



## **Promise Neighborhoods: Recommendations for a National Children's Anti-Poverty Program Inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone®**

### **Opportunity**

#### **Create a comprehensive childhood anti-poverty program that is:**

- results-oriented, seeking to achieve better outcomes for children from birth through college;
- funded with government and private funds;
- place (neighborhood) based, focused on community building, and people based - providing a pipeline of high quality, cross-cutting services supporting children and their families;
- built on public/private partnerships with key organizations: faith-based institutions, health care organizations, local businesses, and schools;
- involving community leaders including parents, residents, teachers, business leaders, and other key stakeholders;
- anchored in well-tested principles, with flexibility for local innovation;
- transformational, seeking policy and systems change;
- focused on integrating previously siloed approaches—early childhood, education, health care, after school, parenting education, college preparation and neighborhood revitalization;
- anchored by accountable, passionate leadership.

### **Recommended Promise Neighborhoods Program**

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

**Program:** Over time, each designated Promise Neighborhood would create a pipeline of accessible, linked, best practice programs and high quality schools for neighborhood children and young adults from 0-23 years old, starting when parents are pregnant and finishing when children graduate from college. The pipeline should be enveloped with additional programs to support parents, families and the larger community.

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

**Eligible Places:** To become a Promise Neighborhood, an applicant would have to show the proposed area has a childhood poverty rate of at least 30%, with additional indicators of childhood disadvantage, or a childhood poverty rate of at least 40%. Neighborhoods would be defined using social, economic, and geographic boundaries that need not be restricted by census tract boundaries. A minimum number of children would need to reside in the



neighborhood. (HCZ started the HCZ Project in a 24 block area where 3,000 children live and now serves over 8,000 annually in the 97 block HCZ and an additional 2,000 in its programs outside this catchment area.).

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

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

**Promise Neighborhood Grants:** Federal funding for Promise Neighborhoods would be awarded after an applicant had received a planning grant, met eligibility criteria, shown how it would serve children through high-quality programs/services in its beginning stages, and provided a plan for how it would build out the pipeline of services over time to serve 65 percent of all children ages 0-23 within the geographic boundaries of the designated Promise Neighborhood (either by growing the program to provide more services to more children or expanding their service area to include more children).

**Program Design and Structure:** Applicants would clearly articulate their program goals and show how they plan to adhere to the HCZ principles of: achieving neighborhood scale, building community, creating a pipeline of high-quality, coordinated, accessible programs, evaluating programs to facilitate continuous improvement, and cultivating an organizational culture of passion, accountability, leadership and teamwork.

**Federal Governance:** Promise Neighborhoods would be governed by a newly created federal agency, similar to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) that is:

- Independent
- Multi-faceted with cross-agency advisors
- Autonomous leadership
- Able to receive philanthropic support.

**Technical Assistance Provider(s):** High quality technical assistance providers would support planning, development, implementation, and cross-site learning.

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

- Direct programs and services to children and families
- Capacity Building
- National and local evaluation systems, including building human capital within local staff
- Technical assistance and peer learning for local sites
- Information technology and database systems to develop national and local technology infrastructures, including the building, staffing, and content management of a national website and database system
- Administrative overhead for federal management and oversight



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

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

## **Research on Modeling a National Program on HCZ**

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

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

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

## **Conclusion**

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

## **Contact Information**

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