



Promising Practices in Consolidated Planning

Linking Local Planning Efforts to Strategically Target Resources

September 2016





PROMISING PRACTICES IN CONSOLIDATED PLANNING

Reduced funding levels, demographic shifts, and greater economic disparities are encouraging many cities and counties to change the way in which they spend local and federal dollars – including their HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds. Making these changes, however, can be difficult, particularly when these grant dollars have been used to fund similar activities and/or places for many years. Every five years’ jurisdictions who receive this formula funding from HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) have an opportunity, through development of their consolidated plan, to make strategic decisions about how to invest these resources. The purpose of this guide is to highlight a number of jurisdictions who have made significant changes to their consolidated planning process and HUD formula fund allocations to better align funding with their communities’ priorities and unleash new partnerships and sources of funding.

The following jurisdictions are maximizing the value of HUD formula and competitive grants using one or more of the following strategies:

- **Shifting the governance structure:** combining departments or programs into the same organization can allow for seamless alignment of goals and resources.
- **Forming new partnerships:** forming collaborations within and among local governments, across sectors and with other local, state, and regional partners.
- **Engaging community stakeholders:** broader and deeper community engagement helps in the development of shared goals and actionable strategies.
- **Using more and better data to understand needs and assets:** a comprehensive analysis of relevant data, visualized in maps, helps communities reach objective conclusions about best uses of funds.
- **Creating a shared vision and common goals:** strong collaboration and leveraging resources can eliminate duplication of effort, relieve administrative burden, and help communities achieve more comprehensive community development goals and measurable impact
- **Targeting resources to priorities and/or places:** strategically directing investments to where they are most needed can produce more meaningful outcomes.



SHIFTING THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Promising Practice 1: Governance structure matters

- Aligning resources to meet common goals is more likely when political leadership and program administrators are speaking with one voice.
- Shared community development priorities must move from plans to implementation for maximum impact.
- Some great examples of consolidated planning are happening in communities where all housing and community development functions are organized under the same umbrella.
- Organizational alignment of multiple programs/funding streams allows for greater efficiency and more effective program delivery and outcomes.

The City of Virginia Beach, Virginia

The City of Virginia Beach, Virginia has consolidated all of its housing and community development programs and functions into a single Department of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation. By consolidating its HUD formula and competitive grant programs, Housing Choice Voucher Program, as well as oversight of the city's homeless initiatives, the city is able to conduct more seamless, targeted, and impactful planning and program implementation. It is also able to be more efficient in delivering resources/services and monitoring activities of service providers in its most in-need communities.

The Department's staff serves as a "one-stop shop," working and collaborating with long-standing partners in other city departments, regional and local non-profit organizations, and the community-at-large to develop the Consolidated Plan. Notably, in order to reach as many citizens and community stakeholders as possible during its planning processes, the city uses "virtual town hall" software to accommodate citizens who cannot attend public hearing. The approach provides a 24/7 opportunity for citizens to submit comments on needs and proposed plans. Since the department functions as the CPD formula grantee, public housing authority, and continuum of care for the entire city, planning for all of these programs is done in concert, targeting resources to the needs identified in a comprehensive housing needs assessment of the city. More importantly, by consolidating all of its planning functions for housing, community development and homeless initiatives, the city is able to coordinate and integrate the preparation of its consolidated plans, public housing administrative plans and its annual CoC applications, saving the city a tremendous amount of time and resources which can be funneled back into community programs.



The City of Sacramento, California

The City of Sacramento, California has consolidated both the city's and county's affordable and public housing activities, as well as many of its general community development activities, into a single housing redevelopment agency. The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency administers CPD funds including HOME, CDBG, ESG and HOPWA, as well as HUD's public housing funds on behalf of the city and county. This allows better coordination of federal resources, more robust planning, streamline department operations and ensures that funds are being properly leveraged and strategically targeted throughout both the city and county.

The key to this coordination has been the development of the consolidated plan as a coherent, single document. Not only can all city and county departments use this document as a common point of reference, the community partners do so as well. Both elected officials and government staff are well-versed on the content of the plan and use common language and shared goals. Sacramento's redevelopment agency uses 30 data sets to create measurable outcomes as well as help determine funding priorities and target areas.

The data is aggregated and analyzed in partnership with the regional council of government and university partners, as a means to enhance their relationship with other partners, have more robust conversations around their shared goals, and to ultimately tell the story of how they have made an impact.

The Agency determines its target areas by assessing the redevelopment and enhancement needs of areas most in need. To ensure the most efficient delivery of services, it works with other departments to coordinate any public infrastructure or construction projects that will happen during the year. All departments, along with the redevelopment agency, do the environmental reviews at the same time and determine the order of work to be performed.

Having a way to target investments and quantify their impacts has been instrumental in the city's successful pursuit of competitive Sustainable Communities Initiative grants, Choice Implementation grants and Jobs Plus funds, as well as a Promise Zone designation- each of which reinforce their impact around key outcomes on jobs, health and sustainable communities.



FORMING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Promising Practice 2: New partnerships are emerging to meet today's challenges

- Recognizing that housing and community development challenges cross local jurisdictional boundaries, regional collaborations are unlocking new opportunities to align resources.
- Place-based initiatives (e.g., Sustainable Communities Initiative, Promise Zones, Choice Neighborhoods) have demonstrated the need for cross-sectoral partnerships across agencies to achieve meaningful change in communities.
- The Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule creates an opportunity for better analysis and planning for equitable housing and community development.
- Public housing authorities are becoming more involved in Consolidated Planning activities. The assessment of fair housing (AFH) will further encourage planning integration.
- The continuum of care (CoC) annual competition's focus on scoring for consolidated plan participation, which requires CoCs to participate in consolidated planning processes, has facilitated more coordinated efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

The City of Boston, MA

The City of Boston, Massachusetts, aligns the consolidated plan prepared for HUD with its local housing strategic plan and its homeless and poverty reduction planning in order to target HUD resources and leverage them with other funding sources to assist the city and region's most in-need populations. A good example of these efforts is the city's "Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030" strategic housing plan developed with extensive long-term collaboration and robust conversations among housing organizations, homeless advocates, community activists/advocates, non-profit and for-profit housing developers, building trade representatives, demographers, academics, and staff from a wide range of city agencies, and state and federal partners. The plan details the current and future housing needs for all Bostonians, whether they are recent college graduates starting a career, middle class working-families, low- and moderate-income families moving toward the middle class, homeless families/individuals looking to get back on their feet or retirees looking to stay comfortably housed throughout their golden years. The city projects that by implementing this plan, which



will accommodate growth and stabilize the housing market, they will create 53,000 new housing units by 2030, a 20 percent increase in housing stock.

To reach these goals, the city has estimated it will need to increase the amount of funding available for affordable housing by \$20 million annually. The city does not rely on HUD program funding alone. Instead it focuses on bringing a variety of funds to the table. For example, the city collaborated with its Office of Business Development to identify and capitalize on a leveraging opportunity. By targeting program income generated from Section 108 loan guarantee repayments into its rental housing preservation program, the city has been able to expand its rental housing program.

King County Consortium, WA

The King County Consortium collaborates closely with All Home King County, the Continuum of Care (CoC) for Seattle/King County. The partnership is ongoing and Collaborative. During the development of the King County Consortium's most recent consolidated plan, the consortium held stakeholder meetings with the CoC early in the planning process for input addressing homelessness.

The collaborative relationship between King County Consortium and All Home CoC is reciprocal. Since the CoC's and consortium's strategic planning processes were concurrent, both entities took the opportunity to have the plans inform one another, particularly on strategies to make homelessness rare, brief, and a one-time occurrence. The CoC incorporated multiple sources of King County's data, not limited to homeless-specific data sets. The consortium paid close attention to the HUD required Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH) measures, worked closely with their data team who interface with the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). During this process, in addition to formal stakeholder and public meetings, there was a great deal of coordination and data sharing at both the team member and leadership level between All Home CoC and King County. Some of the results are an emphasis on rapid re-housing and diversion as emerging best practices for housing homeless individuals and families. Housing data indicating where program participants could be housed was a focus area.

Along with identifying housing options, King County analyzed obstacles to housing people. One key topic was the screening criteria for the CoC's coordinated entry system. The consortium found that even nonprofits that serve homeless persons can screen out the hardest to serve, which undermines the efforts to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. Being more explicit about screening criteria to avoid that practice was an important focus to get more people in market rate or affordable housing. Another important part of their ongoing



work in this area is the Landlord Liaison Project, which gives private landlords some assurances if they rent to a tenant who does have some issues in their rental history. The motivation behind this effort is to house more people who are otherwise passed over in the rental process due to past issues.

ENGAGING COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Promising Practice 3: Strong community engagement brings authenticity to the Consolidated Plan

- Changing demographics and economic conditions require that communities come together to re-examine past funding priorities. Communities that take the time to do broad, deep, and sustained stakeholder engagement develop consolidated plans that are more responsive to real needs and, therefore more likely to result in meaningful outcomes.
- Data visualization, combined with storytelling, can provide important frameworks for community engagement and the development of priorities.

City of Duluth, Minnesota

The City of Duluth, Minnesota uses a collaborative process to establish a unified vision for the city. Its process allows the city's administration and its citizens to shape its housing and community development programs into effective, coordinated neighborhood and community development strategies. The citizen-led collaborative process also creates the opportunity for strategic planning and citizen participation to take place in a comprehensive context, and to reduce duplication of effort.

The process starts with the city's community development division undertaking an analysis of the housing market to determine the affordable housing gaps and a community needs assessment. The community development division meets with various concerned groups and agencies that address community needs. In addition to this process the community development division conducts a survey, both online and in-person, to reach more citizens in Duluth. The online survey is advertised on local television news stations, social media, and through word-of-mouth and can be completed at home, at area branch libraries, programs provided public computers, or on smartphones. The survey is also made available at several



local food pantries and soup kitchens and at neighborhood events, which assist in getting to neighborhoods and programs that serve a proportionally high percentage of low-income individuals and persons of color. To further its outreach efforts, the city has begun to use representatives from different neighborhoods in the development of needs assessment questions to better understand how to reach residents that have not been engaged in the past.

The city also provides professional planning services to neighborhoods that want to develop a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA), a HUD place-based designation. Staff initiates and completes research on community needs and will work with community partners to develop strategies to meet those needs. For example, the city is currently developing a transportation equity map for an area that has fewer transportation services. The mapping is being used to undertake a full needs assessment for this neighborhood and to engage citizens in the discussion city-wide.

The city continues to engage its residents through a community development committee. The committee reviews proposed community development strategies and provides community perspectives. The committee is an advisory group of citizens made up of nine communitywide representatives. Appointed by the Mayor, preference is given to persons of color or persons who are low to moderate income. The committee oversees the entire CDBG Program; including the development of the consolidated plan, annual action plan, consolidated annual performance and evaluation report and all funding recommendations. The committee also makes recommendations to the City Council and Mayor.

As a part of the community engagement process, the committee reviews proposals for funding under the community development program. The committee establishes criteria to evaluate and rank specific proposals for neighborhood activities and low-moderate income clientele activities. These criteria are aligned with the city's identified priorities and needs. The city's community development staff is responsible for determining if an activity is eligible for funding and meets a national objective. City staff also provides a technical review of funding proposals to ensure the application meets the goals of the consolidated plan and to verify grantee capacity and past performance. Final funding decisions are prepared by the committee with the concurrence of the community development manager and sent to the City Council and the Mayor.

King County Consortium, WA

The King County Consortium emphasizes public engagement to inform its consolidated planning process. Rather than asking community members to react to a completed draft plan, the consortium elicits conversations with the community to identify priorities and direct



resources. In an effort to make its outreach efforts as interactive as possible, the county organized its public hearing by setting up conversation stations where people could react to different themes. At each station, the consortium used questions to prompt input and provided visual aids to illustrate relevant data. For example, some stations had maps of the community showing the location of housing and services. The consortium also shared a database of all public investment throughout the county in an interactive map. Community members could zoom into areas of the community to see where activities were ongoing. The county provided attendees with the option of completing surveys either on paper or ton-line. Materials were also provided in multiple languages representative of the community to engage the broadest range of citizens. One unique follow-up event included a facilitated community conversation at an Indian restaurant – the staff of the restaurant also participated.

USING MORE & BETTER DATA TO UNDERSTAND NEEDS AND ASSETS

Promising Practice 4: A data-driven approach an important building block

- Decreasing resources for housing and community development requires better targeting of those resources and increased transparency on how resources are used.
- Comprehensive data analysis helps communities identify the best use of scarce funds and evaluate the impact of chosen interventions.
- The Neighborhood Stabilization Program’s (NSP) data-driven approach to funding laid the groundwork for how consolidated planning and targeting of formula funding can be done differently. The approach focused on grantees collecting and analyzing market information through sound, free data, enabling grantees to work with, not against, local real estate market forces.
- Communities are using HUD’s prepopulated data in CPD Maps to inform local needs assessments and market analyses.

Cuyahoga County, OH

Cuyahoga County believes in the value data during the community engagement process. For example, the county uses data to identify residents are not being served and to uncover gaps local government may miss through a traditional citizen participation process. The county



partnered with Case Western and Cleveland State Universities' Urban Studies Departments to analyze demographics and housing trends in their metro area. These partners were great resources in assisting the county to look at the issues on a regional level. The county next drilled down to a community level using local data, such as real estate sales and foreclosures, to determine where to target resources. They conducted a building conditions survey of 200,000 buildings as a part of the consolidated plan process and were able to analyze parcel by parcel data to really understand neighborhood needs.

As a way to tell its story through data, Cuyahoga County used CPD Maps in meetings with communities and stakeholders. The county believes the maps are a powerful tool to engage citizens in looking at data and helped level the playing field amongst communities. In the past, communities often perceived resources were not allocated to where the need was the greatest, particularly if that funding was not provided for their specific project. With a neighborhood focus, staff layered social services data and homeless data through mapping to better understand how the housing needs impacted low income residents. From these needs, strategies were developed. HUD formula funds are made available to communities through a competitive application process. As a part of the application process, communities are asked to describe the project's impact and receive higher scores when they can connect the impact back to an identified need and strategy in the consolidated plan. The result has been areas of high need, demonstrated by data, match the community areas funded through their competitive application process.

Salt Lake County, UT

Salt Lake County-has developed strong partnerships with its local continuum of care (CoC) planning body, state agencies, and other consolidated plan jurisdictions, resulting in a coordinated effort to prevent and end homelessness region-wide. This partnership has allowed all of the homeless service programs to better coordinate efforts and streamline policies and goals. Additionally, with three Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funding sources located in the same region, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, and the State of Utah, the three government agencies meet regularly to discuss homeless and housing issues, including ESG funding allocations, performance standards, and outcome evaluation.

In 2014, Salt Lake County and its continuum of care adopted the collective impact model for its homeless housing and services system. A collective impact is the commitment of a group from different sectors to a common focus for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration. This effort brought together the CoC and consolidated plan jurisdictions that fall within the CoC's geography to streamline their strategies to prevent and end homelessness as well as to establish consistent outcome indicators, performance



measures, and evaluation methods for funding decisions. In 2015, Salt Lake County's Mayor developed a Collective Impact Steering Committee on homelessness. The steering committee focused on improving the homeless housing and service delivery system in Salt Lake County to more effectively meet the needs of homeless persons and persons at risk of homelessness. Taking the effort to the next level, the county is using state legislation as a vehicle for integrating data sources from other public entities that work in the homeless assistance and criminal justice arenas. The legislation would assess with pertinent agencies within the state the ability to establish a data warehouse to track homelessness and criminal justice from agency to agency for purposes of performance measurement and facilitating a better-coordinated service system. Through stronger connections to the continuum of care and strong data sharing, Salt Lake County, along with its state and city partners, are in a better position to provide needed services to those individuals and families suffering from or threatened with homelessness.

CREATING A SHARED VISION AND COMMON GOALS

Promising Practice 5: Connecting the dots and creating alignment deepens impact

- Shared vision among various partners, with clear and measurable objectives, is key.
- Aligning multiple sources of funding to a limited set of specific priorities can drive change in a community.
- Communities that connect the consolidated plan and associated funding sources to other planning processes are more effective in leveraging resources and maximizing impact.

Cook County, IL

When Cook County was approaching its 2015 consolidated plan submission cycle, the county was in the process of making strategic and organizational changes to strengthen its focus on economic growth. As part of this effort, the county had been contemplating preparing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), the plan required to apply for federal Economic Development Agency (EDA) funds. It approached the regional planning organization, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), to provide technical assistance around a combined consolidated plan-CEDS planning effort. Cook County was interested in working with CMPA given their regional focus and wanted to ensure that the final



plan would complement and enhance other area and regional strategic plans. The planning effort was named *Planning for Progress*. CMAP was very interested in helping Cook County develop *Planning for Progress* because it was invested in helping communities think about how to use their resources more efficiently and effectively.

In the development of *Planning for Progress*, Cook County, in concert with CMAP, developed and deployed a robust engagement process and a variety of outreach efforts, including large kick-off meetings, sub-regional community workshops, targeted focus groups, and an interactive online survey. They also tried to build in feedback loops to ensure groups could see that their voices were being heard and responded to in the substance of the plan. CMAP's facilitation brought legitimacy to the planning process. Strong leadership and personal engagement from the President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners about the need for input into the county's turnaround drew higher than expected turnout from various stakeholders. Internally, county coordinators convened leaders from county departments and agencies to share information and provide input into each other's strategic plans. The internal group has maintained active dialogue and developed new partnerships around disaster resilience, lead-based paint remediation and complete streets. The County plans to continue this collaborative format. The efforts have helped facilitate a new approach to planning and investments.

In addition to gathering input from a broad and deep set of stakeholders (such as local public housing authorities, fair housing advocacy groups, the local CoC and CDBG entitlement jurisdictions within its boundaries), Cook County analyzed data from a variety of sources, including from the Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) developed as part of the region's earlier Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) grant, to help the county align resources with the challenges communities were facing. As a result of the outreach and data analysis, Cook County identified 5 priority investment areas: 1) infrastructure and public facilities; 2) business and workforce development; 3) housing development and services; 4) social services; 5) planning and administration. These priorities guided the creation of the overall, 5-year framework.

The shared priorities identified in *Planning for Progress* are changing the way the county and its partners' direct resources. The County is incorporating the priorities into its requests for applications process for its housing and community development programs. For example, two scoring factors include a project's consideration of multiple modes of transportation and its incorporation of resilient features. Other funders continue to align with the plan as well as one of the regional community foundations has embedded the plan within its application for



funding framework. The Illinois State Housing Finance Agency (HFA) gives a point in its qualified allocation plan if a project references a consolidated plan.

TARGETING RESOURCES TO PRIORITIES AND PLACES

Promising Practice 6: Targeting resources to priorities and places is a powerful pathway to change

- Funding can be targeted to specific priorities or specific places or both; either way is more impactful than spreading funds broadly and generally.
- As priorities and resource allocations change, communities that focus their housing and community development resources to specific activities are making greater use of those funds.
- Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) designations can be a tool to invite non-housing community development stakeholders to the table and undertake more comprehensive strategies in particular neighborhoods.

Salt Lake County, Utah

Salt Lake County recognized that as both a Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME) consortium and a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) urban county, it had a large area to serve: an area with many needs and many stakeholders. As an urban county, community development funds assist Salt Lake's unincorporated county with ten designated communities (Cottonwood Heights, Herriman, Holladay, South Salt Lake, Murray, Midvale, Draper, Alta, Bluffdale, and Riverton). The Salt Lake County Consortium also includes five incorporated cities (West Jordan, Sandy, South Jordan, Taylorsville and West Valley).

With the Mayor taking the lead role, Salt Lake County placed a high priority on the development of a more effective funding allocation process. The goal was to improve both the quality of and the value of outcomes the county wanted to achieve. In 2013, Salt Lake County completed a needs assessment to gain a better understanding of the needs of low-to moderate-income households in the county. This initiative brought together the mayors of the incorporated areas to identify area-wide priorities. It also brought together different agencies and programs to work on coming up with a more effective and more coordinated use of resources. The assessment included an extensive review of prior needs assessments. It also



was an inclusive process involving agency and public feedback. The needs identified through this process were used to determine the county's funding priorities.

Today a new process has been implemented where all funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), and the U.S. Health and Human Services Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) s are pooled and distributed through a collaborative decision-making process. Under this new process, applicants, including both non-profit service providers and local jurisdictions, apply for funding through a one document request for proposal (RFP) process. Bonus points are awarded to applications that bring collaborative partners to the table to address consolidated plan identified priorities. For example, organizations and agencies are able to receive higher scores and rankings when:

- A public facility project is located in areas that have low opportunity and are providing services to underserved populations.
- A public improvement project is located in areas that have been identified as low opportunity cities and neighborhoods that meet a higher need. Access to housing, transportation, employment, health services, school proficiency, food deserts and childcare are just a few of the need areas that are used in the criteria for low opportunity.
- Community and support services can be directly linked to the outcomes the county is seeking to effect in the community. Programs funded must show progress towards specified outcomes through established performance indicators.

The applications are reviewed by the county's three Citizen Advisory Councils Advisory Council (CEDAC), which have been updated to include citizens from the participating cities and unincorporated areas to assist with the collaboration of the priorities. The county's citizen participation process was amended to include a citizen review committee that better reflects the various jurisdictions to score and rank the various applications. This process creates a more streamlined, efficient and effective grant process for all involved and enables the county to collectively focus its funding toward priorities with the greatest impact.

City of Westland, MI

Norwayne is the most economically challenged neighborhood in Westland. Eighty-five percent of children are enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program in schools, and housing values are much lower than in other areas of the city. During the recession, vacancies increased to 30 percent. Crime data indicated that police responses were disproportionately



high in the neighborhood. While the City of Westland had historically funded some projects in Norwayne, it has not exclusively targeted the area for investment.

However, in 2008, the availability of Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds afforded the city the opportunity to infuse this neighborhood with targeted assistance. Westland decided to employ the majority of its NSP grant funds and program income in Norwayne, carrying out demolition projects and rehabilitating residential housing. This strategic targeting of NSP funds was a catalyst for transforming this area into a viable community. Once NSP-funded activities concluded, the city continued its efforts by using CDBG and HOME funds to replicate NSP activities, such as acquiring tax foreclosed properties for demolition or rehabilitation. The city used a Section 108 loan to renovate a vacated school into a new community center. By taking a targeted approach, the city was able to bring other resources to the table. Non-profit organizations, churches and the utility company invested in the neighborhood by increasing services, sponsoring supportive programs and replacing existing infrastructure. The result was new gas lines, increased affordable housing, better community services and a reduction in crime. Property owners have invested in their properties. The community is in the process of positive change. Residents are more invested in their community. Mayor of Westland, William R. Wild, continues to support the targeting strategy, calling for specific attention to Norwayne in the city's master plan. Born in Norwayne, he believes all of the exciting projects serve as the hub of progressive community action and provides a template to be used in other communities.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Federal resources for housing and community development are becoming more strained, relative to demand. By creating administrative efficiencies, building partnerships, aligning resources to meet common goals in a targeted way, communities are able to leverage their HUD formula funding with other public, private, and philanthropic funds. Communities who are not leveraging their funds with other funds are likely not realizing the full benefit of these precious resources.