



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: CNI Planning Grantees

RFP issue Date: February 15, 2022

Application Due: April 15, 2022, by 5:00pm EST

Background.....Page 2

Overview, Award, and Application Criteria.....Pages 3 and 4

Timeline.....Page 5

Application Process and Requirements.....Pages 5 and 6

Scoring Criteria.....Page 7

Participant Acknowledgement Form.....Pages 8 and 9



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

BACKGROUND

In September 2021, Urban Strategies, Inc., (USI) announced the expansion of the Choice Neighborhoods initiative (CNI) Community of Practice. The expansion of the Community of Practice (CofP) will support more than 100 participating cities to develop and implement comprehensive, locally driven plans to revitalize low-wealth communities, that will drive results for each of the three CNI focus areas: People, Housing and Neighborhoods. As an organization, USI has spent more than four decades collaborating with partners and families directly in communities going through comprehensive neighborhood revitalization – particularly in communities of color.

The CofP targets current and future CNI grantee cities (currently 108 planning and 40 implementation grantees) while working with local leaders, community stakeholders such as city governments and public housing authorities, and residents, to create and implement plans to revitalize communities. USI seeks to contribute to developing the knowledge base of best practices and processes for community revitalization and provide data-driven strategies to improve outcomes for low-wealth families and communities of color, centering a racial equity lens throughout our approaches. As part of this work, USI is expanding the “community of practice” among grantees in which they interact regularly through peer learning exchanges, evidence-to-action labs, and direct resources. Through this peer network, grantees can collaborate on local innovations, discuss persistent challenges, create shared priorities, and influence policies that address inequities at the local, regional, and national levels.

“USI is committed to managing the Community of Practice Initiative through an equity and results lens where CNI sites have a voice in setting their priorities. The primary objectives of the Initiative are to increase the capacity of grantees and partnering organizations and to influence changes in federal, state and local policy, removing structural and technical and adaptive barriers to social and economic mobility for low-wealth families while revitalizing communities,” said Esther Shin, president of Urban Strategies, Inc (USI).

The expansion of the Community of Practice was made possible by generous funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Further, USI will support the Community of Practice using a results-oriented approach to accelerate measurable and equitable improvements in outcomes for participating grantees and partners. Implementation of this framework across USI was supported by time and resource investment of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

**Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) Planning Grantee Affinity Group
Request for Proposals
Urban Strategies, Inc.**

OVERVIEW

Founded in 1978, Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI) is a national nonprofit with extensive experience in implementing data-driven human capital and economic development strategies in communities that are undergoing comprehensive physical revitalization. USI supports communities while working with community partners to develop equity-centered economic opportunities, cradle-to-college/career success, high-quality health services, and a range of comprehensive service supports. USI is an organization of color led by people of color seeking equitable results to ensure that all children and families are stable and thriving.

USI is currently an implementation partner in 15 CNI Implementation sites. This experience has afforded USI first-hand knowledge of the challenges in the community development field. As a result, in August of 2020, USI launched the CNI Community of Practice (CofP) to support community leaders struggling with the practices, processes, policies, and financing needed to sustain neighborhood transformation. (See Background Section)

Knowing that Planning Grantees face unique challenges in their capacity to develop and implement equitable community development plans, as part of the CofP, USI is creating a Planning Grantee Affinity Group. Through resources from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and other philanthropic partners, we are inviting interested CNI Planning Grantees and their team and to apply to this RFP to become part of this newly developed affinity group. From the applications (6-8) sites will be selected to receive technical assistance, capacity building resources, and opportunities to directly engage with other CNI Planning grantees through skill building workshops amounting to up to \$100,000 in in-direct resources, with a possibility of access to direct resources. Skill building workshops will not be focused on the successful completion of a CNI Implementation applications, rather on building leadership skills to drive equitable transformation plans.

AFFINITY COHORT OPPORTUNITY FOR EXISTING CNI PLANNING SITES

The Planning Grantee Affinity group is a new initiative within the CNI Community of Practice (CofP) led by USI designed to build the capacity of CNI Planning grantees to develop and implement transformation plans that drive equitable results. Specifically, the Planning Grantee Affinity Group will:



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

- Develop a supportive cohort of Planning Grantees.
- Build capacity of grantees to implement equitable community development plans.
- Support the inclusion of systems change initiatives in the community development plan process. This will require the consideration as to how current policies and procedures support or hinder equitable change.
- Facilitate cross city collaborations to share successes, challenges, and provide support through the planning process.

While all CNI Implementation and Planning Grantees are invited and encouraged to participate in the CofP, selected Planning grantees, through a successful RFP application will be invited to be part of this two-year technical assistance and capacity building process. Participants may also be awarded a limited amount of direct resources to build or strengthen connections to philanthropy, to connect to planned stimulus dollars, to fund innovative strategies not allowed for within the parameters of the HUD budget and/or to support the development of a systems change initiative as part of the final transformation plan. Any direct funding awards will be made on the strength of the application and only after year 1 of the cohort start date.

Who Should Apply? Responding sites should identify a team that includes the Lead Grantee(s) along with new or existing CNI partners with whom they will be collaborating to develop their transformation plan.

Selected Planning Grantee Affinity teams will be asked to commit to the following:

- Attend 8 scheduled 3-hour cohort learning and development sessions.
- Each selected site (team) will be asked to select four (4) team members from their CNI grantee teams. Two (2) lead participants will be expected to participate fully in a Co-Design and Capacity Building process that includes a comprehensive adaptive and results oriented leadership program that will allow them to strengthen their local cross sector collaborations and develop a transformation plan that drives equitable results. The remaining two individuals will serve as accountability partners and will be expected to work with the lead participants in implementation. They will also be invited to attend two capacity building sessions with the lead participants. All four identified team members should have the authority within their respective organizations to implement changes to the CNI sites transformation plan.
- Grantees seeking direct resources commit to elevating equitable impact through connection to philanthropy, stimulus dollars, innovative strategies and/or to imbedding systems change initiative(s) into their transformation plan. Unlike a specific program, a systems change initiative is an intentional process designed to change the current



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

policies/practices of a community system (housing, school, data, financing, criminal justice, etc.) in a way that causes that community system to produce equitable results.

Applications will be reviewed and selected by a set of independent, third-party reviewers. The timeline for applications and awards is as follows:

- February 15, 2022 RFP opens
- March 23, 2022 4:00 pm EST – 5:00 pm EST RFP Question and Answer session
- April 15, 2022 Applications due
- May 15, 2022 Successful Grantees notified
- May 21, 2022 First Meeting with Cohort (Times TBD)
- November 30 – December 2, 2022 Network Gathering at CNI Conference in Ft. Myers, FL.

This is a two-year commitment for selected sites.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Application Requirements:

Applications are due April 15, 2022.

A webinar info session for potential applicants will be held on March 23 2022. Questions for the webinar should be submitted to Kristie.Stutler@urbanstrategiesinc.org by 3:00 pm EST on , March 18, 2022.

To apply for the Planning Grantee Affinity Cohort, please submit the following:

- Proposal Narrative that addresses the questions provided below. Limit your total narrative to 5 double-spaced pages, not including budget attachments or letters of support. You may also attach a copy of your organization’s strategic plan and/or CNI planning document.
- Organization’s total budget.
- Two letters of support.
- 4 signed participant acknowledgment forms

Applications are due by April 15, 2022 by 5:00pm EST and should be submitted to RFP@urbanstrategiesinc.org.

Proposal Narrative:

1. Describe the lead planning grantee including your: organizations, mission, current goals and strategies, population you serve, and examples of 1-2 current projects.



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

2. Describe your proposed work as a CNI planning site. Your response should include demographic data about your population and why this transformation plan is important.
 - a. Provide an overview of your plan and planning process, describe your successes to date and current challenges in meeting your goals.
3. How are you specifically centering equity in the planning of your transformation plan? How will you test your assumptions in the process?
4. Name the two individuals (including their organizations) who are committing to participation in the 8 3-hour learning and development sessions including their organization(s), roles as well as the two individuals (including their organization) who are committing to be accountability partners. State why you believe their participation in the Affinity Group cohort is critical to the successful development of an equitable transformation plan.
5. Please include any other information about the organization, individuals committing to participation, and/or your transformation plan that make you strong candidates for participation?

Participation in the Planning Grantee Affinity group could come with a funding award to grantees who make a commitment to equity in their transformation plan as described above.

Organization's Budget:

Attach your organization's most recent budget

Letters of Support:

Provide at least two letters of support from partners.

Signed Participant Acknowledgement Forms: (included as attachment)

Provide signed participant acknowledgment forms by the 4 team members identified in the application.

Additional Attachments:

List any attachments you are including



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

Scoring: All scoring of this RFP will be done by third party reviewers. Respondents will be scored based on the below:

Affinity Group RFP Scoring Criteria

Section	Criteria	Total Possible Points
Full Application	Application Complete	5
Proposal		
Q1	Organization(s), mission, current strategies, population and examples of current projects are clearly identified and explained.	10
Q2	Clear description of proposed work as a CNI planning site, demographic data is included, successes and challenges are described, and there is clear rationale as to why the transformation plan is important.	20
Q3	Application has a clear description of how the grantee is centering equity in the transformation as well as how they plan to test assumptions that impact equitable outcomes.	20
Q4	Key leaders committing to participation have authority within their organization to impact the transformation plan and the application identifies how participation of all 4 leaders is critical to the successful development of an equitable transformation plan.	10
Q5	Information provided about the organization, transformation plan and/or leaders illustrates why the grantee believes they are strong candidates for participation.	5
Total		70



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) Planning Grantee Affinity Group Participant Acknowledgment Agreement

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AFFINITY COHORT

The Planning Grantee Affinity group is a new initiative within the CNI Community of Practice (CofP) led by USI designed to build the capacity of CNI Planning grantees to develop and implement transformation plans that drive equitable results. Specifically, the Planning Grantee Affinity Group over the course of two years will:

- Develop a supportive cohort of Planning Grantees.
- Build capacity of grantees to implement equitable community development plans.
- Support the inclusion of systems change initiatives in the community development plan process. This will require the consideration as to how current policies and procedures support or hinder equitable change.
- Facilitate cross city collaborations to share successes, challenges, and provide support through the planning process.

A major component of this award is the learning and development capacity building sessions that are being provided over the next two years. Sessions will build upon one another and thereby participants need to make a commitment to be involved in all required sessions.

Specifically Selected Planning Grantee Affinity teams will be asked to commit to the following:

- Attend 8 scheduled 3-hour cohort learning and development sessions. (Lead Participants) or Attend 2 Scheduled 3-hour cohort learning and development sessions with the lead participant. (Accountability Partners)
- Prepare for sessions in advance by reading any assigned material, completing any assessments and/or assignments that will be used to enhance learning.
- Support others in the cohort and on the grantee team with the implementation of the Results Based Accountability and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion frameworks discussed within sessions.
- Notify facilitators in advance of any exigent circumstance that will prevent me from participating in one of the required sessions and complete any session work missed prior to the next scheduled learning and development session.



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

I fully understand my responsibility and commit fully to the above and as well as any commitments made within the application. I further understand that failure to meet the above commitments may result in my dismissal from the leadership development program and may impact the grantees' ability to receive any direct resources.

Choose One:

Lead Participant or Accountability Partner

By signing below, I hereby confirm that I have read the above and agree to all applicable terms and conditions set forth in this document.

Signed:

Name:

Organization:

Date: