



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

Families at the Center of Results

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: CNI Implementation Grantees

RFP issue Date: April 1, 2022

Application Due: May 1, 2022, by 5:00pm EST

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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.



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**Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) Mixed Income Innovation and Action Network
Creating a Community of Practice
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)

The Mixed-Income Strategic Alliance (Alliance) launched in 2017, in partnership with USI, the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities at Case Western Reserve University, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy. In 2019, the Alliance created the Mixed-Income Innovation and Action Network (Network), the nation's only peer-affinity network focused exclusively on mixed-income community building. The Network has been selectively and incrementally curated to establish a high bar for operational quality and experience, to build deep and trusting collaboration and exchange, and to ensure a high degree of organizational commitment and engagement. The first two Network members were Memphis and Minneapolis. Over the last two years, in close consultation with Alliance partners, USI has stepped up to manage the Network to learn from the experience of leading a learning community, to pilot approaches and to crystallize a larger vision. That larger vision will enable the Network to be part of the larger USI CNI Community of Practice. However, moving forward, Network participation will be by application process where CNI cities will be selected based on their capacity and commitment to the 'unfinished business' proposition of stronger social, economic, and community results from CNI transformations that centers racial equity.



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Through resources from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and other philanthropic partners, we are inviting interested CNI grantees and their teams to apply to this RFP to become part of the Network. From the applications (6) six network sites will be selected to receive funds to implement a systems-change initiative in service to achieving equitable results. Selected sites will be granted capacity building resources, direct financial resources, opportunities to directly engage with other CNI grantees in problem solving workshops, and opportunities to participate/lead peer exchanges amounting to over \$400,000 in direct and in-direct resources.

NETWORK OPPORTUNITY FOR EXISTING CNI IMPLEMENTATION SITES

The Network is an initiative within the CNI Community of Practice (CofP) led by USI, which aligns with the CNI Program as a strategy to strengthen the ability of low-wealth, marginalized communities of color to achieve long-lasting positive change for its residents, test innovative programs, and influence policies that address the inequities that have long challenged some community's ability to thrive. USI is committed to managing the Network through an equity and results lens where CNI sites have a voice in priority setting. Specifically, the Network will:

- Build capacity of the Network sites to develop innovative strategies, system and policy change agendas and high action/high alignment networks that drive equitable health, education, and economic mobility results.
- Develop capacity of grantees to implement their CNI transformation plan.
- Improve implementation sites' ability to leverage change in regional policies.
- Help connect sites/neighborhoods to municipal and regional networks that will better create systems changes.
- Facilitate cross city collaborations to share successes and produce better results for sites in terms of influencing regional, state and federal policies.

While all CNI Implementation and Planning Grantees are invited and encouraged to participate in the CofP, selected Implementation sites, through a successful RFP application may be awarded up to \$250,000 to support the implementation of their proposed systems change initiative in service to driving equitable results. Awards will be made on the strength of applications as well as a required 1:1 direct dollar per dollar match by local philanthropy or other resourced dollars.

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 implement a systems change initiative.



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Selected Network sites (teams) will be asked to commit to the following:

- Propose an equitable systems/policy change initiative. Unlike a specific program, a systems change initiative is an intentional process designed to change the current policies/practices of a community system (e.g., housing, school, data, financing, criminal justice, etc.) in a way that causes that community system to produce equitable results.
- Undergo a six-month Co-Design and Capacity Building process. Each selected site (team) will be asked to select five team members from their CNI grantee teams to participate in a Co-Design and Capacity Building process that includes a comprehensive adaptive and results oriented leadership program that will allow them to hone their proposal, strengthen their local cross sector collaborations, and to clearly state, measure, and achieve equitable results. These teams should consist of individuals who have the authority within their respective organizations to implement changes to the CNI site's transformation plan.

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

- April 1, 2022, RFP opens
- April 13, 2022 4:00 pm EST – 5:00 pm EST RFP Question and Answer session
- May 1, 2022 Applications due
- June 10, 2022 Successful Grantees notified
- June 15, 2022 Planning and Capacity Building Process begins
- November 1, 2022 Awards made
- November 30 – December 2, 2022 Network Gathering at CNI Conference in Ft. Myers, FL.

This is a two-year grant with the first six months focused on planning and design.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Application Requirements:

Applications are due May 1, 2022.

A webinar info session for potential applicants will be held on April 13, 2022. Questions for the webinar should be submitted to Kristie.Stutler@urbanstrategiesinc.org by 3:00 pm EST on April 8, 2022.

To apply for this grant, please submit the following:

- Proposal Narrative that addresses the questions provided below. Limit your total narrative to 10 double-spaced pages, not including budget attachments or letters of



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support. You may also attach a copy of your organization's strategic plan and/or CNI implementation document.

- Project Budget (see requirement below).
- Organization's total budget.
- Three letters of support.

Applications are due by May 1 and should be submitted to RFP@urbanstrategiesinc.org.

Proposal Narrative:

1. Describe the lead grantees including your: organizations, mission, current goals and strategies, population you serve, and examples of 1-2 current projects.
2. Who are existing partners you are including in your application team and why? Provide examples of how you have collaborated with these partners to impact change in your community? What new partners would you use this grant to engage and why?
3. Describe your work as a CNI Implementation site. Your response should include demographic data about your population and why this proposed system change work is important.
 - a. Provide an overview of your plan and implementation process, describe your successes to date and current challenges in meeting your goals.
 - b. Describe how your current collaborations have helped you meet your goals and how you are impacting change for the populations you serve.
4. This grant focuses on developing strategies, improving outcomes, and reducing disparities in the areas of housing, economic mobility, health and education. Describe the equity work you are focused on in your Choice Neighborhood grant implementation, how you have worked to impact change for the populations you serve, and what you would use this grant to accomplish? (e.g. technical assistance, peer learning needs, policy training, policy development, collaborative building, data collection and analysis)



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5. Describe the specific systems change initiative you would use this grant to focus on as related to your work as a CNI site. How will this systems change work align or enhance your results as a CNI site?

6. This grant will utilize a comprehensive adaptive and results oriented leadership development program. Technical challenges can be solved with existing knowledge, skills and or technologies while adaptive challenges require challenging existing modes of operating through the examination of deeply held, often unconscious values and beliefs and exploring new ways of thinking or acting. Who are the key staff who would engage in this program and what would you hope they would gain? What are some adaptive challenges (values, beliefs, etc.) that you think may be impacting your results and what would it take to address those?

7. Name the key individuals (including their organizations) who are committing to participation in the six-month comprehensive adaptive and results oriented leadership development program and why you believe their participation is critical to the success of the initiative. Describe why you believe the identified individuals (organizations) have the ability to successfully implement the proposed systems change initiative at this time.

8. Identify the policy challenges your site team faces and examples of attempts you have made to change policy at the local, regional, state or federal level? What else do you need to increase your success?

This grant requires a local 1:1 direct cash match. Provide documentation of commitments from organizations providing the match. City and County funds can be utilized for the match as allowed within your practice jurisdiction if they are available as a direct cash match and not through leverage.

Project Budget:

Provide a budget for how you would use funding from this grant with a brief narrative description of each line item. (USE ATTACHED EXCEL DOCUMENT)

Organization's Budget:

Attach your organization's most recent budget



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Signed Participant Acknowledgement Forms: (included as attachment)

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

Letters of Support:

Provide at least three letters of support from partners. All organizations considered as part of the site team for implementation of the systems change initiative outlined in the proposal should provide a letter of support.

Additional Attachments:

List any attachments you are including

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



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Network 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	Organization(s) included are clearly tied to outcomes, there are robust examples of how they have collaborated with these partners to impact change and new partners to fill gaps are identified and explained.	10
Q3	There is a clear description of work as CNI site, demographic data is included, successes and challenges are described, collaborations are clear, change made to date for populations serve identified, and a clear explanation is contained about why the system change work is important.	10
Q4	CNI equity work to date is clear, intended racial equity impact to date is identified, and there is a clear explanation as to how the grant would support the expansion of equitable outcomes.	20
Q5	Specific systems change as well as, expected impact of that change is present and clear and the application clearly articulates how this will align or enhance CNI results.	20
Q6	Key leaders, expected gains, adaptive challenges impeding the work, and identified strategies for addressing are all identified and clear.	5
Q7	Key leaders who have authority within systems to lead change are committing to participation, and application clearly articulates what would be gained through these leaders participating at this time.	5
Q8	Challenges, past strategies to address policy, and what is needed to move the needle now are all clearly identified.	10
Budget	Budget worksheet and budget assumptions as well as identified 1:1 match are clear and in line with proposed systems change work.	15
Total		105



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**Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) Mixed Income
Innovation and Action Network
Participant Acknowledgement Form**

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NETWORK PARTICIPANTS

The Network is an initiative within the CNI Community of Practice (CofP) led by USI, which aligns with the CNI Program as a strategy to strengthen the ability of low-wealth, marginalized communities of color to achieve long-lasting positive change for its residents, test innovative programs, and influence policies that address the inequities that have long challenged some community's ability to thrive. USI is committed to managing the Network through an equity and results lens where CNI sites have a voice in priority setting. Specifically, the Network will:

- Build capacity of the Network sites to develop innovative strategies, system and policy change agendas and high action/high alignment networks that drive equitable health, education, and economic mobility results.
- Develop capacity of grantees to implement their CNI transformation plan.
- Improve implementation sites' ability to leverage change in regional policies.
- Help connect sites/neighborhoods to municipal and regional networks that will better create systems changes.
- Facilitate cross city collaborations to share successes and produce better results for sites in terms of influencing regional, state and federal policies.

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

Specifically Selected Implementation site grantee teams will be asked to commit to the following:

- Attend 6 scheduled 3-hour cohort learning and development sessions
- 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.



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- 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.

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.

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: