

Choice Neighborhoods: Placing School Improvements and Student Achievement at the Center of Neighborhood Revitalization



Volunteers in front of the Yesler Community Center on Seattle University and Yesler Terrace's community clean-up day

BACKGROUND

Across the country, Choice Neighborhoods grantees are creating the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing. This reinvestment is offering the assets that are important to families' choices about where to live, including safe streets, commercial activity and good quality schools.

HUD's Choice Neighborhoods program recognizes that access to quality schools is a strong driver in creating desirable neighborhoods. Improving school quality boosts the surrounding housing market and makes the neighborhood more appealing to new residents. Improving education opportunities for current residents is also a key factor in ensuring that the neighborhood remains a viable place for families to stay well in to the future. These opportunities include early learning programs and services so children enter kindergarten ready to learn and significant improvements in the quality of schools and after-school programs in the neighborhood that prepare students to graduate from high school college- and career-ready.

This guide highlights how the Seattle Housing Authority and the Seattle Choice Neighborhoods grant team prioritized educational improvements in the neighborhood and in a high-needs neighborhood school by collaborating with multiple partners, including a university, the school district and child-centered nonprofit organizations. Seattle's story serves as a promising example of how multiple partners can mobilize to both improve the range and quality of educational opportunities available to students in their community and use education improvements as a cornerstone of broader community revitalization.

SEATTLE'S CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD

Seattle's Choice Neighborhood is comprised of Yesler Terrace, a more than 70-year-old public housing development located just east of downtown Seattle, and a portion of the surrounding neighborhood. The redevelopment project will increase the number of units on the Yesler Terrace site from 561 to 5,000 units over a 15-year period. Yesler Terrace encompasses roughly 30 acres, and the majority of its residents are from East Africa and Southeast Asia. With residents earning on average less than 30 percent of the city's median income, Yesler Terrace is one of the poorest communities in Seattle.

Close to 400 school-age children live in Yesler Terrace, and according to the Seattle Housing Authority, most of them score well below the Seattle Public Schools' average passing rate on standard math and reading tests in 3rd through 8th grades.

Recognizing the importance of education as a pathway out of poverty for low-income children and youth and the pivotal role of a good quality elementary school in the transformation of a neighborhood, the Seattle Housing Authority is investing Choice Neighborhoods funds in a variety of educational interventions designed to improve educational outcomes for students in Yesler Terrace and the surrounding neighborhood.

The agency's white paper¹ on the subject explains, "In order to [improve outcomes], the Seattle Housing Authority is partnering with local institutions and nonprofits to create a cradle-through-college pipeline of learning resources for children and youth that must result in significantly improved high school and college graduation rates if we are to succeed."

The Seattle Housing Authority recognized that the resources provided through a Choice Neighborhoods grant alone could not transform a neighborhood school or create a coordinated pipeline of supports for children as they move through the education system. To achieve those goals, the Seattle Housing Authority entered into a partnership with Seattle University and with other local institutions and nonprofit organizations. This partnership was forged during preparation of the Choice Neighborhoods application and has become steadily stronger as partners work together. The partnership provides the Seattle Choice Neighborhoods team with the expertise in educational success and wider access to resources needed to create the envisioned support for students in the community.

The Seattle Housing Authority and its partners have built a particularly strong relationship with Bailey Gatzert Elementary School, located across the street from Yesler Terrace. Approximately one third of the school's 400 students live in Yesler Terrace. Bailey Gatzert is one of the highest-poverty schools in Seattle. Historically, the school has been low performing, with only 40 percent of 3rd to 5th graders scoring proficient in reading and only 36 percent reaching proficiency in

Seattle's Choice Neighborhood



math in the 2009-2010 school year. For the past three years, Bailey Gatzert has moved away from open enrollment (which allowed for unrestricted enrollment of students regardless of the location of their residence) and has instead implemented a neighborhood-based attendance plan. As this plan continues to be rolled out, the student body increasingly will be comprised of students from the two square miles around the school. Yesler Terrace falls within that footprint, making a school-based strategy a logical choice for an educational intervention and confirming the importance, for SHA and its partners, to form a strong relationship with leaders at the school.

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY AS A LEAD PARTNER

Seattle University, located just a few blocks from Yesler Terrace, is the leading education and community partner working with the Seattle Housing Authority to shape and oversee the cradle-to-college pipeline being created in the Yesler neighborhood. Serving the community is a part of Seattle University's history and philosophy. For its students, engaging with local neighborhoods is an integral part of attending the university, and they have provided tutoring services at Bailey Gatzert School for nearly 20 years.

In 2010, the University's role providing services to Yesler Terrace residents and to the surrounding neighborhood became more defined. The University's Center for Service and

¹ Choice Neighborhoods: Improving academic achievement and educational opportunities for low-income children and youth in the Yesler neighborhood. Seattle Housing Authority.





CAPITALIZING ON EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS

The Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle University leaders understood that their goal of creating a robust continuum of supportive services around students, from cradle to college and career, required investment and collaboration from a number of community partners. Of the \$30 million Choice Neighborhoods grant, \$1.9 million was dedicated to making education improvements in the community. With this Choice Neighborhoods commitment, the Seattle Housing Authority was able to leverage over \$7.8 million from other partners, including \$3.5 million from Seattle University.

Community Engagement, led by director Kent Koth, launched the Youth Initiative, which focuses its services within the same footprint that comprises Bailey Gatzert's attendance zone. The development of this stronger place-based focus for the University took shape just as Seattle Housing Authority was applying for the Choice Neighborhoods grant, creating a strong confluence of interests. In particular, Seattle Housing Authority leaders recognized the expertise and commitment that existing institutions could bring to their Choice Neighborhoods plan.

"A part of our story is to build off of existing partnerships," says John Forsyth, the Community Services Administrator for SHA. "Seattle University was thinking about education in the neighborhood before anyone thought about applying for a Choice grant."

Prior to their work together on the Choice Neighborhoods grant, Seattle University students were sometimes placed at the Seattle Housing Authority for community service, but the relationship between Seattle University and the Seattle Housing Authority was "not particularly significant," according to Koth, and did not extend to the leadership level. The strong partnership that now exists was a direct result of the Choice Neighborhoods program, as the Seattle Housing Authority recognized Seattle University's expertise in education and the common goal of providing meaningful changes in the neighborhood around Yesler Terrace. The same was true for leaders at Seattle University:

"Along the way, we began to see what was happening at the housing authority with the pursuit of the Choice Neighborhoods grant, and it was in line with what the university wanted to pursue," Koth says. "So we officially embarked on this process together, and a lot came from it."

Community partners are contributing to the education pipeline in other ways as well. These partners include the Seattle Public Schools; Catholic Community Services, which provides both after-school and summer school academic programs; Neighborhood House, which provides early childhood services; the College Success Foundation, which provides high school and college planning; and the YMCA, which provides summer programs for 7th and 8th graders. The newest partner is Seattle Parks and Recreation, which provides summer programs for children moving in to the 6th grade.

Regular meetings among all of these partners have been crucial in making this collaboration around a cradle-to-college pipeline function for the students in Yesler Terrace and the surrounding neighborhood. The Seattle Housing Authority and program staff and leaders from each of the partners meet monthly as part of an Education Collaborative to discuss how they can better complement one another's work, jointly address challenges, and share ideas on how to build upon and strengthen existing services to better meet students' needs. According to Seattle University's Rachael Steward, "The purpose of the meetings is information sharing. The monthly meeting times are best used for participants to learn from one another about developments in their age group, organization, school or field of practice."

These meetings are attended by program staff who are key to the sound implementation of the Collaborative's activities on the ground. For every meeting, there are several goals laid out on the agenda. The topics vary depending on the partnership activities, but include concrete goals for the partnership, such as: "come to a shared understanding of the case management plan" or "come to a shared understanding of summer programming, program logistics, recruitment and registration, and summer program content."



These meetings allow for the optimal coordination of resources and activities across partners. For example, recruiting for summer programs is an annual task that is tackled by all the partners in a collective manner. Yesler families often have children in elementary, middle and high school, and without coordinated recruiting, the group would have to contact several different program providers to register their children for summer programs. This past winter, the collaborative used their meeting times to identify challenges to on-time program registration and created a plan for spring recruitment. As a result, one of the partners hosted a summer program fair, which resulted in earlier and wider enrollment in summer programs.

The Education Collaborative has been essential to ensuring the partnership works in a coordinated fashion and continues to grow and reshape its work in response to the needs of the children and families it serves. The Collaborative works to "foster playful conversation among partners who are working with the same group of people," according to Steward, even if they are doing so in differing capacities.²

CRADLE-TO-COLLEGE APPROACH

Inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone, the Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle University's Youth Initiative, and their partners are creating a "cradle-to-college" pipeline for the Yesler neighborhood along which supports will follow students from early childhood through their elementary, middle and high school years. The "cradle-to-college" or "cradle-to-career" approach is based on the idea that, in order to prepare young people for a successful future, education must be a priority from early childhood until well after secondary school. Education and community leaders must work together to address challenges and provide support along this continuum to ensure children remain in the pipeline all the way through their transition to college and career.

This concept is the foundation of the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods program, which uses the cradle-to-career pipeline model to improve educational



outcomes for students in distressed communities. Thus, SHA's development of a cradle-to-career pipeline in conjunction with Seattle's Choice Neighborhoods program mirrors the close linkages between the Promise Neighborhoods program and HUD's Choice Neighborhoods program at the federal level. Both Promise Neighborhoods and Choice Neighborhoods are part of the Obama Administration's Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI), which includes a number of linked federal initiatives that aim to holistically improve neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

The partnership in Seattle embraced the cradle-to-career approach to "ensure low-income children in the Yesler neighborhood have access to early learning programs, tutoring, summer academic enrichment programs, college preparation mentoring, and scholarships. These resources are meant to complement the learning that happens in the classroom."²

■ Preparing Children for School

To enrich the early supports for young children in the Yesler Neighborhood and prepare children for kindergarten, The Seattle Housing Authority, in partnership with United Way, combined Choice Neighborhoods dollars and matched private funding to bring the Parent Child Home Program to Yesler. In this program, families with toddlers receive home visits from trained paraprofessionals who provide early literacy and parenting education services and speak the language of the families they serve. Twenty-five families from both Yesler Terrace and the larger neighborhood are currently being served by this program, which is delivered by Neighborhood House. Neighborhood House also operates a half-day Head Start program for 3- and 4-year-olds from the neighborhood. The two Head Start classrooms each serve 20 children and these students will likely transition into Bailey Gatzert when they begin kindergarten. AmeriCorps volunteers support the parent engagement component

"A part of our story is to build off of existing partnerships. Seattle University was thinking about education in the neighborhoods before anyone thought about applying for a Choice grant."

~ John Forsyth, the Community Services Administrator for Seattle Housing Authority

² For more details on the Education Collaborative's process of forging relationships and developing a coordinated network of services to support improved education outcomes, see the Seattle Choice Neighborhoods process evaluation paper, online at: http://www.seattlu.edu/uploadedFiles/Youth_Initiative/Content/Results/Impact/Education%20Collaborative%20Summary%20Report_SUYI.pdf.

ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY STUDENTS OF BAILEY GAZERT'S TOTAL ENROLLMENT OF 400 PARTICIPATE IN AN AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING PROGRAM, WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY 80 SEATTLE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, FIVE NONPROFIT PARTNERS AND OVER A DOZEN BAILEY GAZERT TEACHERS.

of the Head Start program. These coordinated efforts are regarded as foundational early childhood supports; local partners plan to continue to build out these resources.

■ K-12 Success

To accelerate the development of stronger opportunities for school-age children, the partnership has organized a multi-faceted set of supports that includes after-school activities, summer programming and enriched supports within the schools. In doing so, it was important to designate key staff people who have a clear role in, and are accountable for, putting this robust set of supports for this age group in place. The Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle University's Center for Service and Community Engagement created a new position, an Assistant Director of K-12 Partnerships, funded through a gift to the university. The incumbent, Eddie Lincoln—a Seattle University law school graduate who grew up in South Seattle—is located at Bailey Gatzert. While he was hired through Seattle University, Bailey Gatzert's Principal, Greg Imel, was involved in the interviewing and hiring process. In his role as Assistant Director of K-12 partnerships, Lincoln coordinates the various school-year and summer programs and connects Bailey Gatzert students to tutoring and other academic enrichment opportunities.

Lincoln's primary responsibility is to work with school administrators, teachers, parents and community partners to bring programs and services into the school that match students' needs and interests. "We've done things to build up the infrastructure of the school," he says. "I do a lot more than my job entails, but you have to do that to build up the trust and to make things go smoothly." The creation of this position has been an important way for the Seattle Housing Authority to ensure the coordination of partners' activities, such as after-school and other service providers, and integrate their efforts with the school's core mission.

The Seattle Housing Authority has also used Choice Neighborhoods funds to hire Saadia Hamid as an Education

Engagement Specialist based at Yesler Terrace. Hamid, who worked at Neighborhood House for 17 years prior to her appointment as the Education Engagement Specialist, provides case management services for some of Yesler Terrace's most at-risk students. This type of monitoring and subsequent intervention prevents children from falling behind as they move through middle and high school. Hamid also serves as a resources for parents at Yesler Terrace who have questions about how to best support their children in school. While parent engagement is not specifically being tracked as part of the initiative, Hamid has more requests for her services than her caseload permits, and family educational activities on site and at the school draw a steady turnout.

K-12 success initiatives extend to summer and after school supports as well. One hundred and eighty students of Bailey Gatzert's total enrollment of 400 participate in an after-school tutoring program, which is supported by 80 Seattle University students, five nonprofit partners and over a dozen Bailey Gatzert teachers. The program operates Monday through Thursday for two additional hours and has contributed 35,000 hours of additional learning time – almost 20 percent more time per participating student per year. Students receive programming that is targeted to their particular grade level and adjusted to meet their individual needs. Students in kindergarten and 1st grade receive one-on-one tutoring and support from university students in math, reading and homework, while 2nd through 5th graders participate in academic assistance and enrichment activities such as filmmaking, instrumental music, soccer, a running club and dance.

Choice Neighborhoods funding also allowed Catholic Community Services to double the number of students attending summer learning programs and almost triple the amount of time students attend the summer program. The summer program held at Bailey Gatzert focuses on literacy and math but also includes activities such as robotics and soccer and. Teachers advise the program's staff on areas of the curriculum where students need to improve. The Supportive Services Coordinator for the Seattle Housing Authority worked with the school's principal to secure space and equipment for the summer program.

"We keep a close eye on the continuous school improvement plan and review with school administrators where students are weak and strong," Steward says, adding that the summer program partners are required to provide a certain number of hours on academics to prevent the knowledge and academic skill loss that often occurs during summer vacation. Additionally, in an effort to support a broader population of Yesler Terrace youth, the Seattle Housing Authority provides on-site tutoring at Yesler Terrace for all





students and offers an after-school arts program and access to the computer lab.

In the near future, the Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle University and their community partners plan to work with school administrators to expand the current supports they are providing to focus on middle-school students who live in Yesler Terrace.

■ Planning For Postsecondary Success

Children from Yesler Terrace who transition from Bailey Gatzert into the neighborhood middle and high schools receive additional support from the College Success Foundation (CSF). These services include test preparation, college tours and other programs for middle and high school students. Prior to the Choice Neighborhoods grant, there were informal conversations between Seattle University, the Seattle Housing Authority and CSF about providing these services. After the grant was awarded, CSF entered into a contractual agreement with SHA to work with middle and high school students. The Choice Neighborhoods grant has allowed the number of Yesler Terrace students receiving this assistance to increase from a mere five students to almost 100 since 2013.

DATA SHARING

Access to data about student performance is an essential component of creating a cradle-to-career pipeline that functions for children and families and results in lasting educational improvements. It allows a student's individual progress to be tracked and creates lasting education improvements over time, so that needed academic and support services can be customized to ensure continued success (and so that potential problems can be identified early and addressed).

School district officials, the Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle University recognized early on that access to data about the performance of each child they serve would better enable them to meet students' needs and maintain continuity of services as students transition between schools and programs. Thus, they established data sharing as a significant component of the Choice Neighborhoods work. As a result, the district's School and Community Partnerships Department led an effort to revamp the district's process for responding to requests for data.

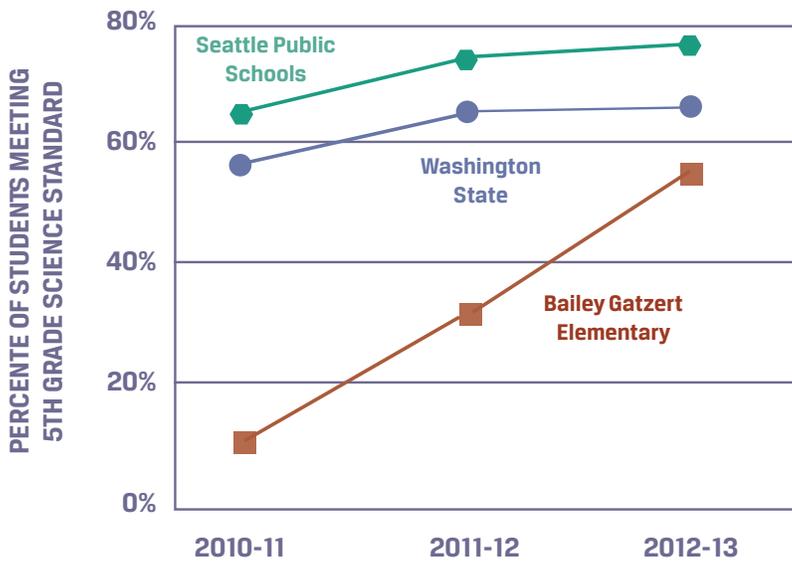
Prior to this effort, small nonprofits often had trouble navigating the school district's data request system. To address this challenge, the Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle University worked with the district's legal, research and technology departments and consulted with multiple partners to develop a new way for community based organizations to access school district data³.

Another challenge was that the school district's interpretations of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which protects the privacy of a student's education records, often differed. After conducting research on the issue, the school district set a high bar for who could gain access to data and what data they could receive, guaranteeing that those organizations that have direct contact with students receive access to the necessary data for the benefit of the students.

According to Courtney Cameron, formerly of the School and Community Partnership's Office, the district's new framework creates a fair process for outside partners to gain access to data and cleans up what used to be a "messy" system. The district is also providing training on "data stewardship" to build partners' capacity to understand and manage the data. "We know we can't do this alone," Cameron explains, adding that "all of the partners involved had to change some of their own bureaucratic policies and procedures, but it's for the better."

To help with the data sharing, the school district received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to host a one-year position to help build the capacity of local schools to work with partner organizations, identify areas where the partners could help improve student outcomes, and create systems where the school and partners could work together. This work has resulted in the creation of two distinct data sharing agreements. The first agreement, between Seattle University, the Seattle Housing Authority and the school district, is designed to allow access to individual student data. The second agreement, between Seattle University and the Seattle Housing Authority, has been amended to include partners who will receive the student records as well. The availability of the individual student data is contingent on the parents signing a waiver annually to allow the school district to release the data.

³ "Protecting Student Educational Records: Law Policy and Practice" is a presentation that was made at a Seattle Public Schools board work session on March 12, 2014. The presentation outlines the new data-sharing framework. The presentation is available at this link: http://www.seattleschools.org/modules/groups/homepagefiles/cms/1583136/File/Departmental%20Content/school%20board/13-14%20agendas/031214agenda/20140312_Presentation_DataSharing.pdf



suggest lessons for other Choice Neighborhoods grantees as they create and sustain relationships among schools and community organizations in order to improve school quality and student outcomes and contribute to a broader neighborhood revitalization plan.

Identify a lead partner or anchor institution with educational expertise. The Seattle Housing Authority leaders recognized that, in order to build and sustain a movement toward educational success as part of their Choice Neighborhoods plan, they needed a strong partner with experience and expertise in this area. As an anchor institution with a track record of service to the Yesler community, Seattle University proved to be ideal in this role. The university had already made a strong commitment to the neighborhood; had resources to bring to this

task; and was prepared to join the Seattle Housing Authority in crafting a plan for educational success that would be a cornerstone of the Choice Neighborhoods application and eventual neighborhood revitalization plan.

Not every Choice Neighborhoods grantee will have access to an anchor partner, such as a university, to take on this role. However, the Seattle Housing Authority's experience illustrates the importance of finding an organization – perhaps a strong community-based organization – that can play a similar lead role in bringing expertise, resources and credibility with schools to the task of improving educational opportunities and outcomes.

Consider adopting a cradle-to-college approach. There are numerous ways to approach the challenges of improving children's educational experiences, but SHA's experience illustrates the value of a cradle-to-career approach from the perspective of a Choice Neighborhoods grantee. First, it encourages action at multiple points along the "pathway" to children's educational success. The Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle University and their partners haven't just launched one or two isolated programs; they are improving supports and opportunities for children from pre-school through high school graduation and transition into college. The programs that the Seattle Housing Authority has located at Yesler Terrace fit within a broader community plan for enriching children's opportunities – and thus are more likely to succeed. Second, this approach allows partners to sequence their work over time, in response to local priorities and as resources allow. The Seattle Housing Authority and its partners expanded after-school and summer learning programs because these were immediate priorities. They will tackle new challenges and enrich the pipeline of services and supports as additional resources become available. Third, using a cradle-to-college approach means that Choice Neighborhoods grantees can draw

In order to develop these data sharing agreements, Seattle University and the Seattle Housing Authority worked with a local with expertise in education data. He was able to work with Seattle Housing Authority's staff and in-house counsel, representatives from Seattle University, and the partners to navigate the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and to negotiate the language in the agreements."⁴

EMERGING RESULTS

Although Seattle University and the Seattle Housing Authority are quick to point out that the initiative at Yesler Terrace and Bailey Gatzert is still in its early stages, positive results are emerging. In 2012-2013, 55 percent of Bailey Gatzert's 5th grade students passed the state Measurements of Student Progress science test, an increase from only 10 percent in 2010-2011. Since 2010, all K-12 students living in Yesler Terrace have also met or exceeded goals in at least one of the following outcome areas: proficiency in reading, proficiency in math, and fewer than 10 days of school missed.

Along with promising results for children at Bailey Gatzert, the investment – of time and dollars – in children's success is growing as well. The university has created a \$1 million endowed scholarship fund, supported by private donors, for neighborhood youth to attend Seattle University in the future. In addition, last year, almost 1,400 Seattle University students provided community service in the Yesler neighborhood, an increase of 79% from the prior year.

LESSONS LEARNED

The joint efforts of the Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle University, Bailey Gatzert Elementary and local partners

⁴ Seattle University and the Seattle Housing Authority have graciously made a copy of one of their data share agreements available for review at: <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/hud-doc?id=sps-sha-su-datashareagmt.pdf>

on the lessons of other communities. Just as the Seattle Housing Authority learned from the experience of the Harlem Children's Zone, Choice Neighborhoods grantees can learn from the growing experience of Promise Neighborhoods around the country.

Ensure effective coordination and implementation of educational services. In Seattle, establishing formal spaces for conversation and coordination of the services along their cradle-to-college pipeline has been pivotal in ensuring that they function well for Yesler's children. The Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle University and their partners have also established roles for dedicated staff people who have clear responsibilities around improving education outcomes and are accountable for their outcomes. The following lessons have emerged from Seattle as they operationalized this coordination:

- **Create structured and regular communication among partners to reduce duplication of services and maximize services for students and families.** The Seattle Housing Authority and its partners have used the Education Collaborative as a place for collaborating and brainstorming about how all the pieces fit together. "Communication throughout the partnerships was critical," Seattle University's Steward says. "I think the agreement that the convening organizations keep the lines of communication open was extremely important." These meetings have also allowed for a formalized space for partners to understand and evaluate how the cradle-to-career pipeline is working and where there are opportunities to strengthen it.
- **Coordinate and provide support at the school site level.** One of the far-sighted actions taken in Seattle was the decision made by the Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle University to devote resources to support Bailey Gatzert's Assistant Director for K-12 Partnerships. Experience around the country has demonstrated that this type of position is pivotal to keeping educators and community partners informed, sustaining relationships, and keeping a sharp focus on results such as increasing students' access to services and improving learning outcomes. Choice Neighborhoods grantees may find it challenging to be able to fund such a position directly, but finding partners who can be a valuable component of a school/community partnership. Across the country, similar positions are being paid for by various institutions, including United Ways, school districts, local foundations and corporations, and multiple federal, state and local funding sources.⁴
- **Develop agreements with the school district to share data at the start.** The attention that the Seattle Housing Authority and its partners have devoted to data sharing

AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF HUD'S CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS PROGRAM IS TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES AMONG CHILDREN IN THE TARGET NEIGHBORHOOD - FROM THE EARLY YEARS THROUGH THEIR TRANSITION INTO COLLEGE AND CAREER.

illustrates their seriousness about working together to ensure progress for every student in the Yesler community. This is the type of nitty-gritty challenge that often defeats partnerships, but the Seattle Housing Authority, the University and the school district have persevered and the benefits should be considerable. When these agreements are in place, partners will be able to share data about student progress in a way that allows each of their services to contribute to individual students' success. But the lesson goes beyond just sharing data. Partners, especially smaller nonprofits, need training in how to access and use the data and to understand the impact that they are having on students. It is important to have someone within the school district dedicated to overseeing and implementing the agreement, to research best practices and to provide ongoing training to community partners, especially when there is staff turnover.

Strong schools are essential building blocks of a strong neighborhood. An important component of HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Program is to improve educational opportunities and outcomes among children in the target neighborhood - from the early years through their transition into college and career. The Choice Neighborhoods grant to the Seattle Housing Authority has enabled nonprofit and educational partners to deepen their efforts to improve outcomes for children and their families. They have expanded their efforts in a coordinated and collaborative way in order to have a greater impact and ensure that more students from Yesler Terrace and the surrounding neighborhood succeed in school and beyond. Early results suggest the staying power of the partnership between the Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle University and other community agencies, as well as improved test scores at the neighborhood elementary school, expanded early childhood education opportunities and many more efforts designed to make the Yesler neighborhood a thriving, central Seattle community.

⁴ To learn more about the community school coordinator position and similar leadership roles, visit the following link at the Coalition for Community Schools website: <http://www.communityschools.org/leadership/coordinator.aspx>



RESOURCES:

- Seattle University is one of a growing number of higher education institutions that are working together as part of the Anchor Institutions Task Force. Visit the AITF (<http://www.margainc.com/initiatives/aitf/2013>) for more information on how such institutions can be "important stabilizing forces and change agents."
- What is happening between the Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle University and Bailey Gatzert Elementary reflects a growing movement to deepen relationships between schools and community partners. Often called community schools or, when universities are involved, university-assisted community schools, these schools bring together numerous partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children and youth and work to strengthen families and build healthy communities. Visit the Coalition for Community Schools website at www.communityschools.org for more information on the overall concept and the Netter Center for Community Partnerships (www.nettercenter.upenn.edu) at the University of Pennsylvania for more on the university-assisted model.
- To learn more about the community school coordinator position and similar leadership roles, visit the following link at the Coalition for Community Schools website: <http://www.communityschools.org/leadership/coordinator.aspx>.
- For more information on other communities creating a cradle-to-career pipeline, visit the websites of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute (<http://www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org>) and the Harlem Children's Zone (<http://hcz.org>).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Martin Blank is the President of the Institute for Educational Leadership and Director of the Coalition for Community Schools.

Linda Jacobson is a freelance journalist and contributing writer for the Institute and the Coalition.

Devon Minerve is a Program Assistant at the Institute for Educational Leadership.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors of this guide would like to thank the HUD staff that directs and administers the Choice Neighborhoods program, especially Mindy Turbov and Jessica Rosenberg. Special thanks is also extended to John Forsyth from the Seattle Housing Authority and Kent Koth and Rachael Steward from Seattle University, and many other partners working in the Yesler neighborhood who generously provided their time and knowledge to our team. Jane Hodgdon from the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods program provided her valuable feedback and expertise. This guide also benefitted from significant contributions by Frank Farrow and Shanti Abedin at the Center for the Study of Social Policy.



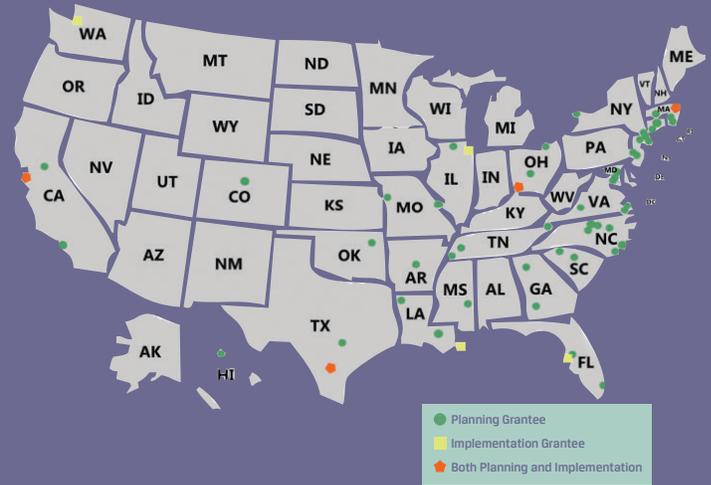
BCT Partners and the Center for the Study of Social Policy are the lead technical assistance providers for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods program.

What is Choice Neighborhoods? Choice Neighborhoods is HUD's signature place-based initiative and is a central element of the White House's Promise Zones Initiative, which builds on a federal partnership to transform high poverty neighborhoods into places of opportunity and economic growth. Choice Neighborhoods enables communities to revitalize struggling neighborhoods with distressed public housing or HUD-assisted housing. Local leaders, residents, and stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers, create a plan that revitalizes distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. Through these grants, communities are replacing obsolete, distressed housing with vibrant mixed-income communities, and are leveraging investments to develop new retail and businesses, turn around failing schools, strengthen early education, prevent crime, improve transportation, ensure basic neighborhood assets, and increase access to jobs.

Why Choice Neighborhoods? Over 11 million Americans live in neighborhoods with a poverty rate of 40% or more. Many of these neighborhoods struggle with rampant crime, failing schools, and the impact of decades of disinvestment. High poverty neighborhoods also collectively have 105,000 units of distressed public and private HUD-assisted housing. Choice Neighborhoods recognizes the need to support local leaders in turning around these neighborhoods so that they can become centers of opportunity and economic growth.

What does Choice Neighborhoods do?

- *Builds upon two decades of HOPE VI innovations.* Choice Neighborhoods builds upon the bipartisan HOPE VI public housing revitalization program launched in 1993. HOPE VI has developed nearly 100,000 units of mixed-income housing in 260 communities. Many HOPE VI sites have not only rebuilt some of the most severely distressed public housing, but have also experienced sharp drops in poverty, crime, and unemployment; large rises in income and property values; and new investment, business growth, and jobs. Urban Institute has estimated that, with these gains, one typical, large HOPE VI redevelopment could save taxpayers \$22 million more than if HUD did nothing.
- *Transforms distressed housing and creates mixed-income communities.* The 8 Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grantees will replace and rehabilitate 2,770 obsolete, isolated public and private HUD-assisted housing units with new, mostly privately managed units. These replacement units will be mixed with 6,600 new affordable and market-rate units to ensure communities attract a sustainable mix of incomes. For some early grantees, Phase I construction is already starting. Boston is beginning to redevelop a distressed Section 8, HUD-assisted housing site that will be replaced with 129 new and reconfigured units. Meanwhile, Seattle is starting to replace a distressed public housing project through the new construction and rehabilitation of 118 units.



- *Catalyzes neighborhood transformation.* Choice Neighborhoods Grantees develop a comprehensive neighborhood plan that addresses the broader needs of the community, including nearby vacant private housing, public safety, local schools, employment, economic development, and other critical community improvements. Grantees can use up to 30 percent of their award to leverage these investments. For example, with \$500,000 in Choice Neighborhoods funds and \$13.5 million in leverage, the City of Boston and its partners are converting an abandoned factory across the street from their future housing site into a multi-tenant food production facility. This facility will support over 50 businesses and create more than 100 new jobs within the first three years of operation. Along the same street, Boston will make strategic façade improvements to 10-15 businesses. These and other physical investments will be complemented with improvements in residents' education, safety, health, and employment.
- *Leverages other funding.* Choice Neighborhoods Grantees have leveraged over \$2 billion, more than 8 times their total grant award. This total includes new and refocused funds from private investors, banks, cities, universities, foundations, and a range of local partners.
- *Engages key stakeholders.* Mayors, local governments, nonprofits, tribal entities, developers, and public housing authorities can apply for Choice Neighborhoods Grants. In addition to applicants, Choice Neighborhoods Grantees have also formed partnerships with a range of local players, such as private investors, Chambers of Commerce, school districts, police departments, community health clinics, faith based organizations, and Workforce Investment Boards.
- *Builds capacity through Planning Grants.* It takes years to plan a neighborhood transformation effort and build a strong coalition of stakeholders. For this reason, Choice Neighborhoods provides smaller, two-year Planning Grants. Planning Grants include competitive preferences for rural communities.