

# Writing a Promise Neighborhoods Grant Application that Supports Long-term Results

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Promise Neighborhoods are places that strive for and achieve neighborhood-level change for children and their families through a cradle-to-career continuum of services. The Promise Neighborhoods [grant program](#) emphasizes collaboration across a wide network of partners, data-driven approaches, strategic planning, and population-level change. For many applicants, this is a new way of thinking and working.

[A Developmental Pathway for Achieving Promise Neighborhoods Results](#), created by PolicyLink in 2014, presents a roadmap for this way of working. The Developmental Pathway has seven key conditions (Data Use; Strategic and Accountable Partnerships; Community Engagement; Sustainable Financing; Policy and Systems Influence; Communications; and Organizational and Strategic Capacity) across five stages (Planning; Early Implementation; Full Implementation; Reaching Scale; and Sustaining Results). While many key conditions of the Developmental Pathway are not explicit requirements of the Promise Neighborhoods program grant, they are necessary for grantees to accomplish the long-term community transformation goals. Applicants to the program can use the Developmental Pathway to understand the planning necessary to achieve these goals. In fact, some of the key conditions align with the grant requirements. For example, [the notice inviting applications \(NIA\) for the Promise Neighborhoods program grant](#) published in the Federal Register on June 27, 2024 required that applicants do the following:



Demonstrate that parents, families, and community members were involved in determining the needs and assets of the community and developing the application. Describe how they will continue to be engaged over the life of the grant (Key Condition: Community Engagement)



Demonstrate that the applicant conducted a needs analysis to inform the proposed project and describe how they will collect data at the program and population level over the life of the grant (Key Condition: Data Use)



Submit a preliminary memorandum of understanding that is signed by each organization or agency that will be a partner in implementing the proposed Promise Neighborhoods program. These memorandums must include each partner's financial, programmatic, and long-term commitment to the strategies included in the application (Key Condition: Strategic and Accountable Partnerships)



Demonstrate a funding match from one or more organizations in the public or private sector (Key Condition: Sustainable Financing)

# How can the Promise Neighborhoods grant application demonstrate Developmental Pathway key conditions?

Promise Neighborhoods grant applicants can use this document to ensure that their applications are responsive to grant requirements and establish the key conditions for transformative practices in their communities. First, they can learn how to plan for and establish each key condition in the early years of an initiative based on [A Developmental Pathway for Achieving Promise Neighborhoods Results](#). Next, they can see how the 2024 Promise Neighborhoods NIA requirements, selection criteria, competitive preference priorities, and invitational priorities allow applicants to demonstrate each key condition.

The boxes below define these terms in the NIA:

**Application requirements** are the criteria applicants must meet to be considered for a Promise Neighborhoods grant award.

**Selection criteria** include the factors that reviewers will consider in determining the extent to which an applicant meets each criterion.

**Competitive preference priorities** are awarded to applications depending on whether or how well the application meets one or more of these priorities:

1. Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change
2. Applications From New Potential Grantees
3. Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities

**Invitational priorities** are of special interest to the Department of Education; in 2024, the invitational priority is for applications that include evidence-based strategies designed to increase regular student attendance and engagement and reduce chronic absenteeism.

The U.S. Department of Education scores applications according to the extent they meet requirements and address competitive preference priorities; points awarded under competitive preference priorities are in addition to any points an applicant earned under the selection criteria in the notice. Applicants that demonstrate the invitational priority do not receive additional points. Note that this document aligns with the 2024 Promise Neighborhood competition, and future funding opportunities may differ. For each key condition, only boxes that are referenced in the NIA and align with the condition are included in this document. Excerpts from the NIA include page and column numbers that align with the 12-page PDF from the Federal Register: [www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2024-06-27/pdf/2024-14054.pdf](http://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2024-06-27/pdf/2024-14054.pdf).

# 1. Data Use



The use of data for decisionmaking is a through line throughout the life of a Promise Neighborhood. To begin designing data-driven solutions, a Promise Neighborhood grantee conducts a needs assessment and segmentation analysis to lead the creation and targeting of solutions. The grantee develops or purchases a data system that includes the key components outlined in the Promise Neighborhoods data guidance document: a case management system, a neighborhood- and school- level data system, a longitudinal data system, and a data dashboard. The grantee uses a results-driven approach, such as Results-Based Accountability, to develop a data plan that aligns with the recommendations in the Promise Neighborhoods data guidance document, including baselines, targets, solutions, partners, and performance measures. Ways to assess the feasibility of implementation, scale, and impact are identified.

## Application Requirements

- “A plan to significantly improve the academic outcomes of children living in the geographically defined area (neighborhood) that is served by the eligible entity by providing pipeline services that address the needs of children in the neighborhood, as identified by the needs analysis, and that is supported by effective practices.” (Page 4, column 2)
- “A description of all information the entity used to identify the pipeline services to be provided... [and] address how the eligible entity plans to collect data on children served by each pipeline service and increase the percentage of children served over time.” (Page 4, column 3)
- “An explanation of how the eligible entity will continuously evaluate and improve the continuum of high-quality pipeline services to provide for continuous program improvement and potential expansion.” (Page 5, column 2)
- “...an applicant must clearly demonstrate needs, including a segmentation analysis, gaps in services, and any available data from within the last 3 years to demonstrate needs.” (Page 5, column 2)

## Selection Criteria

- Quality of management plan: “The experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant’s management team and project director in collecting, analyzing, and using data for decisionmaking, learning, continuous improvement, and accountability, including whether the applicant has a plan to build, adapt, or expand a longitudinal data system that integrates student-level data from multiple sources in order to measure progress.” (Page 6, column 2)

## 2. Strategic and Accountable Partnerships



The network of partners is crucial to the formation and success of a Promise Neighborhood. Partnerships are aligned with Results-Based Accountability, a data-driven approach to decisionmaking; partners are clear on the Promise Neighborhoods theory of change and their roles within the continuum of solutions, and the grantee creates and implements a formal governance structure so that partners are clear on their roles.

### Application Requirements

- “Each applicant must submit, as part of its application, a preliminary memorandum of understanding, signed by each organization or agency with which it would partner in implementing the proposed [Promise Neighborhoods] PN program...all applicants must detail each partner’s financial, programmatic, and long-term commitment with respect to the strategies.” (Page 5, column 1)
- “The applicant must also describe its experience, or its partner organizations’ experience, if applicable, providing these activities, including any data demonstrating effectiveness.” (Page 5, column 2)
- “Providing early learning opportunities for children, including by supporting partnerships between schools and other community resources with an integrated focus on academics and other social, health, and familial supports.” (Page 5, column 3)

### Selection Criteria

- Quality of project services: “The extent to which the services to be provided...involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services.” (Page 6, column 1)

### Competitive Preference Priorities

- “Projects that are designed to take a systemic evidence-based approach to improving outcomes for underserved students in coordinating efforts with Federal, State, or local agencies, or community-based organizations that support students to address community violence prevention and intervention.” (Page 4, column 1)

### 3. Community Engagement



Community voice is an essential part of the formation of Promise Neighborhoods. To strengthen community engagement, the whole community—meaning students, families, and residents—is trained in and participates in data collection and analysis. Additionally, the community weighs in on the continuum of solutions through reviewing different proposals for solutions and informing the content and delivery of solutions. The grantee designs solutions so that students, families, and residents are able to contribute meaningfully to the accomplishments of Promise Neighborhoods.

#### Application Requirements

- Needs and assets analysis of neighborhood must include: “A description of the process through which the needs analysis was produced, including a description of how parents, families, and community members were engaged in such analysis.” (Page 4, column 3)
- “A description of the process used to develop the application, including the involvement of family and community members...which must include the involvement of a local education agency (LEA)...and at least one public elementary or secondary school that is located within the identified geographic area that the grant will serve.” (Page 5, column 1)
- “An explanation of the process the eligible entity will use to establish and maintain family and community engagement.” (Page 5, column 2)

#### Competitive Preference Priorities

- Competitive Preference Priority 3—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: “Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students...that examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implements responses, and that includes establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices, through their participation and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership.” (Page 4, column 1)

#### Invitational Priority

- “Projects designed to increase regular student attendance and engagement and reduce chronic absenteeism through evidence-based strategies such as (1) developing and implementing family- and child-centered effective engagement, messaging, and communication plans with parents, families, and students; and (2) strengthening relationships with families, including through strategies such as home visits...” (Page 4, column 2)

## 4. Sustainable Financing



Promise Neighborhoods is a resource-intensive program that requires substantial planning. The grantee dedicates funds to support the necessary planning and capacity-building processes, and estimates for delivering solutions and maintaining support systems are produced using best practice finance and accounting tools. The Promise Neighborhood identifies existing and potential resources to support solutions

### Application Requirements

- "...an applicant must demonstrate a commitment from one or more entities in the public or private sector, which may include Federal, State, and local public agencies, philanthropic organizations, and private sources, to provide matching funds." (Page 10, column 2)
- "Eligible sources of matching funds include sources of funds used to pay for solutions within the pipeline services, initiatives supported by the LEA, or public health services for children in the neighborhood. At least 10 percent of an applicant's total match must be cash or in-kind contributions from the private sector..." (Page 10, column 2)

### Selection Criteria

- Quality of project design: "The extent to which the applicant describes a plan to create a complete pipeline of services without time and resource gaps..." (Page 6, column 1)
- Adequacy of resources: "The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support"; "the extent to which the applicant identifies existing neighborhood assets and programs supported by Federal, State, local, and private funds that will be used to implement a continuum of solutions..." and "the applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to further develop and bring to scale the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice, or to work with others to ensure that the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project." (Page 6, columns 2-3)

## 5. Policy and Systems Influence



The Promise Neighborhood conducts a current policy scan to identify opportunities and potential challenges. The grantee consults policy experts in designing solutions and creates a policy agenda that focuses on achieving the solution's desired goals and outcomes.

### Competitive Preference Priorities

- Competitive Preference Priority 1—Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change: “Projects that are designed to take a systemic evidence-based approach to improving outcomes for underserved students in coordinating efforts with Federal, State, or local agencies, or community-based organizations that support students to address community violence prevention and intervention.” (Page 4, column 1)
- Competitive Preference Priority 3—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: “...project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students... that examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implements responses, and that includes establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices, through their participation and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing partnerships between civic student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives).” (Page 4, columns 1–2)

## 6. Communications



Promise Neighborhoods design a series of communications to let relevant audiences, such as funders, policymakers, and local residents know about the Promise Neighborhood grant and how they can support the planning and building period. In these communications, the grantee includes data from the needs assessment to share the needs and opportunities in the neighborhood. Additionally, the grantee provides communications training to partners and local leaders to share stories and first-hand experiences about the neighborhood.

### Application Requirements

- “Each eligible entity that receives a grant under this program must prepare and submit an annual report to the Secretary that includes the following: (1) information about the number and percentage of children in the neighborhood who are served by the grant program...and (2) information relating to the metrics established under the Promise Neighborhood Performance Indicators. In addition, grantees must make these data publicly available, including through electronic means...such information must be provided in a form and language accessible to parents and families in the neighborhood served under the Promise Neighborhoods grant.” (Page 5, column 3)

### Invitational Priority

- “Projects designed to increase regular student attendance and engagement and reduce chronic absenteeism through evidence-based strategies such as (1) developing and implementing family- and child-centered effective engagement, messaging, and communication plans with parents, families, and students...” (Page 4, column 2)



## 7. Organizational and Strategic Capacity



The Promise Neighborhood identifies a lead agency or backbone agency that is a trusted and credible organization with the ability to organize partners and stakeholders around the creation of the cradle-to-career pipeline and to serve as the fiscal agent. During the planning stages, the partners clearly outline personal and organizational roles, competencies, and capacities needed to implement the solutions. Additionally, the grantee creates a plan for leadership development and organizational capacity building.

### Application Requirements

- Eligible applicants include the following: (1) an institution of higher education (IHE); (2) an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization; or (3) one or more nonprofit entities working in formal partnership with not less than one of the following entities: (i) a high-need LEA; (ii) an IHE; (iii) the office of a chief elected official of a unit of local government; (iv) an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization. (Page 2, column 2)
- “Each applicant must submit, as part of its application, a preliminary memorandum of understanding, signed by each organization or agency with which it would partner in implementing the proposed PN program. Within the preliminary memorandum of understanding, all applicants must detail each partner’s financial, programmatic, and long-term commitment with respect to the strategies described in the application.” (Page 5, column 1)
- “...Residents of the geographic area proposed to be served have an active role in decisionmaking and ...the applicant’s governing board or advisory board is made up of (a) residents who live in the geographic area proposed to be served... (b) residents of the city or county in which the neighborhood is located but who live outside the geographic area proposed to be served, and who earn less than 80 percent of the area’s median income... and (c) public officials who serve the geographic area proposed to be served...” (Page 5, column 1)

### Selection Criteria

- Quality of the management plan: “(1) the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks... (2) the adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project... (3) the experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant’s management team and project director in collecting, analyzing, and using data for decisionmaking, learning, continuous improvement, and accountability, including whether the applicant has a plan to build, adapt, or expand a longitudinal data system that integrates student-level data from multiple sources in order to measure progress while abiding by privacy laws and requirements.” (Page 6, column 2)
- Adequacy of resources: “The applicant’s capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to further develop and bring to scale the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice, or to work with others to ensure that the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project.” (Page 6, column 3)

## Companion Documents

PolicyLink. (2014). A developmental pathway for achieving promise neighborhoods results. Available at: <https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/pni-developmental-pathway-final.pdf>. Retrieved on: April 2, 2024.

Department of Education. (2024). Applications for new awards: Promise Neighborhoods Program. Available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2024-06-27/pdf/2024-14054.pdf>. Retrieved on: June 27, 2024.

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