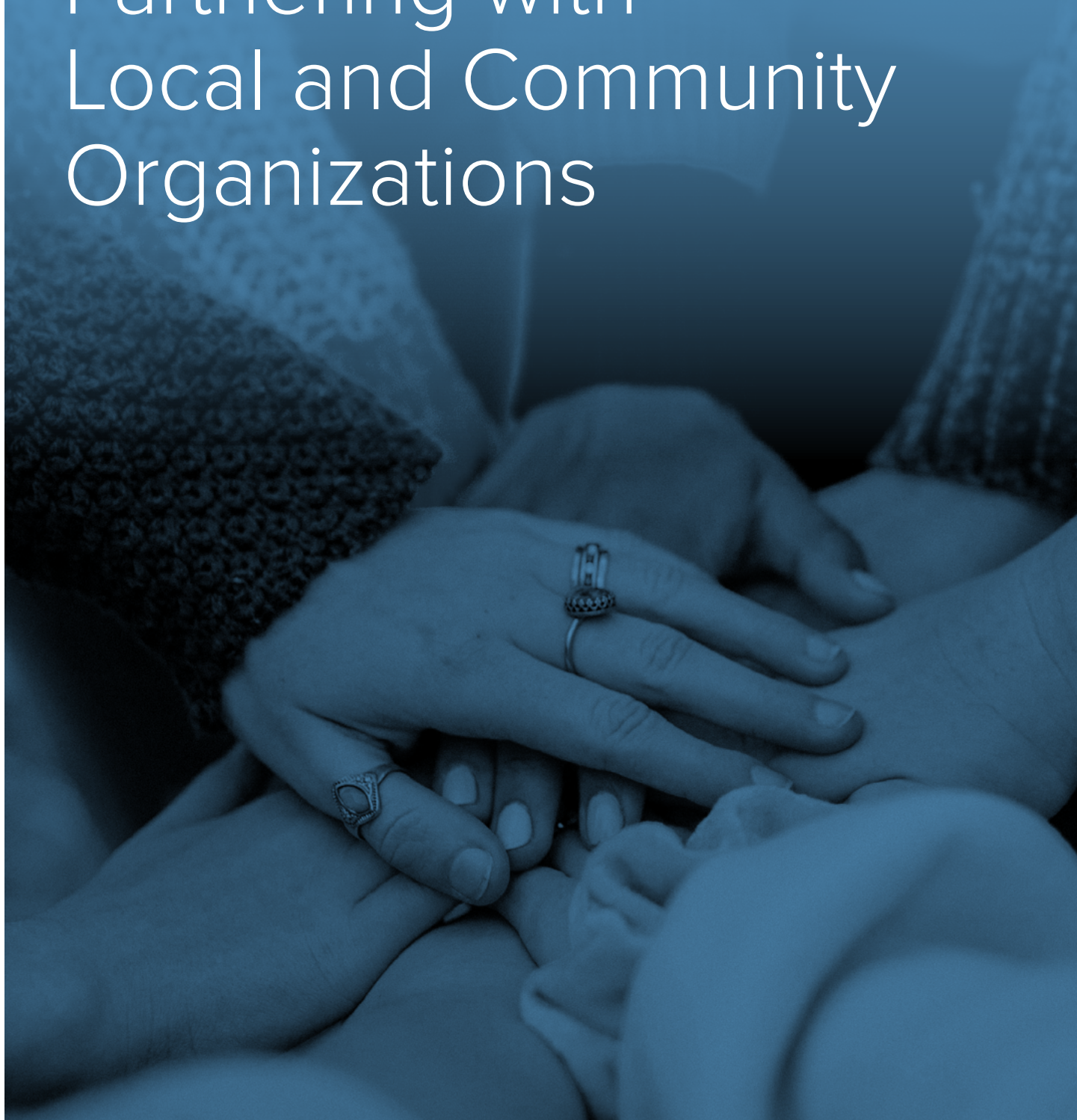




# Guide 6: Partnering with Local and Community Organizations



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This document is part of the **Public Housing Resident Organizing and Participation Toolkit**. The full toolkit includes topical guides, customizable resident council documents and forms, tools related to tenant participation funds, and case studies of resident organizations around the country. To see the full toolkit go to: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/public-housing/resident-toolkit/>

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# PARTNERING WITH LOCAL AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

**Strong resident councils benefit from working with other organizations.** Partnering with community-based organizations allows resident councils to bring programs and services to their communities, receive training, and respond to issues. Partnerships can help residents respond to their community's needs, and improve their housing and quality of life.

Resident councils should work with outside organizations that support the resident council, but do not make decisions for, or take over, the resident council.

HUD further encourages partnerships that help connect public housing residents with health care, education, and social services. The resident council can find partner organizations by reaching out to them directly or can coordinate with the housing authority to bring in programs that will meet resident needs.

You may think it could be difficult to find organizations willing to make time for resident councils or come out to your property. However, many organizations that serve the community value working with resident councils because doing so helps them fulfill their mission too. Many organizations understand that for people to achieve other goals, they must first have affordable, stable housing. The national housing first model, for example, recognizes that people must first have stable housing before addressing other needs in their lives such as improving their health, education, employment, or careers. Public housing offers this platform of stable housing on which services and programs to help both residents and the broader community can be added.



*In this guide we use the term “Resident Council” but you might call your group of residents a tenant council, tenant association, resident association, or tenant/resident organization or another name.*



## Assess: What Needs do Residents Have?

**Your resident council should look for programs that will best meet the needs of the residents.**

You, better than anyone from outside the property, know what those needs are. As the resident council, you want to make sure that you are engaging and building relationships with your fellow residents, and bringing services they need will help do that.

When doing outreach to your neighbors (for example, posting flyers or door-knocking for upcoming events), you might notice there are residents or communities of residents that are not engaged in the resident council. For many resident councils, it is difficult to engage residents with busy family lives and employment. Attracting services that meet their needs may be a way to engage.



**In Los Angeles County** they noticed through surveys that families were most interested in job placement opportunities rather than a job training program that might or might not lead to employment.

When determining what needs exist you might consider:

- **Community outreach:** Conduct door-to-door outreach at your property or set up a table in the lobby to talk with residents about their needs and interests. This is a great way to introduce residents to the resident council and board and listen to residents to ensure that the resident council is responsive. Be sure that residents can always provide ideas to the resident council through a dedicated email and phone number, and an idea box where residents can leave comments.
- **Brainstorming:** add this discussion topic at a resident council meeting (see “dot voting” below for one idea on how to do this).
- **Survey:** Use a paper or online survey to get ideas from residents. You can find resources and examples at the end of this guide. For most properties, it will work best to offer this survey online and by paper in order to reach the most people. **Surveys work best when there are specific, concrete options.** So this will likely work best after having a brainstorming session. That way you will have concrete options. Give options around how programming would work:
  - » **Areas of interest:** education, financial literacy, programming for seniors, employment
  - » **Timing:** ongoing, one-time workshops, day/ evening/ weekends
- **Ask service providers:** existing service providers or coordinators (like a ROSS service coordinator) may know what community needs are not being met. If you ask services providers, still survey your community directly.
- **Committee:** the Board can nominate a committee of interested residents to take on this task, or to conduct any of the activities above.

*Some examples  
of programs that  
may interest  
families include:*



*Employment training  
programs*



*Credit and financial  
counseling*



*Free tax preparation  
for families*



*Programs for  
children such as  
homework support*



*For more information on service programs and coordinators, see [Guide 7: Resident Training and Self-Sufficiency Programs](#).*

**Using multiple methods is recommended to make sure all residents can participate in the way that is most comfortable to them.** If you don't get responses with one method, try another! No matter which method(s) you use, consider asking residents:

- What needs are unmet by the surrounding community?
- What services require travel (either that residents already use, or would like to use but cannot due to the distance)?
- What services are not available at the times residents are free?
- What needs are the most urgent?
- What groups would these services support? Are there any groups in the community that are not being supported? (For example, are there programs for seniors but not after school activities?)
- What programs would residents want to participate in themselves?



**Dot Voting:** Dot voting is a group decision-making process that starts with a brainstorm and then has the group narrow down the ideas to ones that have the most interest or agreement.

- To begin, give all the participants sticky notes and have them write one idea on each note. They stick these ideas on the wall.
- The facilitator can then group the ideas (ex: health, education, youth).
- Participants are then given dot stickers to vote on the ideas that they like the best. For deciding on services or programs, direct them to only put dots next to ones that they would use. You can vary the number of dots participants receive. Generally, give people enough dots for about 25% of the options (1 vote for every 4 options).
- The group will then be able to see visually which ideas have the most support.



*For more information on engaging residents, see [Guide 2: Engaging Residents and Representing Resident Interests](#).*



*For more information on group decision-making, see [Guide 3: Holding Effective Resident Council Meetings](#).*



## Assess: Who is Doing the Work?

**After assessing needs and interests, look for which organizations exist that may be able to serve your community.** You may also have ideas for services that do not yet exist. A good place to start is to look to who is already doing the work:

- Ask residents which community organizations they are already working with.
  - » **Be creative!** Many organizations offer services you may not know about. For example, many school districts have support services for students and families outside of the classroom. Housing counseling organizations and some banks offer classes on personal finance.
- What organizations or people share the goals that our community has identified?
  - » For example, if you have identified the need for fresh food look for organizations that organize farmers markets, health centers with a focus on nutrition, and food pantries.
- Ask residents in your community if they volunteer or work for any organizations?



- Talk to the organizations you have identified.
  - » Tell them what needs you have identified.
  - » Ask them which services they do or could provide.
  - » Ask them what other organizations they know of.

**Do an internet search:** Type in the name of your city or community and the need. See who comes up and do some research on them.

- Who is already working with people in your community?
- Is there a relationship you could deepen?
- Do they do something that your organization does not do (research, policy work, work with different communities, etc)?

## Examples of Partnerships



***In Fall River, Massachusetts***, public housing resident leaders benefit from support, training, and guidance provided by two statewide organizations, the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Residents (Mass Union) and the Mel King Institute, and a national organization the National Alliance of Resident Services in Affordable and Assisted Housing (NAR-SAAH). These organizations provide residents with training, advocacy support, technical assistance, and networking opportunities with resident leaders from other areas of the state and country.



***The Orchard Manor Resident Council***, which is part of the Charleston-Kanawha Housing Authority (CKHA) in West Virginia brought a mobile food pantry to their community. The resident council partnered with Feeding America Program and the Mountaineer Food Bank to provide food to over 50 people Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each week. The pantry has a small space in the community center but when it's nice weather the group provides food from their community garden.



***Public housing resident councils in St Paul, Minnesota*** regularly partner with the Resident Services and Resident Initiatives departments of the St Paul PHA to apply for outside grants that the councils are eligible for as nonprofit organizations. For example, they partnered with the St Paul-Ramsey County Public Health Department for 8 years to bring wellness initiatives, including physical activity, nutrition, and smoking cessation, to the residents.

## Meet with the Housing Authority

**The housing authority may have community partnerships, connections to service providers, or programs that can be expanded to your community.** Or, they may want to partner to bring on a new program.



*For more information, see [Guide 4: Partnering and Advocacy with the Housing Authority](#).*

# Resident Opportunity and Family Self-Sufficiency Programs

**Your community may already have a service coordinator through a program such as Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS), Jobs Plus, or Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS).** Talk to the service coordinator about how you can partner with them or support their programming. The service coordinator will have connections with programs in the area and may be interested in partnering to bring new programs or do better outreach for programs that do exist. The resident council can connect residents to these programs, suggest partnerships, or work with these programs to expand them.

If the property does not have a coordinator, the resident council can talk to the housing authority about working to bring a service coordination program to the property. Through the Annual or Five-year Plan process the housing authority could decide to apply for one of these programs or start another program at the property. The resident council can also directly apply for a ROSS grant or partner with a nonprofit service organization to bring the ROSS program to the property.



**In Los Angeles County** ROSS service coordinators find that working with resident councils helps them ensure that residents can connect with outside services that are available to them. Resident council meetings provide a way for service coordinators to introduce programs and organizations to residents. The service coordinators are often given a space on the agenda to speak or invite speakers from partner organizations.



**In Cincinnati, Ohio** the Jurisdiction-Wide Resident Advisory Board (J-RAB) is organized as a non-profit organization with tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) status. J-RAB has a ROSS grant which funds three service coordinator positions which are filled by residents. The coordinators work to connect other residents to services.



*For more information see [Guide 7: Resident Training and Self-Sufficiency Programs](#).*

## Look at National Directories of Local Service Providers

- **211**—Is a nation-wide 3-digit number (and website) for information and connections to local services.
- **Boys and Girls Clubs**—Uses a club experience to support young people to reach their full potential through. They currently have 290 clubs in public housing communities.
- **Find Help**—Find Help connects people to food assistance, help paying bills, education and job training programs and other free or reduced cost programs by zip code.
- **HRSA Data Warehouse**—This U.S. Department of Health & Human Services website includes tools to locate health programs funded by the Health Resources & Services Administration by your location.
- **Eldercare Locator**—Created by the U.S. Administration on Aging, this searchable database connects people to services for older adults and their families. The service can be reached by phone at 1-800-677-1116.
- **The United Way**—Has local chapters that work with many nonprofit agencies.

# Find Support for your Resident Council

**In addition to partnering to support the residents in your community you may look for support to build your resident council capacity, get technical assistance with HUD programs, engage in advocacy, and impact decisions affecting your community.**

Working with other organizations can increase your impact on larger issues, like community development. Think about what you need in order to make an impact:

- More resources?
- Expertise?
- More people?
- New strategies?

Think about what types of partners would be helpful and who else shares the goals that your community is working towards.

To impact community decisions and advocacy look to partner with:

- Other resident councils—including those at other types of housing, like privately owned buildings or other affordable housing that isn't owned by the housing authority
- Tenant rights and tenant organizing groups
- Legal aid organizations
- Educational institutions (universities, colleges, and community colleges)



## Plan to Meet with Potential Partners

**Before you meet with a potential partner organization, make a plan for the meeting.**

Some things you may want to consider before the meeting:

- What are the goals and mission of the organization?
- Who are the organization's clients, members, or stakeholders?
- If they have clients, what are their clients' goals?
- Why would it be in the organization's self-interest to partner with you?
- How would the partnership help them reach one of their goals?
- Would any of the organizations' priorities put them in conflict with the resident council?

Some ways that a partnership may benefit partner organizations are:

- **People:** Most organizations want to (and need to, in order to keep their funding!) serve their community. Resident councils can connect organizations with the people they want to serve
- **Space:** Many organizations do not have the space to conduct large-scale events, and especially do not have space everywhere they want to serve people. Your resident council may have access to community space.



- **Knowledge:** You know your community better than anyone. Some organizations need that knowledge so they can modify their programs to better serve the community.
- **Advocacy:** If an organization serves your community, you may be able to support them by telling your story to funders and elected officials.



**Example:** A community organization may have the goal of helping people find employment. Your property may have a lot of people in need of this service (potential clients for them) and may be able to provide the organization with free space to host workshops on writing a resume, or hold job fairs with employers.

## Surveys

**The survey provided below and those included here can be updated for your community.** You can use these examples to choose the most relevant questions and options. Be sure to think about whether you actually need to collect information that may be private such as a family's income. **Only ask for information if there is a specific reason.** For example, you may need to ask a general question about income to see if families will qualify for a program. Do not collect contact information on these surveys.

**A survey will work best if it is specific.** So, you will want to first talk with residents to get ideas about their needs, interests, and ideas. You will also want to have an idea of potential programs or resources. For each of the questions include options but also include a space to receive additional ideas and comments. You can set up a survey to receive online answers through Survey Monkey, Google Forms, or another program. If you have an online option, be sure to also have a paper option for residents who are not comfortable using a computer.



- **Sample survey below**
- **Community Needs Assessment Questionnaire** from Survey Monkey:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3RNQD5Y>
- **The ROSS Notice of Funding Availability** also includes a needs assessment template related to employment with questions on community and household needs, barriers to employment, interest around education and training programs, and healthcare needs:  
[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/spm/gmomgmt/grantsinfo/fundingopps/fy2020\\_ross](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/spm/gmomgmt/grantsinfo/fundingopps/fy2020_ross)



## Resources

**Community Toolbox** is an online series for developing a plan to build engagement among diverse groups for community change. The first section focuses on Increasing Participation in Community Action and may provide you with outreach and engagement ideas. You can also contact them for help with using the toolbox: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/encouraging-involvement/increase-participation/main>

**County Health Rankings guide on Building Your Partnerships Capacity for Change** explores how to consider your partnership's strengths and capacity needs, and how to develop and expand your network. The guide also links to a number of useful tools for building successful partnerships: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/media/document/Building%20Your%20Partnership%27s%20Capacity%20for%20Change.pdf>

**The Community Café** offers resources for building conversations that can create change: <https://thecommunitycafe.org/our-work/>

**National Alliance of Resident Services in Affordable and Assisted Housing** (NAR-SAAH) provides technical assistance to resident services staff and members of resident councils by helping to shape national housing policy, expand partnerships with community agencies, leverage funds to support resident programs, and speak on matters impacted by changing economic conditions and shifting political priorities. <https://www.narsaah.today/>

*This survey should be adapted to be specific to your community.*

## Survey for Residents of

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*(name of property)*

The \_\_\_\_\_ Resident Council  
is conducting a survey on our community's needs and interests!

We want to partner with organizations that will best serve our community. We need your help to determine which organizations to work with.

### **Which community-based or non-profit organizations already help you or your family?**

*For example, food banks, after-school programs, health clinics, etc. (Select all that apply)*

Boys and Girls Club

Health clinic/center

Community Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Are there other organizations that you would like to receive help from, but cannot?**

**Why not (distance, hours, etc.)?** *(Select all that apply)*

The food pantry

Afterschool programs

Free health clinic

Community College

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Are there services you would like to receive, but do not know what organization could help? Which needs are most important to you?** *(Select all that apply)*

Computer literacy

GED classes

Job training

College courses

Childcare

Food assistance

Health programs for seniors

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**The resident council is considering bringing other organizations to share about their services at resident council meetings. What one organization or issue would make you definitely attend the meeting?** *(Select all that apply)*

Computer training organization

Job training center

Community college

Local clinic

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**When are you most likely to engage in programs or services?** *(Select all that apply)*

Weekdays during the day

Weekdays after 5 PM

Saturday

Sunday

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please let us know a bit about you so we can make sure the services and programs fit your needs.** *(Select all that apply)*

I am a senior

I am an adult without children currently living in my household

I have small children (5 and under)

My children are 6 – 12

My children are teens

Any other comments about services that should be brought to the resident council, or about the resident council in general:

**Thank you for filling out this survey! Please return it to:**

*[Fill in contact information of Board member or committee member who will collect surveys, or location of drop-box]*