based program strategies adapt continuously to evolving local realities, which makes pinning down the precise intervention to be evaluated difficult. Taken together, these features have caused some traditional researchers to conclude that place-based interventions are "not well defined or defined at all" (HUD 2015b, 2) or that they cannot be rigorously evaluated (Nichols 2013). Creative researchers can, however, craft evaluation designs, including the use of synthetic comparison neighborhoods, that overcome these challenges (Theodos, forthcoming A, B, and C).

The CDBG program, for example, has struggled to implement a rigorous evaluation model in part because the design of the program prioritizes flexible funding for locally defined needs. The program is structured so local jurisdictions receive flexible funding for different community development needs, the specifics of which are largely left up to individual communities to prioritize based on their own strategic community planning process. Although some observers count this flexibility as a hallmark of

the program's success, it unavoidably complicates evaluation because communities are working toward different locally defined goals with unique program approaches.

Absent rigorous evaluations of program impacts, research on place-based programs has produced rich case studies that yield insights about accomplishments associated with specific program components, factors constraining program effectiveness, and emerging promising practices. Though findings from such studies often point to concrete opportunities for improvement, less is known about the extent to which federal agencies or grantees use those findings to adapt strategies or drive improvements.

When programs have measured outcomes, questions often remain about who benefits. For example, some programs have reported significant gains in neighborhood employment, incomes, or property values, but they cannot determine "whether a neighborhood is improving because the residents are better off, because poor residents are moving out, or because more well-to-do residents are moving in" (Auspos 2012, 3). And others, like the Jobs Plus program, provide strong evidence of gains for the original residents, but little community-wide improvement because of population turnover.

GRANTEE CAPACITY TO COLLECT AND USE DATA

In addition to the challenges of formal evaluation, federal place-based programs have not always ensured that local grantees use data effectively to inform action. The Promise Neighborhoods program applies an explicit data-driven and evidence-based approach to implementation and learning, requiring grantees to demonstrate that their programming approaches are based on the best available evidence. But grantees often lack the capacity to collect and use data effectively and typically need technical assistance to do so. In response, the Promise Neighborhoods program makes significant investments in technical assistance to support grantees in collecting and using data to make decisions, understand what programming might be effective for different segments of populations served, and ensure accountability. In cases when the evidence base for a grantee's approach is thin, the program directs grantees to employ robust data collection and management systems to learn more about the impact of those approaches.

In other programs, many grantees have struggled to get their data systems off the ground, raising questions about how they can sustain their data capacity—if they manage to build it—when their federal funding expires. Recognizing this problem, some programs have paired grantees with a research or technical assistance partner to support their data collection and analysis activities. In general, however, federal programs have not made sufficient investments in building local data capacity (Davis et al.

2015). As a consequence, residents and local institutions often cannot effectively use available data in their efforts to drive change on the ground.

DEVELOPING AND APPLYING METRICS AND DATA SYSTEMS

Few programs have systematically defined desired outcomes or metrics from the outset, and data collection has focused more on process measures than on results. For example, the Opportunity Zones program has been subject to particular criticism for its inattention to data collection and evidence building. The program seeks to boost investment in low-income communities by providing tax incentives for investors, but it gathers only limited data on recipients' tax forms, with no clear plan to collect or publish data on program performance. This lack of data has raised profound concerns about whether the program supports equitable development or exacerbates gentrification and displacement of low-income residents and small businesses, particularly residents of color and small businesses owned and operated by residents of color.

Other programs have done a better job of establishing and measuring process and outputs, which are useful for tracking the implementation of place-based investments and ensuring continuous program improvement. For example, the New Markets Tax Credit Program collects data in a compliance and reporting system and uses the data for monitoring purposes and to produce summary reports. This transaction-based system describes activities but offers limited insights into program outcomes or impacts. Tracking activities and outputs without rigorously evaluating their impacts cannot answer questions about the degree to which a program is making a difference in the problem(s) it was created to solve. For example, a program might collect impressive data on the number of jobs it creates, with little to no consideration of the quality of jobs created and the impacts of those jobs on people's well-being.

Moreover, many conventional metrics and analytic tools may not effectively prioritize racial equity. For example, the CDBG program requires grantees to collect data on race or ethnicity as performance measurement indicators for project activities that deliver benefits directly to individuals or households, but it does not require grantees to collect such data for projects that are delivered to specific subareas within the target jurisdiction. In addition, local grantees sometimes face substantial challenges accessing the data they would need to identify systemic equity gaps or track progress toward closing them. Key indicators may not be available at the neighborhood level or not disaggregated by race and ethnicity, or they may be too expensive to access.

Finally, few programs have effectively engaged community members in the collection, interpretation, or application of data. Moreover, as part of performance measurement processes, data

mainly flow up from communities to federal entities (through local implementers), without a corresponding flow of insights back to communities to inform practice. In other words, data are often collected about community residents without meaningful feedback loops that allow local stakeholders to improve their practices or take new action. The Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction Program offers a positive example of community engagement in data-related work, providing resources, including the help of a local research partner, to enable community leaders to closely examine factors contributing to crime. The research partner helps sites describe and define problems and identify evidence-based solutions, and it provides ongoing analysis and assessment of a program's impact. The cross-sector team uses data, analysis, and direct community input to identify and select response strategies rooted in data and the evidence about what works.

A Framework for Designing the Next Generation of Place-Based Programs

As policymakers and practitioners design a next generation of federal place-based programs, they can draw lessons from current and prior programs to better advance their normative goals and principles. PolicyLink and the Urban Institute, with input and advice from the policy working group, are collaborating to develop a framework, or blueprint, for federal policies that reverse and repair the legacy of segregation and disinvestment so every family can live in a community that supports its well-being and the long-term life chances of its children. Collectively, we envision that the next generation of federal policies focused on places will

- confront racial inequity and injustice,
- bridge sectors and policy domains and activate resources and policy levers at multiple scales,
- respect and build community voice and power,
- deliver sufficient resources and lasting system reforms to achieve meaningful change for people and places, and
- promote a culture of learning through evidence and evaluation.

Here we pose a series of high-level questions central to the design of an entirely new place-based program or to the refinement of an existing program. These questions also have relevance to the design of programs that may not be considered place-based but that influence or are influenced by the places in which people live, work, and play. They offer a disciplined framework for incorporating experience

from the federal government's prior place-based programs into an evidence-based theory of change for future policy that confronts long-standing racial inequities and injustices. In many cases, responses to these questions will prompt further investigation about specific features of past or ongoing programs, including their implementation and effectiveness.

The first two questions focus on a program's outcome goals and on clearly articulating how addressing specific conditions in places is expected to advance the well-being and life chances of individuals and families. The third question calls for a frank interrogation of past and ongoing policies and practices that have caused the conditions the program aims to repair and the outcomes it aspires to improve. The following two questions consider issues of leverage and power, revealing mechanisms for shifting and building power. The final questions address financial and institutional resource requirements for a program to achieve meaningful change.

1. What population outcomes does the program aim to improve and for whom?

Even when a program intends to focus on places—and to transform conditions within places—its design should start by identifying how this transformation will improve outcomes for people, acknowledging the dynamic interaction between people and the neighborhoods, cities, and regions in which they live. Answering this question means making explicit both the intended population-level outcomes and the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the people the program aims to benefit. A detailed and thoughtful response can help identify and shape decisions about how to advance racial equity in all aspects of program design and implementation.

In addition, if the program aims to advance outcomes that span policy domains, identifying these goals can help shape decisions about what federal agency (or interagency structure) should administer the program and how to break down policy silos (and the institutional structures and incentives that maintain them) to achieve constructive engagement, collaboration, and problem solving among the relevant agencies.

Finally, identifying population outcome goals in concrete terms from the outset sets the stage for the effective use of evidence and evaluation by helping define meaningful measures of success, framing effective monitoring and evaluation strategies, and equipping communities to collect and use data and evidence to inform their efforts.

2. What conditions of place must change to achieve the intended population outcomes?

Programs considered to be place-based focus on different types of places and different geographic scales. Too often the linkages between place-based conditions and a program's intended benefits for residents are unstated or poorly defined. Clarity about the conditions of place that a program aims to change should draw from existing evidence and evaluation findings and drive the use of evidence to inform local strategies, monitor implementation, and measure results (for both places and people).

Explicitly naming how place matters and how different scales of place interact can help planners and policymakers decide what places should be eligible to participate in a program, along with other important elements of program design. Because racist policies and practices have built a system of separate and unequal places, many place-based programs have directed resources and opportunities to communities of color, although this practice and the underlying rationale have not generally been transparent. Explicitly identifying the conditions of place that matter most to a program's outcome goals could help ensure that the communities that have suffered the most from systemic racism are eligible to participate.

Because people move a lot, changes in the characteristics of a place do not necessarily benefit the original residents or other individuals and families like them that a program aims to serve. Explicitly naming the intended outcomes for both people and places can help shape key program features, including criteria for selecting grantee organizations and investments to protect against displacement, as well as requirements for engaging community members in setting priorities and holding stakeholders accountable for action.

3. What policies and institutional practices created and sustain the current state for these conditions and outcomes?

Effective problem solving starts with systematically assembling evidence (including narratives and personal stories) about current conditions and about the historical forces that produced them. This evidence should be analyzed at the federal level, but local stakeholders should also be prompted and supported to explore and challenge the historical and ongoing practices in their own communities. Meaningful (and well-supported) planning requirements could provide the impetus for this critically important work.

Race-based discrimination, exclusion, disinvestment, and marginalization have created and perpetuated place-based disparities. Making the specifics of this history explicit and understanding the persistence of discriminatory barriers and practices constitute essential first steps toward diagnosing systemic inequities and pursuing actions and investments with the potential to catalyze lasting systems change to correct them. These actions may also highlight opportunities for the program to support advocacy for meaningful and lasting changes in inequitable policies and systems.

Without a full accounting of the drivers of current conditions, a program's design may fail to recognize the role of programs and resources in intersecting policy domains or to confront long-standing disparities in voice and power that have locked people of color and people experiencing poverty out of decisionmaking and leadership roles. A full accounting of these issues underscores the importance of engaging local actors already advocating for equitable systems change in their communities and will help identify the most appropriate local grantees.

4. What agencies control the public-sector levers to transform places and improve population outcomes?

Identifying the agencies that control essential resources and policy levers will reveal challenges and inform strategies for bridging policy domains, not only at the federal level but also at the neighborhood, local, and state levels. For example, housing a new program within a single federal agency may be inadvisable if different federal agencies control the availability and regulation of essential funding streams. Instead, the new program could build on the experience of interagency partnerships or independent implementation entities to establish effective mechanisms for braiding and blending resources. Analysis of key policy levers and who controls them could also help define practical performance metrics and accountability mechanisms. Addressing this question at the state and local levels and the federal level can identify tensions between federal goals and state or local realities, including both the willingness and the capacity of state and local governments to advance federal priorities.

5. Who else wields power, and whose voices have been excluded from decisionmaking?

Transforming long-established conditions in disinvested places requires fundamental changes in entrenched systems. Public-sector agencies play critical roles, but they function within the larger context of political, economic, and social power. Identifying the institutions and people who exercise

power in these systems—both formally and informally—and who has been excluded from power can drive decisions about programmatic mechanisms to support shifting or building power.

Historically, social, political, and economic systems in the United States have denied people of color and people with low incomes both individual and collective power—over financial and physical assets, mainstream narratives and communication, laws and policies, and prevailing institutional practices. When planners and policymakers explicitly address the question of power, they may identify opportunities to shift control over some decisions or actions or to build capacity to exercise influence or control. For example, they might impose program requirements for engaging a broad, cross-sector set of actors—including leaders from the community, as well as from government and philanthropy—to collectively advance the work locally. They might provide resources for investments in leadership development and organizational capacity building or to support advocacy and coalition building. And they might widen the definitions of the characteristics and capacities of organizations best positioned to lead program implementation locally and adapt federal funding criteria to better align with essential organizational capacities.

Community power itself can be an intended outcome of place-based policy, but it can also be instrumental in achieving other desired outcomes. Moreover, both the levers of change and the disparities in power reflect and embody structural and systemic racism, so making these inequitable power dynamics explicit will undergird efforts to center racial equity and justice in the specifics of program design.

6. What scale of funding will be required, and for how long, to achieve and sustain the intended outcomes?

Although estimating the full dollar cost to achieve a program's vision may be difficult, producing such an estimate helps match the program's funding level to its intended outcomes and informs trade-offs between the number of communities to fund and the level of funding per community. A careful estimate will also inform a realistic assessment of the required duration of federal support to each locality, including the need for ongoing resources to sustain community-based organizations and collective decisionmaking efforts aimed at shifting power and reforming inequitable systems.

Not all required resources necessarily come from programmatic funding. The philanthropic sector can potentially play an important role, such as by supporting capacity building for emerging organizations that build voice and power or demonstrations that test new tools and strategies. The long-term sustainability of place-based efforts also requires private-sector investment on a par with the

resources flowing to communities that have not suffered from decades of disinvestment and neglect. Identifying scale and potential sources will inform strategies that leverage other public spending and incentivize investment of private capital (without displacing or excluding people with low incomes and people of color).

7. What other capacity-building supports and incentives will be required?

A place-based program's implementation and impacts hinge not only on dollars but on the capacities of both public and private institutions. Acknowledging and addressing capacity gaps through technical assistance or other forms of support will help localities interrogate their histories to understand the drivers of place-based inequities. Capacity-building support can help local stakeholders effectively blend and braid funding streams and navigate multiple policy domains. It can facilitate the creation of collective decisionmaking tables and bolster the emergence and influence of organizations that amplify the voices of people of color and people with low incomes.

Appendix A. Programs in the Policy Scan

Program descriptions are drawn directly from https://beta.sam.gov/ (formerly known as the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance) unless otherwise noted.

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION PROGRAMS

The commission administers several place-based programs to the 420-county, 13-state region of Appalachia.[50] The programs include planning and technical assistance to Local Development Districts, Appalachian Development Highway System construction, and other area development, technical assistance, research, and demonstration project grants.

BANK ENTERPRISE AWARD PROGRAM

Through this program, the US Department of the Treasury provides monetary rewards to insured depository institutions that increase their level of community investment by either channeling loans, investments, services, and technical assistance to highly distressed communities or providing assistance to certified community development financial institutions that undertake such activities.

BROWNFIELDS AREA-WIDE PLANNING PROGRAM

The Environmental Protection Agency established this program as part of its efforts on the interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities to help communities responsibly develop brownfields, properties whose redevelopment may be complicated by the potential presence of hazardous contaminants. As a supplement to the agency's existing brownfields programming, the Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Program provides funding to help communities perform research to develop an area-wide plan for brownfields assessment, cleanup, and reuse. The resulting plan provides direction for future brownfields cleanup, reuse, and related improvements (EPA 2012).

BUILD TRANSPORTATION DISCRETIONARY GRANTS PROGRAM

Formerly known as the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program, the Department of Transportation's BUILD (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development) program provides surface transportation infrastructure grants to state and local governments. In 2021, the program was renamed the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE).

CAPITAL MAGNET FUND

The US Department of the Treasury, through its Community Development Financial Institutions Program, awards Capital Magnet Fund grants to certified community development financial institutions and eligible nonprofit housing organizations to attract financing for—and increase investment in—affordable housing for people with low incomes or for related community and economic development activities.

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods program provides both planning and implementation grants to public housing authorities, other local government entities, nonprofits, and other eligible entities to support community development and revitalization in distressed areas. The program focuses on redeveloping severely distressed public or HUD-assisted housing to transform neighborhoods with high levels of poverty into viable mixed-income neighborhoods with access to economic opportunity.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development provides flexible funding to states and local governments via Community Development Block Grants for activities directed toward neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and community services, facilities, and other improvements. The program strives to channel resources into improvements in housing, environmental conditions, and economic development that principally benefit people with low or moderate incomes.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS PROGRAM

This fund, administered by the US Department of the Treasury, provides support to community development financial institutions for making community loans and investments, or providing other financial services, that promote local economic revitalization and community development.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

The US Department of Health and Human Services provides flexible funding via the Community Services Block Grant to states and other eligible entities for services, implemented through a network of local community action agencies, that aim to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower families and individuals with low incomes to become fully self-sufficient.[51]

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM

The US Department of Agriculture provides grants to land-grant schools to operate cooperative extension programs that provide agricultural extension and disaster planning services to local governments and businesses. The grants aim to encourage practical applications of research to the agricultural, rural energy, and related industries.

ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE

Through this program, the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration provides a range of technical, planning, and infrastructure assistance to local governments in regions experiencing adverse economic changes. The program is designed somewhat flexibly to respond to economic challenges that happen suddenly or over time, including, for example, a steep decline in manufacturing employment that follows a plant closure, changes to trade patterns, a catastrophic natural disaster, a military base closure, or a shift in environmental or regulatory conditions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Through its Planning program, the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration provides local governments with funding for a strategic economic development planning process to guide and inform future strategic investments and initiatives based on the region's strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PUBLIC WORKS

Through its Public Works program, the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration provides catalytic investments to help distressed communities build, design, or engineer critical infrastructure and facilities that help advance regional development strategies and local economic development goals.

EMPOWERMENT ZONES PROGRAM

This program, which we group with the closely related Enterprise Communities and Renewal Communities programs, was an interagency effort by the Departments of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development. As part of this program, designated zones and communities received access to a combination of direct grants and tax benefits, with the goal of spurring community revitalization.[52] While the direct grants component of the program has been discontinued, the tax designations and associated benefits remain active.

INNOVATIONS IN COMMUNITY BASED CRIME REDUCTION PROGRAM

Through this program, formerly known as the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation program, the US Department of Justice provides funding for state and local governments, as well as eligible nonprofit organizations, to establish multistakeholder neighborhood partnership teams that deploy data-driven, community-led, cross-sector approaches to increasing safety and trust in neighborhoods with high levels of violent or other series crime. The program was originally a part of the agency's efforts in the interagency Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative.

JOBS PLUS INITIATIVE

Through its Jobs Plus Initiative, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development provides support to public housing authorities to help residents increase earnings and improve employment outcomes through work readiness, employer linkages, job placement, educational advancement, technology skills, and financial literacy services. It strives to address poverty among public housing residents by encouraging and enabling employment through services and an earned income disregard for working residents.

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND UNIVERSITY CENTERS

Through its Local Technical Assistance program, the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration supports local governments in economically distressed regions by providing them with tools to help shape, implement, or evaluate strategic economic development initiatives. The Local Technical Assistance program is flexibly designed to provide a range of supports, including project feasibility and economic impact studies.

Through its University Center program, the Economic Development Administration builds the capacity of colleges and universities to provide technical assistance—such as providing support on economic impact assessments, developing cluster strategies, promoting regional collaboration, or commercializing and transferring new technologies—to local governments and businesses in economically distressed areas.

NATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION INITIATIVES

Through the Community Development Financial Institutions Program, the US Department of the Treasury provides financial and technical assistance services to Native community development financial institutions.

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

This was an interagency initiative that engaged the White House's Domestic Policy Council and Office of Urban Affairs, as well as the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Education, Justice, Health and Human Services, and Treasury, to collaborate and coordinate on pioneering neighborhood revitalization solutions. The initiative did so through integrating Promise Neighborhoods, Choice Neighborhoods, and other place-based programs in distressed neighborhoods; providing flexible grants and technical assistance to localities; and working with communities to develop approaches for effectively "braiding" federal and other resources to pursue community development projects.[53]

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM

In response to the Great Recession, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Neighborhood Stabilization Program provided emergency assistance to communities with high rates of home foreclosures and abandoned properties. It provided grants to state and local governments to help them establish financing mechanisms for the purchase and redevelopment of foreclosed-upon homes and residential properties, such as buying and rehabilitating them directly, establishing land banks, and redeveloping or demolishing properties in a state of disrepair.[54]

NEW MARKETS TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

Through the Community Development Financial Institutions Program, the US Department of the Treasury administers this tax expenditure program that provides tax relief to investors who make capital investments in qualifying low-income communities.[55]

OPERATION WEED AND SEED

The US Department of Justice's Operation Weed and Seed provided grants to local governments to implement a multipronged strategy for reducing community crime, including (1) law enforcement "weeding" activities that sought to reduce violent crime and drug use in communities with high levels of crime via community policing and other law enforcement strategies and (2) neighborhood public and private "seeding" activities that sought to spur neighborhood revitalization through social service enhancements, including substance use prevention and treatment options.[56]

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

The US Treasury, which administers this tax expenditure program jointly through the Community Development Financial Institutions Program and the Internal Revenue Service, provides tax benefits to investors who direct capital to businesses, housing developments, and other entities in qualifying low-income communities.[57]

PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

This program was a federal interagency partnership between the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development that encouraged the agencies to align their investments and policies toward integrating and improving their housing and transportation systems and supporting the local business landscape (EPA, HUD, and DOT 2010).

PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP PILOTS FOR DISCONNECTED YOUTH

This was an interagency initiative that involved collaboration among the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor to test innovative, cost-effective, and outcome-focused strategies for improving results for disconnected youths. The program allowed state and local grantees to blend discretionary funds from these agencies into a single pot that they could report on with a single set of reporting and other requirements.[58]

PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS

The Department of Education provides funding to community-based and other qualifying organizations to help them implement a continuum of cradle-to-career educational, family, and community supports at the neighborhood level, with the goal of improving academic and developmental outcomes for children living in distressed communities.[59]

PROMISE ZONES INITIATIVE

The Promise Zones Initiative was an effort of 13 federal agency partners that allowed designated zones to draw on benefits that included access to the AmeriCorps VISTA program, a federal liaison to help navigate partner agency programs, a preference for certain competitive federal grant programs and technical assistance from participating federal agencies, and Promise Zone tax incentives.[60]

REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Through this program, the US Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture partners with four regional host institutions to build capacity among cooperative extension service programs. The four Regional Rural Development Centers are land-grant universities that individually act as a regional hub for extension programs operated by land-grant schools in multiple states and together form a one-stop shop for the nationwide network of cooperative extension service programs.[61] Each center receives resources to help its regional network of land-grant schools provide strategic economic development support to the rural governments and businesses they serve.

RESIDENT OPPORTUNITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Through this program, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development provides funding for service coordinators in public housing developments who link residents to supportive services—such as training opportunities and job placement assistance—that can help them achieve economic and housing self-sufficiency.

SECTION 4

Also known as the Capacity Building for Affordable Housing and Community Development Program, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 4 program provides capacity-building support to community development corporations and community housing development organizations to help them provide effective community development and affordable housing services to families with low or moderate incomes.

STRONG CITIES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

SC2 was an interagency effort that sought to boost local capacity for community and economic development by providing localities with a combination of planning grants, embedded community solutions teams made up of federal agency representatives, connections to a national resource network of localities implementing solutions to similar challenges, and the opportunity to host a fellow from a public service program.[62]

STRONGER ECONOMIES TOGETHER

This program funded regional collaboration and strategic economic development planning among rural counties. It was a partnership between cooperative extension programs at 1,862 land-grant schools, the US Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Rural Development department, and the four Regional Rural Development Centers funded by the US Department of Agriculture.[63]

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development established this initiative as part of its efforts on the interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Through the Sustainable Communities Initiative, HUD rolled out a constellation of smaller programs to help localities integrate their housing, transportation, infrastructure, and environmental goals as part of a comprehensive planning process.

Appendix B. Questions Addressed in the Policy Scan

The table below identifies the seven major domains for which we collected and summarized information on the federal place-based programs in the policy scan.

TABLE B.1

Guiding Questions for the Policy Scan

Domain	Key program questions
1. Background	*Organizations* ▪ Which federal agency implements and/or oversees the program? ▪ What types of organizations are eligible for funding (e.g., level of government, type of government agency, large nonprofits, community-based organizations)? *Funding mechanism* ▪ How is federal funding delivered (e.g., formula or competitive grants, tax credits, loans, or another subsidy mechanism)? ▪ Is funding delivered directly to localities or as a pass-through grant administered by states or another umbrella entity? *Scale of funding* ▪ What is the most recent appropriation level and budget year? *Implementation background* ▪ How many years has this program been active? ▪ What is the size of the program (e.g., total federal investment, number of sites or entitlement jurisdictions, or average federal spending per site)? ▪ How has the program evolved since its initiation, and how is feedback gathered and incorporated into each iteration? Who provides feedback?
2. Goals	*Overall goal* ▪ What core or motivating problem does this program aim to solve? ▪ Who is the program designed to reach or benefit? ▪ What are the target goals and outcomes of the program? ▪ How does the program try to achieve greater racial equity? ▪ Does the program articulate its strategies for achieving greater racial equity in its mission statement or governing statutes? If so, how? *Mobility predictors* ▪ Which predictors of mobility from poverty does the program directly target? *Theory of change* ▪ What is the program's theory of change? ▪ How does the program regularly assess the community's needs? ▪ In what ways does the program design or theory of change address racial equity? *Policy and systems change* ▪ How does the program consider, articulate, or address policy and systems change goals? ▪ Does the program include capacity building or other activities related to systems change? ▪ To what extent do the program's goals relate to or address historical and systemic racial inequities? ▪ Is there an opportunity for a cross-agency or cross-systems approach to maximize federal resources and incentivize federal and local coordination?

Domain	Key program questions

3. Geographic scale and focus	*Place definition*
	▪ Does the program define place? If so, how?
	▪ At what geographic scale does the program focus its efforts (e.g., neighborhood, city/county, metro area, region)?
	Eligibility
	▪ What entities are eligible to receive funding (e.g., states, local public agencies, nonprofits)?
	▪ In what ways is the program designed to be accessible to nonprofits (particularly smaller community-based organizations)?
	▪ How is program eligibility determined?
	  ▪ If formula, what is the formula based on?
	  ▪ If competitive, what criteria are most important?
	Equity features
	▪ To what extent do the program's geographic focus and eligibility criteria relate to or address historical and systemic racial inequities?
	▪ In what ways does the program prioritize geographies where residents of color experience disproportionate rates of economic insecurity?

4. Strategies and activities	*Core program strategies and activities* ▪ What agencies, organizations, and individuals does the program engage? ▪ What activities does the program undertake and/or support? ▪ Which actors are responsible for implementing the activities? ▪ How does the program leverage partnerships within and outside of government? *Equity features* ▪ Are racial equity and justice concerns addressed in the program's strategies and activities? If so, how? ▪ How does the program engage and include leadership of its constituents, clients, or target population in the implementation? ▪ Is the program designed to center the efficacy and power of marginalized people and communities living in the specified geographic place in its governance? If so, how?
5. Evidence and evaluation	*Evidence-based approach* ▪ To what extent does the program build and apply evidence? ▪ How does the program use data and evidence to drive activities or investments? *Data and measurement* ▪ What measurable outcomes and indicators does the program target? ▪ How does the program track and measure progress on its selected predictors of mobility from poverty? ▪ What data does the program collect? What are the sources of data? *Evaluation* ▪ Has the effectiveness of the program been measured? ▪ Is evaluation required for individual sites and/or for the program as a whole? If so, is it under way? *Evaluation insights* ▪ In what areas has the program excelled? ▪ What factors have supported the program's success? ▪ What factors constrain the program's effectiveness? ▪ What promising practices have been documented? ▪ How are insights communicated, and to whom? *Equity in evaluation* ▪ How are questions of racial equity addressed in data collection, outcomes measurement, and evaluation design? ▪ Are data on program results and efficacy disaggregated by race and ethnicity?

Domain	Key program questions
	▪ What type of qualitative data is considered in lieu of quantitative data sets to illustrate racial inequities?
6. Sustainability and systems change	*Sustaining work (for time-limited awards or one-time grantees)* ▪ Have grantees successfully sustained their work after project funding ends? ▪ What funding mechanisms or policy changes support sustainability, especially for programs that are competitive? ▪ Did the program produce ongoing policy or systems changes? Have insights from this program been incorporated into subsequent initiatives? *Stakeholders* ▪ What leading associations, networks, or organizations advocate for the program? ▪ How does the program communicate its results with partners, stakeholders, the people whom the program serves, and the broader community? *Equity in systems change* ▪ How are the people whom the program serves involved in conversations about how to sustain the work after the grant ends? ▪ How are the people whom the program serves involved in setting policy agendas, advocating for broader change, and so forth? ▪ How are low-income residents and residents of color positioned to govern the iteration and implementation of the program moving forward? ▪ Do inequities in funding continuation exist among grantees?
7. Feasibility	*Likelihood of successful adoption and implementation* ▪ Does the program garner bipartisan, institutional, and community support? ▪ If not, what strategies can be deployed to build public will for this approach?

Notes

[1] Margery Austin Turner and Solomon Greene, "Causes and Consequences of Separate and Unequal Neighborhoods," Urban Institute, accessed March 21, 2021, https://www.urban.org/racial-equity-analytics-lab/structural-racism-explainer-collection/causes-and-consequences-separate-and-unequal-neighborhoods.

[2] For a discussion of tax incentives that prioritize physical profitability with a physical space and those that attempt to improve community conditions within that space, see Layser (2019).

[3] Joanne Kim and Tracy Hadden Loh, "How We Define 'Need' for Place-Based Policy Reveals Where Poverty and Race Intersect," Brookings Institution, September 22, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-we-define-need-for-place-based-policy-reveals-where-poverty-and-race-intersect/.

[4] Austin, Glaeser, and Summers (2018) discuss, for example, direct public investment, tax benefits, or subsidies to businesses, tax benefits or grants to individuals, and regulatory relief. Neumark and Simpson (2015) tie some of their classification to underlying economic theory about the value of place-based programming, discussing Enterprise Zones (and like programs), programs that leverage network effects, discretionary grants, cluster-based and university programs, infrastructure and other regional investments, and community development and locally led initiatives. Bartik (2020) focuses on place-based jobs subsidies.

[5] Tax incentives often have their own financing distinctions. Layser (2019) discusses indirect tax equity models versus more direct funding models. Pew Charitable Trusts (2021) discusses Community Development Block Grants, Enterprise Zones, job creation and investment tax credits, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, New Markets Tax Credits, Opportunity Zones, and tax-increment financing.

[6] For a list of economic development programs, see Lawhorn (2021) and Pew Charitable Trusts (2021). Tach et al. (2019) is a recent catalog that crosses multiple policy domains.

[7] See Turner, Acs, et al. (2020).

[8] For this initial scan, we consulted Brennan and Galvez (2017), Pendall and Hendey (2016), Tach and Wimer (2017), and Turner (2017).

[9] Given the breadth and scope of federal programming, we recognize that this inventory may be incomplete. In addition, other programs meet one or two but not all three of our definitional criteria.

[10] Formerly the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program.

[11] "Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government," White House, January 20, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/.

[12] "Investment Priorities," Economic Development Administration, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.eda.gov/archives/2016/about/investment-priorities.htm.

[13] "Investment Priorities," Economic Development Administration, accessed June 4, 2021, https://eda.gov/about/investment-priorities/.

[14] Katrina Ballard, Sarah McTarnaghan, Brittany Murray, and Emily Peiffer, "Creating Lasting Change through Community Leadership," Urban Institute, December 1, 2020, https://www.urban.org/features/creating-lasting-change-through-community-leadership.

[15] Metro Broadcasting Inc. v. FCC 497 US 547 (1990).

[16] "Investing in Appalachia's Economic Future," Appalachian Regional Commission, accessed April 6, 2021, https://www.arc.gov/.

[17] "Local Development Districts," Appalachian Regional Commission, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.arc.gov/local-development-districts/.

[18] US Department of Agriculture, "Become a Part of Stronger Economies Together Regional Training Process," news release, April 22, 2015, https://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/news-release/become-part-stronger-economies-together-regional-training-process.

[19] "Funding Opportunities," Economic Development Administration, accessed April 6, 2021, https://eda.gov/funding-opportunities/.

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Policy Working Group Members

This effort to develop a blueprint for the next generation of federal place-based policy is informed by a policy working group, composed of policymakers and civic leaders working at the intersection of policy areas and across a wide range of geographies, that is sharing insights and fostering learning regarding place-based principles, programs, and action.

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