

## **Aligning Resources and Results: *How Policymakers and Communities Can Collaborate to Improve Neighborhood Outcomes***

The release of President Obama's fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget proposal provides an important opportunity to emphasize how - and why - policymakers and community members should work together to maximize resources and ensure that supports for children and families are sustained. The need for collaboration between state policymakers and community members has never been clearer in the midst of a heated Congressional environment and the drastic cuts taking place through sequestration.

Public policy and funding decisions at the federal level have a significant impact on community conditions. The current economic and political climate has intensified as communities face greater needs while federal and state budgets are being cut. The sequestration-driven spending cuts that started in March have added an additional layer of concern - with cuts starting to take place across all federal agencies. While the national economy has started to recover slowly, policymakers in many states are continuing to face budget shortfalls. Prior to sequestration, nearly all states had already reduced services for their residents, including some of their most vulnerable individuals and families. Cuts occurred in areas that include health care, services to the elderly and disabled and K-12 and higher education. The sequestration will amount to reduced federal funding for children by an additional \$4.2 billion in FY13. The expected impact of the sequestration cuts on low income families will be significant. The federal Housing Choice Vouchers Program, for example, is expected to cut 140,000 families using vouchers to afford housing by early 2014. Although President Obama has cancelled the sequestration in his FY14 budget, whether or not this reversal is implemented will depend upon Congress.

These cuts are taking place at a time when the need for services has increased, with more families facing difficult financial challenges. As families struggle to recover from the recession, the public policy world is engaged in a debate over austerity; one that often poses false choices about what investments should be made in the interest of fiscal responsibility. However, this climate is also an opportunity for advanced collaboration, the development of innovative strategies and for leaders to think and act differently.

The federal budget process serves as a critical opportunity for policymakers and community members to work together to ensure that children and families, especially those living in communities of concentrated poverty, are supported. The president's proposal outlines the administration's policy agenda and budget for federal spending in the upcoming year and sets the tone for the national policy agenda. The federal budget becomes the guide by which every major spending and revenue decision is made, making it one of the largest policy vehicles for supporting children and families. While the process this year has been a bit unorthodox - with the Senate and House of Representatives releasing their FY14 budget proposals *before* the White House released its budget request - the stakes for children and families remain incredibly high and the benefit of collaboration is not only clear but, in some cases, necessary.

As this brief highlights, the best way for policymakers and community members to promote equitable outcomes for children, families and communities is to ensure that *all* children and families are supported by federal policy and funding that is aligned with a common set of results. In the midst of a weak economy, the number of children and families living in communities of concentrated poverty has increased to include 11.5 million people. The complex challenges these neighborhoods face require a unique set of interconnected solutions that are effective, sustainable and make a lasting impact on the lives of children and families. Working together, policymakers and communities can address these challenges through a focus on a common set of results.

### ***Shared Vision: Working Together***

Both policymakers and community stakeholders have key roles to play in ensuring that policies and public funding at the federal, state and local levels effectively meet the needs of the community and thereby improve outcomes for children and families. By starting with a shared vision of what they would like to accomplish, the work of communities and policymakers can move beyond passing a law or funding a program. With collaboration, policymakers can be more deliberate in the efforts to target resources in ways that promote safe and healthy communities and, as a result, ensure that children and families have access to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

Policymakers and community members have complementary strengths they can bring to this process. With an opportunity to influence and work across a broad spectrum, policymakers are positioned to see a larger landscape. This lens allows them to support innovation, prioritize strategies communities tell them are the most effective, address gaps in funding or services - as well as barriers that might exist in the current infrastructure - and create incentives that ensure policies and programs address the needs communicated by neighborhoods. Policymakers also have the ability to reach across multiple branches of government, which is important for breaking down silos and ensuring increased coordination across agencies whose programs impact communities on a daily basis. The platform policymakers have allows them to cross traditional divides and bring together business, faith-based and other community organizations. These partnerships not only help to inform policymakers of what's working and what's needed on the ground, but can allow them to track the ongoing progress of investments and make adjustments as needed to achieve better outcomes for children and families in manner that is both transparent and effective.

Community members play a critical role in this partnership as well. A growing number of communities are learning how to use data to help policymakers better understand what is actually happening in their neighborhoods, the level of resources required to address local challenges and how specific policies are helping or hindering their progress. This is all in an effort to ensure that effective and sustainable strategies and solutions are implemented to achieve results and improve the quality of life for community residents.

### ***Building a Solid Foundation: A Case Study on the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative & the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program***

Successful partnerships between policymakers and community members are critical to ensuring that neighborhoods have access to the opportunities and resources needed to help children and families thrive. One example of an innovative strategy to accomplish this

is the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program, a key program within the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI). This program exemplifies how listening, working collaboratively and investing in innovation improves the odds that the needs of children, families *and* communities will be addressed in a more holistic, responsive and effective way.

NRI is a place-based approach that reinforces the importance of partnership and aims to disrupt the challenges communities of concentrated poverty face. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of families living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty increased by 3.6 million people. Children living in these neighborhoods tend to have lower educational attainment and poorer health outcomes and their families lack access to quality housing and experience limited access to employment opportunities. In addition to the impacts on individual families, these neighborhoods are often disconnected from the resources that are required to improve their neighborhoods - including the chances to make meaningful relationships with policymakers possible.

In response to the sharp increase in poverty in recent years, and with the recognition that a “one-size-fits-all” approach may not provide neighborhoods with effective resources, the White House launched the NRI in September 2010. In its attempt to develop a comprehensive approach to reducing poverty, the White House Domestic Policy Council has since engaged the U.S. Departments of Education, Health & Human Services, Housing & Urban Development, Justice and Treasury. NRI’s cross-agency strategy is designed to catalyze and empower local action that addresses several challenges - such as education, housing and health - while busting agency silos, prioritizing public-private partnerships and making existing programs more effective and efficient.

### **Building Neighborhood Capacity Program**

The Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP) is an innovative strategy intended to help communities build the knowledge, skills and relationships needed to create sustainable change in neighborhoods that have experienced years of disinvestment. Launched in 2012, BNCP was born out of the federal government’s efforts to listen to local policymakers and residents about the need for a program that focuses on distressed communities that traditionally don’t get the help they need. Today, the BNCP is testing what sustained collaboration between a community and its leaders can produce in order to develop more responsive public policies and programs.

BNCP is unique – it is an effort aimed at building the foundation necessary for communities to begin to work toward achieving a community result – as opposed to most programs that are designed to support partnerships and efforts already underway. The goal of BNCP is to help neighborhoods develop the capacity they need to enable residents, civic leaders, the public and private sectors and local organizations to identify neighborhood needs and implement sustainable solutions. A key tenet of this program is that neighborhoods cannot do this work alone. Though BNCP is designed to build the capacity of a particular neighborhood, it incorporates a city-wide cross-sector partnership. This cross-sector partnership includes broad representation from local government, philanthropy, education, business, housing and other sectors. The partnership provides neighborhoods with access to resources, including the opportunity to meet with and hear from civic leaders and policymakers. BNCP is currently in eight neighborhoods across four cities: Flint, MI, Fresno, CA, Memphis, TN and Milwaukee, WI.

## Portrait of Milwaukee

The Metcalfe Park and Amani neighborhoods of Milwaukee are using BNCP as a springboard to bring together the voices and experiences of individuals that are often overlooked. Similar to the other BNCP neighborhoods, both Amani and Metcalfe Park face several challenges, including high rates of poverty, violence and unemployment. In Metcalfe Park, more than half (55%) of the residents live in poverty and less than half (47%) of young adults have a high school diploma. In addition, nearly one in four properties is vacant. These barriers, coupled with the fact that roughly half of the adult men in these neighborhoods are unemployed in the midst of a struggling economic climate, has left residents with inadequate resources to move the neighborhood forward.

*"BNCP is providing residents with an opportunity to work with our city leadership. For the first time, residents have an opportunity to be heard when it comes to improving our neighborhood."*

--Danell Cross, Resident and  
BNCP Site Director in Metcalfe  
Park, Milwaukee

The Metcalfe Park and Amani neighborhoods are in the midst of assessing the most pressing needs of local residents, as well as the skills and resources the neighborhood needs to build to successfully address these challenges. At a recent meeting in Metcalfe Park, neighborhood residents discussed concerns, including the overwhelming amount of

*"The voices of residents and neighborhood organizations are critical because they help to inform and align city-driven efforts that are trying to impact the well-being and quality of life for our residents."*

--Martha Brown, the Deputy  
Commissioner of the Milwaukee  
Department of City Development

vacant and foreclosed homes in the neighborhood and their limited ability to do anything about them. Residents know that vacant properties are a problem, but do not know how to access the data describing the reason for foreclosures or the funding opportunities that might provide them with the resources needed to buy and revitalize these properties.

As Amani and Metcalfe Park continue to identify their concerns, as well as the resources they need to address local challenges, they are communicating with their partners in the project, which include Mayor Tom Barrett, as well as organizations like the police department, housing authority, citywide nonprofits and local foundations. Only a few months into the

grant period, Danell Cross – the BNCP site director and seven-year resident of Metcalfe Park – has already sat at a table with the Milwaukee police chief, foundation executives and other civic leaders to articulate both the assets and challenges that her neighborhood faces. And policymakers are listening.

Today, the city is considering how it can reallocate or apply for funding that would revitalize properties in these neighborhoods. Though several Milwaukee neighborhoods have vacant properties, BNCP has created a forum in the Amani and Metcalfe Park neighborhoods that is needed to inform citywide planning. BNCP has provided the city of Milwaukee with a unique opportunity to work directly with neighborhoods - including residents, local organizations and business – to hear firsthand how particular programs or the reallocation of resources may impact the lives of children and families in the neighborhood.

*“BNCP will help the Amani and Metcalfe Park neighborhoods gather the necessary resources to create an action plan that will kick start strategies and push these neighborhoods forward.*

*The City of Milwaukee is committed to partnering with these neighborhoods and responding to their needs.”*

--Willie Hines, City of Milwaukee  
Common Council President

As BNCP continues to take shape and gain momentum in Milwaukee, neighborhood site directors and the cross-sector partnership look forward to developing the forum BNCP has provided for information-sharing. Built upon the successes and lessons learned of community-based organizations, BNCP is a program that is beginning to turn the tide in the neighborhoods it serves by helping create the relationships that lead to change. For Amani and Metcalfe Park, those outcomes may include transforming vacant properties into something beneficial for the community, such as revitalized housing or community gardens that stimulate business and promote healthy eating. In the other BNCP cities, neighborhoods may identify different needs. But the common ground in these communities is that BNCP is attempting to be a needed catalyst for change that supports the working relationships between neighborhoods and policymakers.

BNCP is supported by braided funding streams from several federal agencies, including the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Education through neighborhood-based initiatives. Specifically, BNCP is funded through allocations from the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program, the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative and Promise Neighborhoods – all centerpiece programs within the NRI strategy. Congress passed a continuing resolution (C.R.) to fund the government through FY 2013, which funded most programs at their FY12 levels. Therefore FY13 funding for these programs are as follows: \$18 million for the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program, which supports NRI by directing resources to higher-risk neighborhoods, integrating public safety, housing services and other investments; and \$121 million through Choice Neighborhoods to continue investments in high-poverty neighborhoods where distressed HUD-assisted public and privately owned housing is located. In FY12, \$60 million was allocated to the Promise Neighborhoods program, aimed at investing in high-need communities combining effective services for families with comprehensive reforms centered on high-quality schools. Although the C.R. continues to fund the Department of Education, the distribution for the FY13 Promise Neighborhoods allocation will be released by the Department of Education at the end of April. Since the sequester went into effect in March, all non-defense discretionary programs suffered a five percent cut. For example, the sequester reduced funding for the Choice Neighborhoods program by \$6 million, lowering it to \$115 million for FY13.

*“The Building Neighborhood Capacity Program stakes a claim in Milwaukee’s Metcalfe Park and Amani neighborhoods that will foster collaborations in redirecting and improving the delivery of resources. I believe the BNCP model gives us a prime opportunity to invigorate and empower the good people who call Metcalfe Park and Amani home.”*

--Mayor Tom Barrett, City  
of Milwaukee

The President's budget for FY 2014, released today, requests \$35 million for the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation program, \$400 million for Choice Neighborhoods and \$300 million for Promise Neighborhoods. Adequate funding for these programs enables support of the BNCP and other innovative strategies designed to help families living in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty. In addition to funding for these NRI centerpiece programs, the president's budget proposes building on the success of existing NRI programs through the designation of "Promise Zones." Located in high poverty neighborhoods throughout the nation, federal agencies will engage directly with local leaders within "Promise Zones" in an effort to break down barriers and help them access and coordinate the resources and expertise neighborhoods need to create jobs, leverage private investment, increase economic activity, reduce violence and improve educational opportunities.

### **Other Key Line Items for Children, Families and Communities in the President's Proposed FY 2014 Budget**

#### **Department of Education**

##### *Early Childhood Education*

The budget outlines a proposal to ensure that 4-year-olds across the United States have access to preschool, which would be financed through mandatory resources and fully paid for elsewhere in the budget. This proposal consists of a federal-state partnership to provide all low- and moderate-income 4-year-old children with preschool, while also providing states with incentives to expand these programs to reach additional children from middle class families and put in place full-day kindergarten policies. To support this effort, the budget proposes \$750 million discretionary investment in Preschool Development Grants in 2014.

##### *Race to the Top (RTT)*

The Department of Education will shift the focus of RTT in 2014 to promoting comprehensive reforms in postsecondary education. The budget provides \$1 billion to support competitive grants to states that commit to driving comprehensive change in their higher education policies and practices, while doing more to contain their tuition and make it easier for students to afford a college education.

##### *Pell Grants*

The budget continues to preserve the maximum award of \$5,645 and includes measures that ensure full program funding through the 2015-2016 academic year.

##### *Promise Neighborhoods*

The budget proposal includes \$300 million for Promise Neighborhoods – an initiative that aims to improve high school and college graduation rates by providing an effective pipeline of support services to children and families in under-resourced neighborhoods. A portion of these funds will also be targeted to designated Promise Zones.

## **Department of Health and Human Services**

### *Early Childhood Care*

The budget invests \$1.4 billion in new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships to support states and communities in expanding the availability of learning opportunities for infants and toddlers. The budget also provides an additional \$200 million for states to support child care in 2014 and \$7 billion over the next 10 years to maintain the availability of child care subsidies. In addition, the budget invests \$15 billion over the next 10 years to extend and expand evidence-based, voluntary home visiting. These investments will be paired with a new initiative in the Department of Education to expand preschool to all low- and moderate-income four-year-olds.

### *Community Health Centers*

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has allocated \$3.8 billion in 2014 to support comprehensive, primary and preventive health center services that will serve an estimated 22 million people.

### *Community Service Block Grants (CSBGs)*

The proposed budget allocates \$350 million to CSBGs, which provide funding to community-based agencies that have successfully demonstrated their ability to meet the unique needs of their community, including: unemployment, education, housing and nutrition issues.

### *Child Support Enforcement Program*

The budget supports states in providing access and visitation services for non-custodial parents and also increases support for states that pass child support payments through to families rather than retaining them. The program will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of providing employment services aimed at increasing child support payments from non-custodial parents. In addition, the budget provides \$35 million for states to test strategies to overcome financial deterrents to marriage.

### *Child Welfare*

The administration continues to support flexible funding through waivers that allow states to test innovative approaches to child welfare service delivery and financing. The budget provides \$45 million over three years to reauthorize grants that help children reconnect with family members.

### *Domestic Human Trafficking*

The budget provides \$10 million for a new initiative to prevent and address domestic human trafficking. This initiative will provide direct services to domestic victims of trafficking, train service providers and invest in data collection, research and evaluation.

### *Mental Health Services for Children and Families*

The proposed budget includes a new \$130 million initiative to expand mental health treatment and prevention services, including: \$55 million to provide Mental Health First Aid training in schools and communities and to help school districts and their communities ensure that students with mental health issues are referred to the services they need; \$50 million to train 5,000 new mental health professionals to serve students and young adults and \$25 million to help support transitioning youth (ages 16-25) and their families access and navigate behavioral health treatment systems.

### *Gun Violence Prevention*

The budget includes \$10 million within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support research on the causes and prevention of gun violence.

## **Department of Housing and Urban Development**

### *Choice Neighborhoods Program*

The proposed budget includes \$400 million – \$280 million more than enacted funds in FY2012 - for the preservation, rehabilitation and transformation of HUD-assisted housing and the surrounding neighborhood in an effort to transform communities of concentrated poverty into opportunity-rich, mixed-income neighborhoods.

### *Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)*

The proposed budget includes \$3 billion for the Community Development Block Grant program to help address local development goals. This funding, which includes \$200 million in new competitive funding, will provide essential new resources to help communities hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis and will create jobs through rehabilitating, repurposing and demolishing vacant and blighted properties.

### *Housing Choice Voucher Program*

The budget includes \$20 billion for the Housing Choice Voucher program to help more than 2.2 million low-income families afford decent housing in neighborhoods of their choice. This funding level supports all existing vouchers and provides 10,000 new vouchers targeted to homeless veterans.

## **Department of Justice**

### *The Byrne Criminal Justice Initiative*

The budget proposal includes \$35 million for the Byrne Criminal Justice Initiative – a community-based program striving to combat crime and increase public safety by addressing the specific needs of a community.

### *Second Chance Act*

The budget proposal includes \$119 million for the Second Chance Act Grant program, which aims to reduce re-offending and help ex-offenders successfully return to their communities by providing several key supports, such as employment assistance.

### *Youth Violence Prevention Programs*

The proposed budget includes funding for several programs that target juvenile justice and youth violence prevention strategies. Specifically, the budget includes a total of \$332 million for youth juvenile justice initiatives, including \$25 million for the Community-Based Violence Prevention Initiative, which would provide grants to replicate successful community-based interventions to control shootings and other serious gang violence. In addition, a total of \$4 million has been requested for the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, which provides assistance to selected communities across the nation as they develop and implement youth violence strategies.



## **Department of Labor**

### *Workforce Innovation Fund*

The proposed budget includes \$150 million for the Workforce Innovation Fund, allowing states and regions to share innovative ideas, implement systems reforms and replicate evidence-based strategies for employment training and helping workers find jobs. The funding proposed includes \$10 million dedicated to building knowledge about which interventions are most effective for disconnected youth.

### *Pathways Back to Work Fund*

With the president's proposed \$12.5 billion, the fund is designed to make it easier for workers to remain connected to the workforce and gain new skills for long-term employment. This initiative will support summer and year-round jobs for low-income youth, subsidized employment opportunities for unemployed and low-income adults and other promising strategies designed to lead to employment.

## **Department of Treasury**

### *Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund*

The budget increases funding for the CDFI Fund, which provides financing to increase economic and community development and job opportunities in poor and underserved communities. It also expands the Fund's Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which aims to expand the availability of nutritious food and to develop and to better equip grocery stores, small retailers, corner stores and farmers markets to sell healthy food.

### *Partnerships and Innovation*

The budget creates a \$300 million Pay for Success Fund within the department. Nonprofit intermediaries and state and local governments will be able to leverage the fund to provide credit enhancements and success-based payments to investors in public programs that impact families and communities.

## ***Additional Resources on the Federal Budget***

- [Policy Basics: The ABCs of State Budgets](#)
- [Policy Basics: Introduction to the Federal Budget Process](#)
- [Federal Budget Vocabulary Tip Sheet](#)
- [Aligning Resources and Results: How Communities and Policymakers Collaborated to Create a National Program](#)

## ***Additional Resources on BNCP***

- [The Building Neighborhood Capacity Resource Center](#)
- [The White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative](#)