



Choice Neighborhoods e-Newsletter

Issue 20 • November 2013



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Webinar for Choice and Promise grantees on the NEA

On Wednesday, December 11th at 3:00 PM EST, the National Endowment for the Arts, along with HUD and the Department of Education, is hosting a webinar on how arts can play a role in neighborhood revitalization. The webinar will provide information on the NEA and resources that may be available to assist communities with arts-focused projects. Click [here](#) to register.

Rental Assistance Demonstration Webinar

Please join us on Thursday, December 12th at 2:00 pm EST for a webinar on HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). This webinar will provide an overview of financing and development methods for combining RAD with Choice Neighborhoods. Participants will also receive a demonstration of an inventory tool to assess the potential benefits of leveraging RAD for their Choice Neighborhoods project. Click [here](#) to register.



RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Choice Neighborhoods Conference Videos and Materials Available

In November 2012, Choice Neighborhoods hosted a conference in Washington, DC for grantees, staff, federal partners, and other stakeholders. Several of the sessions were videotaped and are now available on the Choice Neighborhoods website; also available on the website is the conference agenda and materials from various sessions. The sessions available include: *Strategies for Distressed Private Housing in the Surrounding Neighborhood, Community Organizing to Develop a Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan, Building Neighborhoods Not*

Housing, Strategies to Promote Safe Communities, and Ensuring Stakeholder Engagement and a Long-term Governance Structure. To access the videos and materials, click [here](#).

Asset-Building Resource

Policylink and the Ford Foundation have launched an online resource that addresses wealth inequities in this country by providing a comprehensive set of resources for advocates, policymakers, and organizations working to help low-income people and communities of color save and invest in long-term assets. The ACCESS to Financial Security for All website was developed to serve as a place for asset-building and equity-policy advocates to share information, learn about promising asset-building policies, connect with cross-sector allies, and promote inclusive and progressive policies aiming to close the racial wealth gap and advance financial security for all. Click [here](#) for more information.

New Markets Tax Credits as a Financing Tool for Healthy Food Retail

Policylink recently held a webinar on the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) program and how it has been used to expand access to healthy foods by encouraging the private sector to invest in underserved communities. Participants had the opportunity to learn the mechanics of the NMTC program, and explore specific ways that NMTCs are being used to finance projects. Featured speakers include representatives from the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Fund and The Reinvestment Fund. Click [here](#) to view the archived webinar.

Food Stamp/SNAP Benefits Decrease November 1

As of November 1, 2013, anyone who receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamps) benefits will see a decrease in the amount of their monthly benefit. The average single-person household will see a decrease of about \$11/month in benefits. This can be a significant amount, especially for recipients living on a fixed income. In addition, there is further potential for confusion due to timing. In October of each year, the standard cost-of-living adjustments used to calculate SNAP eligibility and benefits are updated. Accordingly, some people may see a slight increase in their SNAP benefits this October, but then a subsequent decrease in November. SNAP offices sent out notices in September and October to inform recipients about the change in benefits. However, food Stamp/SNAP beneficiaries may still need further clarification regarding this change. Click [here](#) to read more about the SNAP benefits decrease. Click [here](#) for potential strategies to help recipients experiencing hardship as a result of the decrease.

Please give us your feedback!

We work diligently to make this e-newsletter relevant to your work. Please submit Grantee feature articles, constructive feedback, story ideas, and funding announcements to: choicetaenewsletter@bctpartners.com.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Request for Proposals for Programs Geared Toward At-Risk Youth

The Interactive Intelligence Foundation has announced a Request for Proposals from nonprofit organizations seeking to foster life improvements for at-risk youth. Special emphasis is placed on projects that promote technology education within the at-risk youth sector. Grant awards typically range from \$5,000 to \$20,000. Priority will be given to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) related projects, as well as those including measurable outcomes. Proposals must be received by November 15, 2013. Click [here](#) for more information.

Request for Applications for Green Jobs Literacy Training and Materials

Roots of Success, a national environmental literacy and workforce development program for individuals facing multiple barriers to employment, has designed a curriculum to strengthen core academic skills; promote understanding of environmental problems and solutions; and prepare people for environmental careers in multiple sectors of the economy. This curriculum is currently used by job training programs, re-entry programs, community colleges, high schools, youth programs, prisons, juvenile facilities, government agencies, and community-based organizations in thirty-four states and three countries. The Roots of Success program provides selected organizations with instructor training and certification for two staff people, all materials required to teach the curriculum, sixty student workbooks (with the option to purchase more as needed at a significantly reduced cost), ongoing technical support, and membership in a national community-of-practice for certified instructors. Organizations not selected for the Roots of Success program will have the option to receive the training and teaching materials at a substantial discount. To be eligible, organizations must have a 501(c)(3) designation and offer job training programs that serve individuals (age 18 and older) with barriers to employment. Applications must be received by November 15, 2013. Click [here](#) for more information. Click [here](#) to access the application.

Grants for School Libraries

The Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries aims to provide books and reading materials to school libraries and students that need them most. Grants of up to \$5,000 are provided to help school libraries expand, update, and diversify their book collections. All grants are made to individual schools rather than school districts, county systems, private organizations, foundations, or other entities. However, only schools where a minimum of 80% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch programs are eligible to apply. The foundation gives preference to schools where 90% or more of the students receive free or reduced lunches and are likely to have the fewest books and reading materials at home. Schools in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and all American territories (including special schools, social services schools, and juvenile detention center schools) that serve any combination of pre-kindergarten through high school students are eligible to apply. Applications must be received by December 2,

2013. Click [here](#) for a list of frequently asked questions. Click [here](#) to view the grading rubric of how applications will be assessed. Finally, the grant application can be found [here](#).

Science Lab Makeovers for Secondary Schools

The Shell Science Lab Challenge, administered by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), is seeking to recognize outstanding middle and high school programs that exhibit an exemplary approach to science lab instruction. Middle and high school science teachers are encouraged to submit proposals highlighting innovative, replicable strategies to deliver quality lab instruction to students utilizing limited school and laboratory resources. One grand prize winning school will receive a lab makeover support package valued at \$20,000. Four national finalists will each receive a lab makeover support package valued at \$8,500. Finally, 18 district winners will each receive a lab makeover support package valued at \$3,000. Applications must be received by December 20, 2013. Click [here](#) for more information.

Surdna Foundation Support for Sustainable Economic Development

The Surdna Foundation aims to create opportunities for upward economic mobility among communities that have experienced historical economic barriers, including low-income people, communities of color, women, and immigrants. The Foundation's Strong Local Economies Program supports the development of robust and sustainable economies through three main categories of programming: business development and acceleration, equitable economic development, and job quality and career pathways. Nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply and invited to submit online letters of inquiry at any time. Grant amounts will vary. In 2012, the Strong Local Economies Program allocated 45 grants ranging from \$20,000 to \$425,000. Click [here](#) to view the funding guidelines for each category in the Strong Local Economies Program.



NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

INITIATIVE CORNER

New Health Centers Announced

On November 7, 2013 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced \$150 million in awards through the Affordable Care Act that will support 236 new health care center sites across the country. Community health centers play a critical role in providing health care services in communities with historically high uninsurance rates. These funds will support the care of approximately 1.25 million additional patients. Of the 382 applications submitted, only 32 proposals received funding. However, Health Center New Access Point applications that did not score high enough for funding, but were in the approvable range, were placed in an active status for up to one year. Click [here](#) to read the press release. Click [here](#) to view the list of new grants organized by state.

U.S. Department of Treasury Announces Bank Enterprise Award Program Winners

The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI Fund) recently announced awards totaling approximately \$17 million to 85 Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)-insured depository institutions for serving economically distressed communities across the nation. The awards are being made through the fiscal year (FY) 2013 round of the [Bank Enterprise Award Program](#) (BEA Program). In order to qualify for the BEA Program, these institutions must engage in activities in census tracts where at least 30 percent of the population lives at or below the national poverty level, and where the unemployment rate is at least 1.5 times above the national average. Click [here](#) to read more about the awards and the CDFI Fund.

Do you have a Technical Assistance (TA) Question, Request, or Suggestion?

Grantees with TA questions or requests, or a suggestion for an upcoming TA activity, are invited to submit them to BCT and HUD at hud.gov/choiceta.



RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Early Assessment of Choice Neighborhoods Off-Site Replacement Housing, Relocation Planning, and Housing Mobility Counseling

The Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC) has released a qualitative analysis of how HUD and the first two rounds of Choice Neighborhoods grantees have approached relocation and neighborhood mobility. This brief focused on whether Choice Neighborhoods has helped families relocate to high-quality neighborhoods and steps taken toward improving neighborhood quality. Click [here](#) to read the report.

Leveraging Anchor Institutions in Neighborhood Revitalization

Two organizations have recently released research on innovative strategies to incorporate anchor institutions into a neighborhood revitalization strategy. First, Living Cities recently published [*The Anchor Mission: Leveraging the Power of Anchor Institutions to Build Community Wealth*](#). This report focuses on a case study of the nonprofit University Hospitals (UH) in Cleveland, OH and their Vision 2010 program to generate local wealth, economic opportunity, and jobs. In-depth interviews of 20 of the core participants in the Vision 2010 process were used to examine how UH was able to achieve their goals, and some of the challenges encountered along the way. Second, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released [*Achieving the Anchor Promise: Improving Outcomes for Low-Income Children, Families, and Communities*](#) in August 2013. Seventy-five interviews of anchor institution, national nonprofit, government, and community organization leaders were conducted to develop a set of focus areas and indicators

help move the field toward a more concerted and strategic emphasis on equitable, inclusive, and place-based development.

Two Research Studies Underscore the Importance of Early Childhood Education

Recently published research by Stanford University psychologists highlights the disparity in language skills between rich and poor children. According to an article published in *Developmental Science*, by 18 months of age, toddlers from socioeconomically disadvantaged families are already several months behind in language proficiency compared to more advantaged children of the same age. Based on investigative experiments of approximately 50 children at ages 18 months to 24 months, psychologist Anne Fernald concluded that “at 24 months the lower [socioeconomic status] SES children just barely reached the level of processing efficiency that the higher SES children had achieved at 18 months.” Click [here](#) to read a review of the article. The Annie E. Casey’s latest KIDS COUNT policy report reveals similar findings. In *The First Eight Years: Giving Kids a Foundation for Lifetime Success*, the authors outline how a child’s early development across critical areas of well-being is essential for making the transition into elementary school and for long-term school success. The report states that just 19% of third-graders in families with incomes below 200% of the poverty level had developed age-appropriate cognitive skills. Click [here](#) to read the report and list of policy recommendations.



GRANTEE FEATURE

Spartanburg, SC Healthy Food Hub

The Spartanburg, SC Planning grantee has recently launched their Healthy Food Hub, a \$1.6 million project to provide residents of the Northside neighborhood with access to healthy food options. The [Northside](#) Healthy Food Hub (NHFH) is a collaborative effort between the City of Spartanburg, the Butterfly Foundation, Hub City Farmers Market, and the Northside Development Corporation, to bring critical fresh foods and staple groceries to the community. The project is located in the center of Spartanburg's CHOICE neighborhood planning area and is scheduled to be completed in April 2014.

Northside is considered a “food desert;” it is located in an area where affordable healthy food is difficult to obtain, especially for those without access to an automobile. Residents of the community have been diligently trying to develop solutions to the lack of access to outlets for fresh food. However, the current economic landscape of the community couldn’t support a grocery store. In addition, dialogue with residents revealed their preference for purchasing most groceries from big box retail outlets. Residents explicitly indicated that they wanted expanded options for fresh food. One resident summarized the problem, “the ice cream truck has no problem selling ice cream here, but we can’t get fresh food and veggies.” This led to a successful grant application to create a mobile farmers market and began discussions in the community

about how to combine this opportunity with another challenge - lack of jobs. Ultimately, NHFH will create between 15-22 jobs over the next four years, at least 75% of which will be filled by residents of the community.

Implementing the NHFH involves a strong partnership between several groups, each with a specific role in the development, operations, and financing of the project:

- The [City of Spartanburg](#) donated \$140,000 to the project, and also manages construction.
- The [Butterfly Foundation](#) (BF) received a \$545,800 grant from the [Healthy Food Financing Initiative](#), which is a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services program. BF operates a culinary arts program that trains formerly homeless, incarcerated, and/or under-/unemployed individuals in the culinary arts. BF will be responsible for running the retail component of the food hub (store, café, and kitchen).
- [HUB City Farmers Market](#) (HCFM) is a successful farmers market with almost 40 vendors serving approximately 1,000 customers each week. Also, once completed, the HCFM will staff the urban farm and manage the farmers' market pavilion.
- The [Mary Black Foundation](#), [Spartanburg County Foundation](#), and [Duke Energy Foundation](#) each made financial contributions to the project.
- The University of South Carolina was recently awarded a grant from the National Cancer Institute to study and document the health related effects of the Spartanburg food hub. This research effort is one of the first in the country to study the ways that residents' health is impacted by having healthier food options available to them.

For more information on the NHFH, click [here](#) to contact Angela Walker at the Northside Development Corporation.