

Choice Neighborhoods

monthly news about transforming housing, people, & neighborhoods

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HUD ANNOUNCEMENTS

In Case You Missed It: Choice Neighborhoods Receives Record Funding Amount for FY22.

President Biden signed the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) budget on March 15, 2022. For FY22, the Choice Neighborhoods program was appropriated \$350 million. This is the highest funding amount provided to the program since its first appropriation in FY10, and a \$150 million increase over the FY21 budget.

With this appropriation, HUD will issue FY22 Choice Neighborhoods Planning and Implementation Grant Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs). The Planning Grants NOFO will be issued this spring to provide funding to create a comprehensive neighborhood Transformation Plan. Of note, the FY22 budget authorizes up to \$10 million for Planning Grants – double the amount available in prior years. The Implementation Grants NOFO, which provides grants to fund activities within a comprehensive Transformation Plan, will be published later this year. The current award amount for an Implementation Grant is up to \$50 million, with up to 15 percent available for resident supportive services. The FY22 budget increases the amount available for supportive services to up to 20 percent of the total grant award.

This historic investment will enable housing authorities, cities, and partners to revitalize distressed neighborhoods, develop new mixed-income housing, and provide tailored supports to those living in HUD-assisted housing. For more information, visit www.hud.gov/cn. Future NOFOs will be posted on the Choice Neighborhoods website, with the full application package available on www.grants.gov upon publication.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Justice and Mental Health Collaboration.

Government agencies, institutions of higher education, and non-profits can [apply for funding](#) for programs that support cross-system collaboration to improve public safety responses and outcomes for individuals with mental health disorders or co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders who come into contact with the justice system. A total of 27 awards are anticipated, with a maximum dollar award amount of \$550,000. The grants.gov application deadline is May 27, 2022.

EVENTS & TOOLS

Affordable Internet Connectivity Program.

View this [outreach toolkit](#) and [webinar](#) for information on how to help low-income households

struggling to pay for internet service.

Government's Response to the Eviction Crisis.

Understand more about how different levels of government have coordinated and complimented each other's efforts to respond to the eviction crisis by watching this previously recorded [webinar](#).

Lessons from an Anti-Eviction Program.

Listen to this [podcast](#) describing the connection between poverty and eviction and how a Philadelphia based eviction diversion program worked to dramatically reduce eviction filings.

Building Healthy Communities of Opportunity: An Equity Blueprint to Address America's Housing Challenge.

Listen to this previously recorded webinar or read this [report](#) to hear about this groundbreaking report, which weaves together insights from health, housing, and economic security to outline a case for progressive, equity-focused policy.

RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

2022 URA Low Income Limits Issued.

The [2022 Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 \(URA\) - Low Income Limits](#) have been issued on HUD.gov with an effective date of April 18, 2022. The low-income limits are used in connection with rental assistance payment calculations under 49 CFR 24.402(b).

Green Communities + WELL: First Affordable Housing Receives Joint Certification.

Enterprise Community Partners and the International WELL Building Institute [announce](#) that Thessalonica Court, a Bronx, NY-based apartment building is the first affordable housing development in the country to receive a joint certification for healthier, more efficient, and environmentally responsive homes and communities.

An Initial Analysis of New York State's Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act.

Read this [summary](#) of research conducted by New York University's Furman Center to gain insight into short-term trends and impacts this policy has had on NYC's rent stabilized housing units' rent increases and tenant's legal protections.

Reclaiming Vacant Houses and Preventing Foreclosure.

This [report](#), by LISC and Urban Institute, describes how municipalities across New York State have turned the tide on vacant and so called "zombie" homes that can drive crime, sap resources, and undermine the wellbeing of black and brown people and their neighborhoods.

What Works to Improve Employment and Earnings for People with Low Incomes?

Read this [report](#), published by Mathematica to understand more about the effectiveness of interventions and services that can help people with low incomes succeed in the labor market.

Six Trends in Placemaking and Active Transportation from Walk/Bike/Places.

View this [conference summary](#) to learn about and connect to innovative trends in active transportation in the areas of technology awareness; health equity and access; street adaptation; justice, advocacy, and policy; creating programming; and economic opportunity.

GRANTEES IN THE NEWS

New Free Little Libraries.

The Fayetteville Choice Neighborhood FY20 Planning Grantee recently installed and unveiled 19 new free little libraries at the Murchison Townhouses on Rosemary Street. Read this [article](#) to learn more and see photographs.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Cincinnati Choice Neighborhood Connects its Families to High-Quality Early Learning Slots.

In Cincinnati's Avondale neighborhood, the Choice Neighborhoods grantee, The Community Builders (TCB), partnered with Cincinnati Public Schools and several local non-profits to help identify high quality early education slots and connect families to them. Utilizing a full-time early-education specialist and a model early childhood drop-in center, their strategies focused on relationship building. They also focused on growing and developing quality providers, thereby increasing the availability of early childhood slots while also enhancing their quality. As a result, the number of children 0-6 enrolled in early education increased from 18% in 2013 to 73% in 2017. Choice students' Kindergarten Readiness Assessment increased from 31% in 2014/15 to 64% in 2016/17.

In 2012, TCB was awarded a \$29.5 million Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant to rehabilitate five distressed HUD-assisted housing developments and revitalize the surrounding Avondale neighborhood. Education was a significant component in the Avondale Transformation Plan. Recognizing the importance early learning plays in long-term academic success, TCB's education component placed a strong emphasis on securing high-quality early education slots and connecting families with those slots. At grant award, only 18% of their families had their pre-school children in a formal day care setting and more than 50% were not ready for kindergarten. Additionally, TCB already knew that there was both a mistrust of childcare centers – “No one can take care of my child as well as I can” – and a lack of understanding of how to navigate the early education enrollment process.

One of TCB's key strategies in addressing these challenges was to develop solid and trusted relationships with their families. Hiring an early education specialist with strong ties to the community played a major role in their success. Their education specialist, Ms. Gloria Butler, who was formerly a teacher in the Cincinnati Public Schools and spent her entire teaching career in neighborhoods like Avondale, helped make the connection to families and the community easier. The early education specialist and the TCB team began to deepen



trust with the community using several “organic” approaches:

- They worked with the local elementary school to create a “model preschool classroom” within the school where families could drop-in, and children and parents could experience the look and feel of an early education center. In the model classroom, the early education specialist hosted special programs and opportunities for parents to engage in parent-education programs, just read a book with their child or have their child play while they met with staff to discuss early education options. In creating this welcoming home away from home, they were able to expose parents and children to an early-education experience in a low-pressure environment, which ultimately helped families understand the value of early education to support the social and emotional development of the child and become comfortable with the idea of early childhood education as an option for their child.
- Another approach they used was “being present”. The early-education specialist was present in the community, knocking on doors, showing up at events, and hosting a range of events at the sites, at the model center and, pretty much being present wherever families frequented or congregated.
- They also focused their efforts on “fully understanding and addressing the families’ needs”. Once a family began to participate, the early-education specialist would work with them to identify barriers to early education access, such as potty-training, transportation, and immunization requirements, and develop solutions to address them.

Another key strategy behind TCB Team’s success was partnering with local non-profits to facilitate the effort of identifying and connecting families to high-quality early education slots.

- For example, the team partnered with 4C for Children, an area non-profit that specializes in securing early education slots and building the capacity of providers and worked closely with the Choice Neighborhoods families to find the best, geographically nearby, quality setting, for their children. The early education specialist would take families on tours or hold meetings in the centers, so that they could see first-hand where, how and with whom their children would spend their day. This allowed her to connect families and the centers to each other and allay concerns. This approach also enabled TCB to maintain continuous contact with all the centers. This work created relationships and helped TCB be the first one to know of available slots.
- The team also partnered with the United Way to leverage the Preschool Promise program, a program created because of Cincinnati Public School’s levy and designed to fill the gap for those families that fall in the “in between space”. The levy, overwhelmingly supported by taxpayers, allocated \$33 million per school year to strengthen K-12 education and \$15 million to expand access to quality preschool. By successfully guiding families through the Preschool Promise application process, the partnership effectively helped families through what is commonly referred to as the “cliff affect”, which occurs when a pay raise at work triggers a disproportionate loss of government assistance.

A third element in TCB’s approach was leveraging the State of Ohio’s five-star quality rating and improvement system called



“Step Up to Quality” (SUTQ) that rates early learning programs. They used this system to identify high quality slots and improve the quality of nearby early education providers. They would refer families to early education providers who had either achieved a high-quality rating or were willing to enroll in a capacity building program to achieve a high rating. They worked with partners like 4C for Children, who provided professional development to early education providers to help them build their capacity and ultimately achieve the Ohio State 5-star rating. Using this system, TCB was able to identify and support local early-education providers, thereby increasing the total number of high-quality early education slots in the neighborhood.

TCB has demonstrated key successes in its early-education programming through relationship building, partnerships, and leveraging key policies that promote high-quality learning as shown by the significant increase in percent of children enrolled in early education and student Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores. Capitalizing on its early successes, the Cincinnati Choice Neighborhoods Avondale team continues to support its families’ educational goals by starting early for maximum impact over the life of the child and the benefit of the family overall.

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