

**Proposed Promise Neighborhoods Priorities**  
Office of Innovation and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education  
March 2011

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The Department of Education proposed to fund Promise Neighborhoods under the legislative authority of the Fund for the Improvement of Education Program (FIE). FIE supports nationally significant programs to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education at the State and local levels and help all children meet challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards. The proposed priorities for the Promise Neighborhoods competition are now available for public comment and include both planning and implementation grants. The level and allocation of funds among the grant types are contingent upon the final fiscal 2011 budget.

- **Vision and Purpose:** The vision of this program is that all children and youth growing up in Promise Neighborhoods have access to great schools and strong systems of family and community support that will prepare them to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and a career. The purpose of Promise Neighborhoods is to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in our most distressed communities, and to transform those communities by—
  1. Identifying and increasing the capacity of eligible organizations that are focused on achieving results for children and youth throughout an entire neighborhood;
  2. Building a complete continuum of cradle-through-college-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports, with great schools at the center;
  3. Integrating programs and breaking down agency “silos” so that solutions are implemented effectively and efficiently across agencies;
  4. Developing the local infrastructure of systems and resources needed to sustain and scale up proven, effective solutions across the broader region beyond the initial neighborhood; and
  5. Learning about the overall impact of the Promise Neighborhoods program and about the relationship between particular strategies in Promise Neighborhoods and student outcomes, including through a rigorous evaluation of the program.
- **Planning Grants** would support eligible organizations that need to develop feasible plans to create a continuum of solutions with the potential to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in a neighborhood. These grants would support eligible organizations that demonstrate the need for implementation of a Promise Neighborhood strategy in the geographic areas they are targeting, a sound strategy for developing a feasible plan, and the capacity to develop the plan.

Under proposed Absolute Priority 1 for planning grants, Promise Neighborhoods planning grantees would undertake the following activities during the planning year:

- (a) Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and segmentation analysis of children and youth in the neighborhood.
  - (b) Develop a plan to deliver a continuum of solutions with the potential to drive results. This includes building community support for and involvement in the development of the plan.
  - (c) Establish effective partnerships both to provide solutions along the continuum and to commit resources to sustain and scale up what works.
  - (d) Plan, build, adapt, or expand a longitudinal data system that will provide information that the grantee will use for learning, continuous improvement, and accountability.
  - (e) Participate in a community of practice.
- **Implementation Grants** would support eligible organizations in carrying out their plans to create a continuum of solutions that will significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in the target neighborhood. These grants would aid eligible organizations that have developed a plan that demonstrates 1) the need for implementation of a Promise Neighborhood in the geographic area they are targeting, 2) a sound strategy, 3) and the capacity to implement the plan. Specifically, grantees would use implementation grant funds to develop the administrative capacity necessary to successfully implement a continuum of solutions, such as managing partnerships, integrating multiple funding sources, and supporting the data system. The majority of resources to provide solutions within the continuum would come from existing public and private funding sources that are integrated and aligned with the Promise Neighborhoods strategy.

Under proposed Absolute Priority 1 for implementation grants, Promise Neighborhoods implementation grantees would undertake the following activities during the implementation years:

- (a) Implement a continuum of solutions that addresses neighborhood challenges, as identified in a needs assessment and segmentation analysis, and that will improve results for children and youth in the neighborhood.
- (b) Continue to build and strengthen partnerships that will provide solutions along the continuum of solutions and that will commit resources to sustain and scale up what works.
- (c) Collect data on indicators at least annually, and use and improve a data system for learning, continuous improvement, and accountability.
- (d) Demonstrate progress on goals for improving systems, such as by making changes in policies and organizations, and by leveraging resources to sustain and scale up what works.
- (e) Participate in a community of practice.

- **Eligibility Requirements:** Entities proposed to be eligible to receive both Promise Neighborhoods planning and implementation grants include: (1) nonprofit organizations, which may include faith-based nonprofit organizations, (2) institutions of higher education, and (3) Indian tribes.
- **Rural and Tribal Priorities (Planning and Implementation):**
  - (a) **Absolute Priority 2:** Promise Neighborhoods in rural communities. The Secretary proposes a priority for applicants that meet all requirements in absolute priority 1 AND serve one or more rural communities only.
  - (b) **Absolute Priority 3:** Promise Neighborhoods in tribal communities. The Secretary proposes a priority for applicants that meet all requirements in absolute priority 1 AND serve one or more Indian tribes.
- **Additional Priorities:** The Secretary proposes priorities for applicants that propose to enhance, expand, or coordinate comprehensive and high-quality local early learning networks; include strategies to increase internet connectivity; improve access to the arts and humanities; or increase the availability of quality affordable housing as part of a strategy that is integrated with neighborhood transformation efforts. In recognition of the important role that adults play in the educational development of children, the Secretary proposes to include, in the FY 2011 competition, a priority for proposals that include a focus on family engagement in learning through adult education. Finally, the Department of Justice (DOJ) is interested in reviewing the applications of Promise Neighborhoods implementation grantees that address public safety concerns through strategies that include prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry of offenders back into communities upon release from prison and jail. Further, subject to the availability of FY 2011 funds, DOJ intends to provide some Promise Neighborhoods implementation grantees with additional resources from the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation program, to pursue their public safety strategies. If one or more of the additional proposed priorities are included in a notice inviting applications, the priority or priorities that are included in the notice would be designated as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational priorities in that notice for the purposes of the competition for which the notice is inviting applications.
- **Selection Criteria** are designed to align with the absolute priority for planning and implementation grants. Specifically, the selection criteria would be used by peer reviewers to evaluate (a) the need in a neighborhood that would be served through a proposed project, (b) an organization's strategy to build a continuum of solutions, and (c) an organization's capacity to do the work effectively and efficiently. In the notice inviting applications, the application package, or both, the Department will announce the maximum possible points assigned to each criterion.
- **Funding:** The level and allocation of funds among the grant types are contingent upon the final fiscal 2011 budget.
- **Timing:** Our current goal is to have applications for Promise Neighborhoods available in late spring. Application submissions would be due within 60 days of application release. September 30, 2011 is the deadline for the Department to make awards.
- **Public Comment:** We invite you to submit comments regarding the Notice of Proposed Priorities. The deadline for comments is Monday, April 11 and must be submitted in accordance with the instructions in that notice. To ensure that your comments have maximum effect in developing the notice of final priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria, we urge you to identify clearly the specific proposed priority, requirement, definition, or selection criterion that each comment addresses. Address all comments about this notice to Jill Staton, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 4W245, Washington, DC 20202-5970. If you prefer to send your comments by e-mail, use the following address: [pn2011comments@ed.gov](mailto:pn2011comments@ed.gov). You must include the term "PN--Comments on FY 2011 Proposed Priority" in the subject line of your electronic message.