



PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS INSTITUTE
AT POLICYLINK

HOW TO APPLY

Promise Neighborhoods Program: Planning 2012 Grant-Writing Guide¹

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink (PNI) is pleased to provide this *How to Apply: Promise Neighborhoods Program: Planning Grant-writing Guide* for the U.S. Department of Education's **Promise Neighborhoods** grant initiative. This guide is designed to help applicant organizations and neighborhood coalitions navigate through the guidelines and application for the **FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant (CFDA Number 84.215P)** and understand the key elements, priorities, and requirements of this funding opportunity. The Department of Education plans to award up to 14 planning grants of up to \$500,000 each. We have developed a separate guide for the **FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods Implementation Grant (CFDA Number 84.215N)**.

Note: *This writing guide is as intended guidance only. Always refer to the official notices in the Federal Register inviting applications and specifying requirements, definitions, and selection criteria.*

In the following sections, we will lead you through the application process, give you tips and pointers on preparing the application, and connect you to resources to help you design an effective project and prepare a strong application. Let's get started!

First, let's take a look at what you can expect as we move through the application process. We have divided the process into five sequential steps. Click on the [green](#) or [blue](#) text to jump to the link or text within the section.

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¹ *This resource is based on public information and the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink experience in the field. Reference herein to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the United States Government. Furthermore, the views and opinions of the authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the United States Government.*

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A. BEFORE YOU START

The four things that all prospective applicants need to ask themselves before they delve into the details of the application requirements are:

1. Are we eligible?
2. What's the Timeline?
3. What are the matching fund requirements?
4. Are we ready to apply?

Confirming Eligibility

Before you go any further, you need to check your eligibility for this grant competition. The eligibility requirements can be found in the [Federal Register notice](#) for the planning grant competition and in the following documents posted on the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods website: the [FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods At-A-Glance document](#) and the [Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) FY 2012](#).

Eligibility Requirements

Organizations eligible to receive Promise Neighborhoods planning grants include: (1) nonprofit organizations, which may include faith-based nonprofit organizations, (2) institutions of higher education, and (3) Indian tribes. An eligible entity must also:

- Be representative of the geographic area proposed to be served (as defined in the notice);
- Be one of the following:
 - A nonprofit organization that meets the definition of a nonprofit under 34 CFR 77.1.(c), which may include a faith-based nonprofit organization;
 - An institution of higher education as defined by section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended;
 - An Indian tribe (as defined in the notice).
- Currently provide at least one of the solutions from the applicant's proposed continuum of solutions in the geographic area proposed to be served;
- Operate or propose to work with and involve in carrying out its proposed project, in coordination with the school's Lead Educational Agency (LEA), at least one public elementary or secondary school that is located within the identified geographic area that the grant will serve.

The vast majority of communities fall under Absolute Priority 1 (Promise Neighborhoods that do not serve rural or tribal communities as defined by the notice), and must adhere to the above requirements.

For purposes of Absolute Priority 2 (Rural Communities), an applicant must propose to develop a plan for implementing a Promise Neighborhood strategy that (1) meets all of the requirements in *Absolute Priority 1*; and (2) proposes to serve one or more rural communities (as defined in the notice) ONLY.

For purposes of Absolute Priority 3 (Tribal Communities), an eligible applicant is an eligible organization that partners with an Indian Tribe or is an Indian Tribe that meets the definition of an eligible

organization (see [FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods FAQs](#)).

To be absolutely sure that you qualify, please review the following Eligibility Checklist, prepared by the Department, which you will be required to submit as part of your proposal package. (Note: If you are not eligible to apply, you may consider partnering with an eligible organization. This organization would then serve as the lead agency for the application.)

Applicant Eligibility Checklist (required)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. An eligible applicant must meet all requirements of (1) through (4) below.
2. A newly created entity must also fulfill requirement (5).
3. Applicants should check the appropriate boxes, save this document in MS Word, and upload it as Appendix A in Grants.gov.

(1)	<p>Click to check ONE box EACH for I and II below.</p> <p>I. <i>The organization must fall under one of these three categories:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A nonprofit organization that meets the definition of a nonprofit under 34 CFR 77.1(c), which may include a faith-based nonprofit organization</p> <p align="center">OR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> An institution of higher education as defined by section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended</p> <p align="center">OR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> An Indian tribe (as defined in the notice).</p> <p>II. <i>At least 1/3 of the governing board or advisory board must be made up of either:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Residents who live in the geographic area proposed to be served</p> <p align="center">OR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Residents of the city or county who are low-income (earning less than 80 percent of the area’s median income)</p> <p align="center">OR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Public officials who serve the geographic area proposed to be served</p> <p align="center">OR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some combination of individuals from these three groups</p>
(2)	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No more than ½ of the governing or advisory board may be made up of public officials</p>
(3)	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The applicant currently provides at least one of the solutions from the applicant’s continuum of solutions in the geographic area proposed to be served.</p>
(4)	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The eligible applicant operates or proposes to work with and involve in carrying out its proposed project, in coordination with the school’s LEA, at least one public elementary or secondary school that is located within the identified geographic area that the grant will serve.</p>
(5)	<p align="center"><i>**This box only applies to newly created eligible entities:</i></p> <p>Newly created entities must describe in their applications each of the following (both must be checked):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meet all requirements of (1) – (4) above.</p>

	AND
	<input type="checkbox"/> The application includes a description of the prior performance of organizations managed by the new eligible entity’s management team on efforts similar or related to the proposed Promise Neighborhood.

The [Applicant Eligibility Checklist](#) is available on the Department of Education’s website. Please complete this form and include it in the Appendix section of the Grants.gov electronic application.

[Department of Education Pre-Application Webinar Recording May 15, 2012](#)

As soon as you have confirmed your eligibility, you will need to review key dates in the application process and take a look at the timeline for preparing the application for submission by the designated deadline.

Timeline

Table 1: Key Dates in the Planning Grant Application Process

KEY DATES	APPLICATION PROCESS	HELPFUL HINTS
April 20, 2012	Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant Application available	The CFDA Number is 84.215P. However, to access the application on Grants.gov do not type in the letter “P” when you are entering the CFDA Number.
May 15, 2012 June 12, 2012 All webinars begin at 1:00 EST/10:00 PST	U.S. Department of Education Planning Grant Application Webinars	Pre-application meetings designed to provide technical assistance to interested applicants. Go to the Promise Neighborhoods website to register.
June 8, 2012	Notice of Intent to Apply due	Submitting the Notice of Intent to Apply is strongly encouraged but not required.
Friday, July 27, 2012 on or before 4:30 p.m. EST (Washington, DC time)	Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant Application deadline. Applications must be submitted electronically using Grants.gov.	Do not wait until the last day to submit your application. Late applications will not be accepted. NO EXCEPTIONS!
September 25, 2012	Intergovernmental review (review of applications)	
By December 31, 2012	Notification of awards	
January 1, 2012	Projected start date of grant	Use this date on your application

Understanding the Matching Requirements

A match is required for the Promise Neighborhoods planning grant. All applicants must obtain matching funds. Contributions may be **cash or in-kind donations** from one or more entities in the public or private

sector, which may include federal, state, and local public agencies, philanthropic organizations, private businesses, or individuals, to provide matching funds equal to a certain percentage of the grant award as described in Table 2:

Table 2: Matching Requirements

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY OF APPLICANT	MATCHING REQUIREMENT
Absolute Priority 1: Proposal to develop a Promise Neighborhoods Plan	At least 50 percent of the grant award.
Absolute Priority 2: Promise Neighborhoods in Rural Communities	At least 25 percent of the grant award.
Absolute Priority 3: Promise Neighborhoods in Tribal Communities	At least 25 percent of the grant award.
Eligible matches include sources of funds used to pay for solutions within the continuum of solutions, such as Head Start programs, initiatives supported by the LEA, or public health services for children in the neighborhood.	

- An applicant must provide evidence that funds or in-kind contributions have been committed at the time it submits its application. These funds or in-kind contributions need not be in hand.
- Eligible applicants may commit their own funds or in-kind contributions to meet the matching requirement, so long as the funds or in-kind contributions in question are (a) spent or used during the planning year, and (b) used for purposes within the scope of the proposed planning process. The eligible applicant must provide appropriate evidence of the commitment of its own resources in its application.
- Volunteer services may count as an in-kind contribution under the Education Department’s General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR). For nonprofit organizations, including institutions of higher education (IHEs) as defined in section 101(a) of the HEA, 34 CFR 74.23 (d) and (e). (See page 33, Item I-10 of the [FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) document](#) for details.)

Demonstrating the Match Commitment

Each applicant must demonstrate the commitment of matching funds by including letters in its application explaining the source of the funds or contributions and the type and quantity of the match commitment, with original signatures from the executives of organizations or agencies providing the match. In the case of a third-party in-kind contribution, the applicant must include a description of how the value was determined for the donated or contributed goods or service.

Exceptions

The U.S. Secretary of Education may consider decreasing the matching requirement in the most exceptional circumstances, on a case-by-case basis. An applicant that is unable to meet the match requirement must include in its application a request to the Secretary to reduce the matching level requirement, including the amount of the requested reduction and a statement of the basis for the

request.

Regulations

Applicants should review the Department of Education's regulations on the types of in-kind contributions that may be used to meet the matching requirements and the regulations specific to different types of organizations:

- The Department of Education's regulations on the different types of matching funds, including in-kind contributions, are set forth in 34 CFR 74.23 and can be viewed at the following web site: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/fund/reg/edgarReg/edgar.html>.
- Regulations vary depending on the type of applicant organization. These regulations include specific limitations in 34 CFR 74.23 applicable to nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education and 34 CFR 80.24 applicable to state, local, and Indian tribal governments, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) cost principles for entity types regarding donations, capital assets, depreciations and allowable costs. These circulars are available on OMB's website at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html>.

Assessing Institutional Readiness and Capacity to Apply

There are some basic elements of a successful grant application that are often taken for granted yet are critical to creating a strong, competitive application and are also key to the successful implementation of a grant project once funded. These include having a thorough understanding of the grant requirements and the electronic submission process, as well as creating a detailed plan for completing the grant application by the designated deadline.

Applicants often overlook the importance of having the right people at the table, from the lead organization and from the partner organizations and institutions, and the importance of identifying the most appropriate people to prepare the application, provide leadership, and carry out the goals and objectives of the grant once awarded. Below are some tips to help you assess your institutional readiness and capacity to apply. Some of these steps may seem obvious but are often skipped and could jeopardize the development of a high-quality application and its timely submission.

Understanding the Grant Project Requirements

- Start by downloading the [Federal Register notice](#) and [related application and project materials from the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods page](#).
- The *Federal Register* notice serves as the official document in providing instructions for the completion of your grant application, *and should be the first source for answers to questions*.
- Next, go to Grants.gov to register and download the electronic application and instructions. (Detailed information on how to register and use the Grants.gov system is provided in [Section B](#) of this guide.)
- We recommend that you compile all grant materials in a binder with dividers and labels, for easy reference through the grant-writing process.
- Assign two to three people to read the application and resource materials **several times**. It takes several readings to process all of the information and to formulate a thorough understanding of the grant application requirements. Having several people who are familiar with the guidelines lessens the likelihood that you will miss crucial information and make mistakes.

Developing a Detailed Grant-Writing Plan and Application Timeline

- Create a project timeline, working backward from the deadline of July 27, 2012, and outline the steps and tasks in the grant-writing process. Assign names to each task.
- Plan to submit your application a minimum of **two to three days early**—or sooner—to allow time to upload files through the electronic Grants.gov application system and to resolve any unforeseen technical difficulties that may arise during the final upload and submission process.

Bringing the Right People to the Table

- The importance of bringing the right combination of people to the table is signaled by the fact that a **total of 45 points**—nearly half of an applicant’s potential score of 100 points—focuses on the Quality of the Management Plan for a planning grant project, including the experience, lessons learned, and organizational strength in building capacity of the applicant’s management team and project director in four specific areas (see details under Selection Criteria on page 23702 of the [Federal Register](#) notice).
- Identify your **project partners** as soon as possible. These partnerships are required and must be carefully selected to ensure an effective plan for the grant’s cradle-to-college-to-career continuum of solutions.
- Identify your **lead grant writer(s)**, who will have primary responsibility for writing the project narrative and overseeing the preparation of all related materials for the grant application.
- Identify members of a **grant-writing team** and establish a work plan, schedule, and list of team member responsibilities, in accordance with the grant project timeline. We strongly suggest that you designate one or more individuals who will be responsible for: (1) developing the grant project budget; (2) managing the Grants.gov registration and electronic submission process; and (3) managing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process.
- Identify **leadership**: (1) Obtain formal “buy-in” from administrative leaders from all organizations within the partnership; (2) identify grant-writing team leaders by section; and, (3) identify the project leaders who will be responsible for implementing the planning grant, once awarded.
- Identify **data research team member(s)**, including representatives from key partner organizations, who will be responsible for compiling and analyzing initial needs assessment data, developing a plan for the collection and analysis of data on the proposed geographic area(s) and target neighborhood(s), and for building systems for examining longitudinal data across sectors.
- Identify team members who understand and can speak to designing the continuum of solutions that must be outlined in the application.

Managing Logistics

Technical Hardware and Software Logistics:

- It is helpful to identify the computer that will be used to upload the final submission of the grant proposal through Grants.gov. Make sure it is in good working order. In the past, applicants have experienced technical difficulties because of outdated computer hardware—some have even missed the deadline! Update the computer software, if needed.
- Adobe forms and PDF files are required for all applications and are available for free download through the Grants.gov web site. A scanner is needed for the MOU and other documents.
- If needed, identify support personnel to help you with the technical aspects of the application.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Logistics and Planning:

- This grant requires a single MOU that includes all partners. The MOU should include the information listed in Absolute Priority 1, part 4,(c)(i)-(ii) of the notice. The recommended page limit is no more than ten pages in length (double spaced).
- The MOU must contain information on the financial and programmatic commitment of the individual partners, and how each partner’s existing vision, theory of change, theory of action, and existing activities align with those of the proposed Promise Neighborhoods strategy (see [Federal Register](#) notice for detailed definitions). The MOU may also discuss accountability structures in place and budgets.
- We highly recommend that you start early to **develop the MOU and get signatures well in advance of the deadline date.**
- Take into account that you will have to get **approvals for all formal and informal partnerships.** Some nonprofits also require **board approval** for grant submissions. Find out now what the deadlines and timelines are for your own organization and your partner institutions.
- Drafting this MOU has value beyond meeting the technical requirements of the application; the MOU may also be used as a planning tool. It can help you plan, clarify each partner’s contributions, share and align theories of change and theories of action, and assist in the development of an appropriate governance structure for the project.

B. BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

Understanding the Grants.gov Electronic Application Process

Important to Read First: Please refer to pages 34-37 of the Promise Neighborhoods [Planning Grant Application, Section IV: Submitting Your Completed Application](#). Take the time **NOW** to familiarize yourself with [Grants.gov Submission Procedures and Tips for Applicants](#). Understanding and knowing how to use Grants.gov will help to ensure the timely **submission and acceptance** of your application by the U.S. Department of Education.

The following information is extracted from pages 34-37 of the [Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant Application package](#).

1. **Applications must be submitted using the Grants.gov system** at www.grants.gov. Please note that the Central Contracting Registry (CCR) will be replaced by the System for Award Management (SAM). SAM will be live and active May 29, 2012. (If you go to CCR.gov on May 29 you will be redirected to SAM.gov.) SAM is where you will go to register as an institution, organization, or business in order to apply for federal assistance (grants) or for contracts as of May 29, 2012.
2. **Adobe forms and PDF files are required for all applications** submitted to Grants.gov for the Department of Education. Therefore, you will need to download the latest version of Adobe Reader (at least Adobe Reader 10.1.3). Information on computer operating system compatibility with Adobe, as well as links to download the latest version, is available on Grants.gov. It is strongly recommended that you review these details **FIRST** before moving forward with completing and submitting your application.
3. **All applicants are required to upload their attachments in PDF format only.** If you have questions regarding the Grants.gov system you may contact support@grants.gov or call (800) 518-4726.

4. **Your organization's e-Biz POC (Point of Contact) must update their Grants.gov registration.** To complete this step, the e-Biz POC must have the organization's Dun & Bradstreet (DUNS) number and Central Contractor Registry (CCR) MPIN, which must be updated annually. It is highly recommended that you complete this step *well in advance* of your application's submission, unless the e-Biz POC has already responded to this requirement. [For more information on this topic, please visit Grants.gov.](#)
5. **REGISTER EARLY.** Grants.gov registration **may take three to 14 or more business days** to complete. You may begin working on your application while completing the registration process, but you cannot submit an application until all of the registration steps are complete. [For detailed information on the registration steps, click here](#), or visit Grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.js.
6. **SUBMIT EARLY.** It is strongly recommended that you **do not wait until the last day to submit** your application. Grants.gov will put a date/time stamp on your application and then process it after it is fully uploaded. The time to upload an application will vary depending on a number of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection, and the time it takes Grants.gov to process the application will vary as well. If Grants.gov rejects your application, you will need to resubmit successfully before 4:30 p.m. EST on Friday, July 27, 2012.
7. **DUNS Number. To submit successfully, you must provide the DUNS number on your application that was used when you registered as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) on Grants.gov.** This DUNS number is typically the same number used when your organization registered with the CCR (Central Contractor Registry) or the System for Award Management (SAM). **If you do not enter the same DUNS number on your application as the DUNS you registered with, Grants.gov will reject your application.**
8. **Submission Problems? What should you do?** Contact Grants.gov Customer Service at (800) 518-4726 or <http://www.grants.gov/contactus/contactus.jsp>, or use customer support available on the Web site: <http://www.grants.gov/help/help.jsp>.
9. **Helpful tips.** Once you download an application from Grants.gov, you will be working offline and saving data on your computer. Please be sure to note where you are saving the Grants.gov file on your computer. You will need to log into Grants.gov to upload and submit the application. Again, **you must provide the DUNS number on your application that was used when you registered as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) on Grants.gov.**

Grants.gov Support

Grants.gov Contact Center: (800) 518-4726 or support@grants.gov.
Hours of Operation: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [federal holidays](#).
Please have the following information available, to help expedite your inquiry:
Funding Opportunity Number (FON): **CFDA 84.215P**
Name of Agency You Are Applying To: **Department of Education**
Specific Area of Concern

Instructions for DUNS Number

All applicants must have a DUNS number in order to apply for federal funds. The DUNS number used on the application must be the same number that the applicant organization uses to register on

Grants.gov. If the numbers are not the same, Grants.gov will reject the application.

NOTE: Check with your fiscal office to see if your institution has an assigned DUNS number before contacting Dun & Bradstreet. You can obtain your DUNS Number at no charge by calling (800) 333-0505 or by completing a DUNS Number Request Form. The form can be obtained online at the following URL: http://www.dnb.com/US/duns_update/index.html.

Dun & Bradstreet, a global information services provider, has assigned DUNS numbers to over 43 million companies worldwide. For live help Monday-Friday 8am-6pm (EST), dial (888) 814-1435.

NOTE: Electronic submission via Grants.gov e-Application must use the DUNS number your organization used when it registered in the Central Contractor Registry or the System for Award Management.

When filling out the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424), you must use the same DUNS number that your organization used when it registered with the Central Contractor Registry, or Grants.gov will reject the application.

Complete the SF 424 first; the information provided on the SF 424 will populate fields in other application package forms.

C. GETTING STARTED

Orientation Materials

Start by using the following orientation materials from the U.S. Department of Education to give you an overview of the application. We recommend that you look at the summary materials and register to participate in a pre-application webinar before diving into the grant-writing process. *Please note: You will be able to review a copy of the PowerPoint slides from the pre-application webinar, if you should miss the live webinar.*

All materials and documents referenced in Section C of this guide may be downloaded from the Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods website:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html>.

Summary Materials

- **Promise Neighborhoods At-A-Glance April 2012**
[This helpful three-page document](#) provides an overview of the purpose of the Promise Neighborhoods Program, key changes in the grant competition including absolute priorities, additional priorities, selection criteria, matching requirements, and a summary of the FY 2012 competition design.
- **Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) FY 2012**
[This 39-page document](#) offers responses to questions about the purpose of the Promise Neighborhoods Program, eligible applicants and partners, priorities, target populations and neighborhood (the service area), project design, data collection and reporting, allowable activities, future competitions, the matching requirement, selection criteria, and the application process.

Please note: The Department will provide additional or updated program guidance as necessary on its Promise Neighborhoods website.

Pre-Application Webinars

Pre-application webinars are designed to provide technical assistance to interested applicants. Applicants are encouraged to register early for the webinars by going to the Promise Neighborhoods web site and clicking on the link to the desired webinar. After clicking on the desired webinar, please remember to click the “Register” button on the log-in page. Planning grant pre-application webinars will be held on:

- Thursday, May 15, 1pm EST/10am PST
- Thursday, June 12, 1pm EST/10am PST

Please note: Following the webinars, the PowerPoint slides will be posted on the website, and the slides and audio can be downloaded. The same PowerPoint presentation will be used for the May 15th and June 12th webinars. However, each webinar will have a unique, live question and answer period.

Application Materials

Next, set aside time to carefully review the following application materials: (1) the *Federal Register* notice ([download the PDF file on the Promise Neighborhoods website](#)); and (2) the Promise Neighborhoods **Planning Grant Application** listed below.

- **Federal Register Notice Inviting Applications for FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant**
[The Federal Register notice](#) outlines in detail the application requirements, description of the funding opportunity, priorities, and specific instructions that are aligned to the accurate completion of the planning grant application. You should always refer to the Promise Neighborhoods **Federal Register** notice first if you have any questions about the competition.
- **The FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant Application**
[The Promise Neighborhoods application package](#) is to be used as a guide only; while the *Application Guidelines* contain much of the same content as the *Federal Register* notice, the *Federal Register* is considered the official notice and should be considered the official statement of requirements.

For further information, please contact the Department of Education:

Adrienne Hawkins
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Rm. 4W256
Washington, D.C., 20202
Phone: (202) 453-5638
promiseneighborhoods@ed.gov

D. MOVING FORWARD

Application Checklist

The application checklist, prepared by the Department of Education for this grant opportunity, is a valuable tool to help you plan your proposal package. It can also be used to double-check that you have all pieces in place before submitting. We recommend that you have several grant-writing team members review the checklist to make sure that you do not overlook any sections in preparing your proposal.

A. Application Checklist

Use This Checklist While Preparing Your Application Package (optional):

All items listed on this checklist are required.

Application Narratives

- Abstract Narrative (go to <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/2011/abstract-form.pdf>)
- Project Narrative (use the Project Narrative Attachment Form)
- Budget Narrative (use Budget Narrative Attachment Form)
- Appendix
 - Applicant Eligibility Checklist ([available on Department of Education website](#))
 - Resumes of Key Personnel
 - Memorandum of Understanding
 - Documentation of match **or** waiver request for match, if applicable
 - Nonprofit status verification, if applicable
 - Evidence, timing of implementation, partner participation, costs and source of funds, #/% of children served per solution, penetration rate, and growth plans
 - Other, if applicable

Standard Forms

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424)
- Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424
- ED Budget Form SF 524

Assurances and Certifications

- Certification Regarding Lobbying
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Survey Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Applicants
- GEPA Statement
- Assurances – Non-Construction Programs

Application Narratives

There are three application narratives: the **Ed Abstract Form**, the **Project Narrative**, and the **Budget Narrative Form**.

IMPORTANT: The standard ED Abstract Form has been replaced and the Department of Education is now using a PDF web-based form, called the Ed Abstract Narrative Form, which is located on the Promise Neighborhoods website at www.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods. Once you have filled this out, label it as the ED Abstract Narrative Form and upload it on Grants.gov. You can do this by opening the Ed Abstract Form on Grants.gov and attaching the completed PDF form.

The Department of Education has made portions of the 2010 and 2011 Planning grantees' applications available on their website at: <http://www.data.ed.gov/grants/oii/2011/promise-neighborhoods>.

Project Narrative: Understanding the Key Requirements and Selection Criteria

1. Quick review of page limits and formatting requirements

Before you begin planning out and writing your project narrative, it is important to review the page limit and formatting requirements set forth in the [FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods planning grant Federal Register notices on page 23700](#). Key formatting requirements are presented in the chart below:

Key Formatting Requirements
<p>Applicants are strongly encouraged to limit the Project Narrative to 40 pages using the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A "page" is 8.5" x 11", on one side only. • Use one inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. • Text in the application narrative must be double spaced, and may contain footnotes • Text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs may be single-spaced • Use a font that is 12 point or larger and no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch). • Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial. • The suggested 40 page limit does not apply to Part I, the Coversheet; Part II, the Budget Section, including the Narrative Budget Justification; Part IV, the Assurances and Certification; or the one-page abstract, the resumes, the bibliography, or the letters of support. However, the page limit <i>does</i> apply to all of the application's Project Narrative Section (Part III). • When attaching files in Grants.gov, the titles of uploaded files must be less than 50 characters, contain no spaces, no special characters (example: -, &, *, %, /, \), including periods (.), blank spaces, and accent marks. Applications submitted that do not comply with Grants.gov guidelines will be rejected at Grants.gov and not forwarded to the Department of Education. • Finally, if you have received a waiver and will be submitting your application by mail, remember to print on only one side of the page.

2. Understanding the Three Absolute Priorities (APs):

Absolute Priorities	Focus for the Absolute Priorities
Absolute Priority 1 (AP1):	Promise Neighborhoods Plan
Absolute Priority 2 (AP2):	Rural Communities
Absolute Priority 3 (AP3):	Tribal Communities

- All Promise Neighborhoods planning grant applicants must complete Absolute Priority (AP1), which is to develop a Promise Neighborhoods Plan. In addressing AP1 all applicants must address five requirements:
 - 1) Neighborhood and need
 - 2) How to build a cradle-to-college-to-career continuum
 - 3) Data and needs assessment
 - 4) Experience, organizational capacity, and partners
 - 5) Commitment to work with a national evaluator
- Applicants eligible to apply for Absolute Priority 2 (AP2) must:
 - 1) Meet all the requirements in Absolute Priority 1, **and**
 - 2) Serve one or more rural communities **only** (see the [Federal Register](#) for the definition of a rural community).
- Applicants eligible to apply for Absolute Priority 3 (AP3) must:
 - 1) Meet all the requirements in Absolute Priority 1; and,
 - 2) Propose to serve at least one or more Indian tribe (see the [Federal Register](#) for the definition of an Indian tribe).

3. Understanding the Competitive Preference Priorities (CPP)

There are four optional Competitive Preference Priorities (CPPs), which Promise Neighborhoods planning grant applicants may choose to address in order to earn competitive points. Applicants for the Promise Neighborhoods planning grant may identify no more than **two** CPPs. (See the [Federal Register](#) for detailed descriptions of the CPPs.)

Note: The applicant **MUST** indicate the two CPPs to be scored. If the applicant does not indicate the two CPPs for which points will be sought, **NONE** of the CPPs will be scored.

Competitive Preference Priorities (CPP)	Focus for the Competitive Preference Priorities	Points
Competitive Preference Priority 4 (CP4):	Comprehensive Local Early Learning Network	2
Competitive Preference Priority 5 (CP5):	Quality Internet Connectivity	1
Competitive Preference Priority 6 (CP6):	Arts and Humanities	1
Competitive Preference Priority 7 (CP7):	Quality Affordable Housing (partnership with the Department of Housing and Urban Development)	1

4. Understanding the Invitational Priority

There is one Invitational Priority (optional; no additional points awarded) for this grant competition:

Invitational Priority	Focus for the Invitational Priority
Invitational Priority (IP):	Family Engagement in Learning Through Adult Education. The Department of Education is interested in receiving applications with plans that are coordinated with adult education programs that provide training and opportunities for family members to support student learning. An application that meets this priority will not receive preference over other applications.

5. Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant: Priority Alignment Areas and Selection Criteria

The FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods planning grant will support eligible organizations that demonstrate the *need* for creating a promised neighborhood in the geographic areas they are targeting, a sound *strategy* for developing a feasible plan to create a continuum of solutions, and the *capacity* to develop the plan. For this reason, Absolute Priority 1 (Proposal to Develop a Promise Neighborhood Plan) is organized around **three Priority Alignment Areas: 1) Need; 2) Strategy; and 3) Capacity**. Your proposal should reflect and address these three Priority Alignment areas.

The Promise Neighborhoods planning grant project narrative must address the five requirements of Absolute Priority 1. Therefore, your project narrative will consist of **five sections**, one for each of the Absolute Priority 1 five requirements. Four sections are assigned a selection criteria value, in terms of points, with all points adding up to a total possible score of 100. Section 5 is required but no points will be scored for this section (Note: Applicants may possibly earn an additional 1 to 2 points if they choose to also address a Competitive Preference Priority.) The points for each are presented below:

Priority Alignment	Selection Criteria	Planning Score
Need	Section 1: Need for the Project	15
Strategy	Section 2: Quality of the Project Design	20
	Section 3: Quality of the Project Services	20
Capacity	Section 4: Quality of the Management Plan	45
	Total Points	100
*Section 5: Commitment to Work with a National Evaluator—This requirement has no assigned points but still must be addressed in the project narrative.		

Project Narrative: Understanding What to Include in Addressing the Priorities

Suggested Topical Outline for Writing the Major Sections of the Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant Project Narrative:

Table of Contents (*included in the suggested 40-page limit for the Project Narrative file*).

- I. Introductory Statement (list all priorities to be addressed in your application)
- II. Planning Grant **Absolute Priority 1** (Proposal to Develop a Promise Neighborhood Plan)*
 - A. Priority Alignment Areas
 1. Priority Alignment Area 1: **NEED**
 - a. Required Section 1: Need for the Project
 2. Priority Alignment Area 2: **STRATEGY**
 - a. Required Section 2: Quality of the Project Design
 - b. Required Section 3: Quality of the Project Services
 3. Priority Alignment Area 3: **CAPACITY**
 - a. Required Section 4: Quality of the Management Plan
 - B. Required Section 5: Commitment to Work with a National Evaluator (no points)
- III. **Competitive Preference Priorities (CPPs)** (if applicable to your project)
- IV. **Invitational Priority** (if applicable to your project)
- V. Conclusion (optional)

**Note: You must respond to all the requirements in Absolute Priority 1 above if you are applying under Promise Neighborhoods Absolute Priority 2 in Rural Communities or Promise Neighborhoods Absolute Priority 3 in Tribal Communities.*

Absolute Priority 1: Selection Criteria/Content for Required Narrative Sections

The Department is very prescriptive about what should be included in the plan to create a Promise Neighborhood. As you write the application, be very attentive to describing how your organization will meet the detailed selection criteria and the requirements of Absolute Priority 1 (required for all applicants) and Absolute Priority 2 and 3, where appropriate. On the following pages we provide a “walk-through” of each of the required sections of the project narrative, along with selection criteria, required components, and tips and strategies for each section.

We made an effort in this grant writing guide to extract the information in the *Federal Register* notices, and to organize it in such a way as to be helpful to you in planning your project and in organizing the writing of your project narrative. In the chart for each section, the selection criteria, score points, and the required components of each section are arranged together conveniently in one place, which we hope will help you to be more efficient in the effective writing of each section of the project narrative.

Absolute Priority 1 Section 1: Need for the Project		
Selection Criteria	Total Points	Breakdown of Selection Criteria Points—What the peer reviewers are going to be looking for in this section
Need for the Project	15	10 Points: Magnitude or severity of the problems to be addressed. 5 Points: Extent to which geographically defined areas has been described.
Absolute Priority 1: Requirement 1 Components—what must be covered in this section		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the geographically-defined area (neighborhood) to be served and the level of distress in that area, based on the <i>indicators of need</i> and other relevant indicators (See Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant Federal Register p. 23698 for the definition of <i>indicators of need</i>.) 		

Section 1: Need for the Project: Tips and Strategies for Addressing the Selection Criteria

In this section you want to provide a well-rounded sense of the magnitude of the distress in your target neighborhood(s) and provide a strong case for the need for a Promise Neighborhoods planning grant. This statement of need should provide a strong justification for and be linked to the proposed continuum of solutions that will be developed through this project. Here are some ideas to help you approach this section:

1. Describing the geographically-defined area:

Start by introducing the geographic area to be served. Describe the parameters of the target neighborhood(s) or region and give a brief overview of the area and its demographics (e.g. What is the demographic profile of the target area? Are the demographics changing? What is the overall economic situation?) (Note: If you are serving more than one neighborhood or regions, be sure to provide a rationale based on the indicators of need for the target areas.)

Below is a list of some commonly accepted indicators for measuring the well-being of a community:

- **Poverty and Income Status:** Percent of individuals/families living below poverty level and median household and family incomes.
- **Unemployment Rates:** Trends for local rates; comparison to county or state rate.
- **Educational Attainment Rates:** Highest degree or level of school completed by residents in the zip code(s) of the neighborhood(s)/region served.
- **Home Ownership Rates:** The percent of residents who own vs. rent.
- **Housing Cost:** The percent of household income spent on monthly rent/mortgage.
- **Medicaid Recipients:** Number of Medicaid recipients by age group and zip code/city.
- **Crime Rates:** Rates of violent and property crimes in target area. Juvenile crime statistics.
- **Gang Involvement:** Police reports on level of gang activity in the target area.
- **Juvenile Probation Rate:** Rate of probation per 1,000 persons for ages 18 and under.
- **Homeless Youth:** Number of homeless youth at schools in target area.
- **Foster Care rates**
- Low birth weight babies
- School proficiency rates

Possible sources for the above data may include: U.S. Census (sort by city/zip code); United Way reports for your area; Employment Development Department (EDD) data; city websites; county health department reports; police reports; information collected by local CBOs, etc.

In addition, please refer to the paper [Results and Indicators for Children: An Analysis to Inform Discussions About Promise Neighborhoods](#) written by Child Trends, commissioned by the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink. This paper and others that might be helpful to you in demonstrating need in your neighborhood, such as studies by the Urban Institute's [National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership](#), are available in the [Resource Library of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink website](#).

2. Describing the magnitude and severity of the problems to be addressed:

As a basis for discussing the level of distress in your target area, you must use the Department of Education's definition of *indicators of need*:

- *Education need*, which means:
 - All or a portion of the neighborhood(s) includes or is within the attendance zone of a low-performing school that is a high school, especially one in which the graduation rate (as defined in this notice) is less than 60 percent, or a school that can be characterized as low-performing based on another proxy indicator, such as students' on-time progression from grade to grade; and
 - Other indicators, such as significant achievement gaps between sub-groups of students (as identified in section III (b)(3)(C)(x)(iii) of the ESEA) within a school or LEA, or high teacher or principal turnover, or high student absenteeism.
- *Family and community support need*, which means:
 - Percentages of children with preventable chronic health conditions (e.g. asthma, poor nutrition, dental problems, obesity) or avoidable developmental delays;
 - Immunization rates;
 - Rates of crime, including violent crime;
 - Student mobility rates;
 - Teenage birth rates;
 - Percentage of children in single-parent or no-parent families;
 - Rates of vacant or substandard homes, including distressed public and assisted housing;
 - Percentage of the residents living at or below the federal poverty threshold.

3. Making the case: identifying gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities

To make the case for your project, your planning team and project partners will need to work together to do an initial gaps analysis and brainstorm what you would like to see in your community, in terms of systems improvement and integrated service delivery. Ask yourself: To what extent do we have specific systems, services, and infrastructure in place to address the indicators of need? What are the existing gaps? What areas need alignment and integration? What changes do we have to make to create healthier schools and a healthier community?

Describing the need in the neighborhood is the foundation for the rest of your application. In every section, the reviewer must understand how your description of the need is informing your strategies.

Absolute Priority 1		
Section 2: Quality of the Project Design		
Selection Criteria	Total Points	Breakdown of Selection Criteria Points—What the peer reviewers are going to be looking for in this section
Quality of the Project Design	20	<p>10 Points: Extent continuum of solutions is aligned with a comprehensive strategy for the improvement of schools in the neighborhood.</p> <p>5 Points: Extent applicant describes a proposed plan to create a continuum of solutions.</p> <p>5 Points: Extent to which solutions leverage existing neighborhood assets including programs supported by federal, state, local, and private funds.</p>
Absolute Priority 1: Requirement 2 Components—What must be covered in this section		
<p>Special Note: While the following summary points for the Absolute Priority 1 required components for Section 2 will help guide your writing, you <i>must</i> refer to the Federal Register (pp. 23692-23694) to ensure you cover all detailed requirements and respond to the terms as defined in the notice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe how the applicant will plan to build a continuum of solutions based on best available evidence, including, when available, <i>strong or moderate evidence</i>, as defined in the <i>Federal Register</i> notices). ▪ Describe how the applicant will build community support for and involvement in the development of the plan. ▪ Describe how children not living in the neighborhood but attending schools in the neighborhood will have access to the proposed continuum of solutions. ▪ The success of the applicant’s strategy to build a continuum of solutions will based on the results of the project, as measured against the project indicators defined on pages 23693 in the <i>Federal Register</i> notices and described in Table 1 and Table 2. ▪ The applicant must describe how it will determine which solutions within the continuum of solutions to implement, and must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High-quality early learning programs and services designed to improve outcomes across multiple domains of early learning (as defined in the notice) for children from birth through third grade. ▪ Ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive education reforms that are linked to improved educational outcomes for children and youth in preschool through 12th grade. [See detailed requirements of the types of public schools that may be served through the grant on page 23692 of the <i>Federal Register</i> notices.] ▪ Programs that prepare students to be college- and career-ready; and ▪ Family and community supports (as defined in the notice). ▪ The applicant must identify in its application the public school or schools that would be served and the current status of reforms in the school or schools, including, if applicable, the type of intervention model being implemented, as defined in the notices. ▪ Describe how the applicant and its partners will leverage and integrate high-quality programs, related to public and private investments, and existing neighborhood assets into the continuum of solutions. ▪ The applicant must also describe in its plan how it will identify federal, state, or local policies, regulations, or other requirements that would impede its ability to achieve its goals and how it will report on those impediments to the Department and other relevant agencies. ▪ The applicant must describe how it will participate in, organize, or facilitate, as appropriate, <i>communities of practice</i> (as defined in the notice) for Promise Neighborhoods. 		

Section 2-Quality of the project design: tips and strategies for addressing the selection criteria

Project design

The purpose of the planning grant is to develop a plan based on the needs of a specific geographic area(s) will build a continuum of solutions with great schools at the center. In order to do that you have to demonstrate how you will increase capacity of all the organizations focused on achieving results for children and youth in the designated geographic area or neighborhood, while also integrating other community supports such as housing, health, etc., integrating programs that will break down agency silos, and using data to sustain and scale up proven, effective solutions, and, finally, measuring the impact of a Promise Neighborhood and the relationship between particular strategies and student outcomes. Visit the [PolicyLink](#) web site to learn about program planning and best practices and lessons learned from other Promise Neighborhood and broad-scale neighborhood revitalization projects.

School reform

Schools are the centerpiece of the Promise Neighborhood program model. You must identify a public school or schools to be served and the current status of reforms in that school or schools, including the type of intervention model being implemented or proposed. It is very important that you review the specifications in the *Federal Register* for the three types of schools that you may serve and other instructions about school partnerships.

Note: An applicant proposing to work with a *persistently lowest achieving school* must include as part of its strategy one of the four school intervention models (Turnaround Model, Restart Model, School Closure, or Transformational Model), as described in Appendix C of the *Race to the Top* notice.

Access and community involvement

You must be able to describe how you will build support within the community so that the continuum of solutions is available to all children. This includes: 1) children in the neighborhood in target school(s); 2) children in the neighborhood not attending target school(s); and 3) children attending target school(s) but not in neighborhood. You must also show how the proposed continuum of solutions is accessible to children with disabilities, English Learners (as defined in the notice), and recent immigrants.

Leveraging neighborhood assets

Another task in planning the program design of a Promise Neighborhood is to identify the ways resources will be leveraged, integrated, and targeted. This would include a description of how you will build on existing resources in your neighborhood and involve community partners. You must also describe the use of private funding (individual, corporate, or philanthropic), new Promise Neighborhood funding support from the Department of Education, and other public funds (ED, HUD, HHS, Justice, Labor, USDA, State, local, etc.). (See the Promise Neighborhood definition of *theory of action*.)

Familiarize yourself with the definitions (as defined in the Federal Register notice):

- There are more than two dozen key terms, with specific definitions, as defined in the Promise Neighborhoods Program Planning Grant Notice in the *Federal Register*. More importantly, many of these definitions have numerous and lengthy subheadings.
- Take the time to familiarize yourself with all definitions of terms as defined on pages 39636-39639 of the *Federal Register* for the Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant competition. Incorporate these terms into your narrative.
- You must also know these terms in order to effectively and accurately plan your project and to write about the specific requirements that must be addressed in the project narrative.

Absolute Priority 1		
Section 3: Quality of Project Services		
Selection Criteria	Total Points	Breakdown of Selection Criteria Points—What the peer reviewers are going to be looking for in this section
Quality of Project Services	20	<p>10 Points: Extent applicant describes how the needs assessment and segmentation analysis, including identifying and describing indicators, will be used during the planning phase to determine each solution within the continuum.</p> <p>10 Points: Extent applicant describes how it will determine solutions based on best available evidence including, where available, strong or moderate evidence, and ensure that solutions drive results and lead to changes on indicators.</p>
Absolute Priority 1: Requirement 3 Components—What must be covered in this section		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specify how applicant will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and segmentation analysis of children and youth in the neighborhood during the planning project period. ▪ Explain how applicant will use this needs assessment and segmentation analysis to determine the children with the highest needs and ensure those children receive appropriate services from the continuum of solutions. ▪ The applicant must describe in the application both the educational indicators and the family and community support indicators that the applicant will use in conducting the needs assessment during the planning year. ▪ During the planning year, the applicant must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Collect data for the educational indicators listed in Table 1 and use them as both program and project indicators; and (b) Collect data for the family and community support indicators in Table 2 and use them as program indicators; and (c) Collect data for unique family and community support indicators developed by the applicant that align with the goal and objectives of the project and use them as project indicators, or use the indicators in Table 2 as project indicators. <p>Note: Planning grant applicants are not required to propose solutions in their applications, however, they are required to describe how they will identify solutions, including the use of available evidence during the planning year that will result in improvements on the project indicators.</p> <p>Note: The indicators in Table 1 and 2 are not intended to limit an applicant from collecting and using data for additional data. (For examples of additional indicators, see <i>Federal Register</i>, page 23698.)</p>		

Section 3-Quality of the project services: tips and strategies for addressing the selection criteria

For this section, it is important to understand the definitions, as defined in the *Federal Register*, of the terms *program indicator* and *project indicator*, and the difference between these terms.

Definitions

Program indicators are indicators that the Department of Education will use only for overall program tracking and evaluation and for which an applicant is not required to propose solutions.

Project indicators are indicators for which an applicant proposes solutions intended to result in progress

on the indicators.

Another term that is important to understand in writing this section is the official definition of *segmentation analysis*. *Segmentation analysis* means the process of grouping and analyzing data from children and families in the geographic areas proposed to be served according to indicators of need or other relevant indicators. Some examples of segments that communities might want to consider include: students in special education programs, boys or girls, English language learners, or students who attend in school activities but not after-school.

As a reminder, the planning period is the right time to do your needs assessment and segmentation analysis. The U.S. Department of Education planning grant assumes you will be doing this work during planning, not that you will have completed it upon application.

Tips and strategies for data collection, needs assessment, and segmentation analysis:

In writing to meet the requirements of this section you may need to consider the following issues:

- Deciding on an evaluator
 - Would you prefer that the same individual(s) who works with you on the initial research and data collection during the writing of the grant also carry out the ongoing data collection, comprehensive needs assessment, and segmentation analysis functions? If so, the ability, availability, and willingness to engage in the full range of associated activities will be important.
 - Does institution or organization or partners have people on staff to carry out these functions? Or, do you need to hire consultants? If keeping or hiring an internal evaluator, where will that individual fit within your organizational structure and how will you ensure that he or she has access to the information and support needed for success? If working with external evaluators, will you hire an individual operating, a team from a stand-alone evaluation company, or work with a team affiliated with a University?
- It may be useful to make use of part or the entire [Needs Assessment tool created by the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink](#).
- It is advisable to devote sufficient time and thought to choosing variables (i.e., demographic information, indicators, and goals) so that the right data will be collected in the right ways. The upfront work ensures that the full story of the program's implementation and impact can be told down the road.

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink has developed a tool relating to data collection and making decisions about data systems. [Choosing a Data System for your Promise Neighborhood](#) outlines some potential criteria you may want to consider in choosing a system.

Some additional questions you will want to make sure to address in your application include:

- What is your plan and timeline for the ongoing data collection required by the grant?
- How will the needs assessment and segmentation analysis be conducted, and when?
- Are data readily available for the required program and project indicators in *Table 1—Education Indicators and Results They Are Intended to Measure*?
- Is data readily available for the required program indicators in *Table 2—Family and Community Support Indicators and Results They Are Intended to Measure*?
- Is data readily available for any unique project indicators that you might choose to include?

Absolute Priority 1		
Section 4: Quality of the Management Plan		
Selection Criteria	Total Points	Breakdown of Selection Criteria Points—What the peer reviewers are going to be looking for in this section
Quality of the Management Plan	45	<p>Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant’s management team and project director in all of the following areas:</p> <p>10 Points: Working with the neighborhood and its residents; the schools described in Absolute Priority 1; the LEA which those schools are located, Federal, State, and local government leaders; and other service providers.</p> <p>15 Points: Collecting, analyzing, and using data for decision-making, learning, continuous improvement, and accountability.</p> <p>10 Points: Creating formal and informal partnerships, including alignment of visions, theories of action, and theories of change described in its memorandum of understanding, and creating a new system for holding partners accountable for performance in accordance with the memorandum of understanding.</p> <p>10 Points: Integrating funding streams from multiple funding streams from public and private sources, including its proposal to leverage and integrate high quality programs in the neighborhood into the continuum of solutions.</p>
Absolute Priority 1: Requirement 4 Components—What must be covered in this section		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe the experience and lessons learned, and describe how the applicant will build the capacity of its management team, project team and project director in all of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Working with the neighborhoods and its residents, including parents and families that have children or other family members with disabilities or ELs, as well as with the school(s) described in paragraph (2) of this priority (i.e., see Section 2 of our guide; these are your <i>target schools</i>); the LEA in which the school or schools are located; Federal, State, and local government leaders; and other service providers. (b) Collecting, analyzing, and using data for decision-making, learning, continuous improvement, and accountability. The applicant must describe— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Its proposal to plan to build, adapt, or expand a longitudinal data system that integrates student-level data from multiple sources in order to measure progress on educational and family and community support indicators for all children in the neighborhood, disaggregated by sub-groups listed in section 1111(b)(3)(C)(xiii) of the ESEA; (ii) How the applicant will link the longitudinal data system, LEA, and State data systems, make the data accessible to parents, families, researchers, and evaluators while abiding by Federal, State, and other privacy laws and requirements; and manage and maintain the system; (iii) How the applicant use <i>rapid time</i> (as defined in this notice) data both in the planning year and once the Promise Neighborhoods strategy is implemented, for continuous program improvement; and (iv) How the applicant will document the planning process, including by describing lessons learned and best practices; (c) Creating formal and informal partnerships for such purposes as providing solutions along the continuum of solutions and attaining resources to sustain and scale up what works. An applicant, as part of its application, must submit a preliminary Memorandum of 		

Understanding, signed by each organization or agency, with which it would partner in planning the proposed Promise Neighborhood. The preliminary memorandum of understanding must describe:

- (i) Each partner’s financial and programmatic commitment; and
- (ii) How each partner’s existing vision, *theory of change* (as defined in this notice), *theory of action* (as defined in this notice), and existing activities align with those of the proposed Promise Neighborhood strategy;

(d) The governance structure proposed for the Promise Neighborhood including, the system for holding partners accountable, how the eligible entity’s governing board or advisory board is representative of the *geographic area* proposed to be served (as defined in this notice), and how residents of the geographic area would have an active role in the organization’s decision-making;

(e) Securing and integrating funding streams from multiple public and private sources from the Federal, State, and local level. Examples of public funds include Federal resources from the U.S. Department of Education, such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and Title I of the ESEA and from other Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and Treasury.

Section 4-Quality of the management plan: tips and strategies for addressing the selection criteria

IMPORTANT: The success of your proposal will hinge on how well you write this section, which accounts for almost half (45 points) of the total score (100 points). To increase your chances for a maximum score on this section, you must:

- (1) Demonstrate that you have the right people in place to plan and carry out the project;
- (2) Demonstrate that you have the capacity and experience to begin to build a system for collecting, analyzing, applying, and sharing data (real-time, longitudinal), which integrates student-level data from multiple sources, and can be used for continuous improvement and accountability.
- (3) Prove that you have a strong lead organization and leaders at the helm; and partners with existing activities that are aligned to the proposed Promise Neighborhood.
- (4) Demonstrate your capacity for creating a strong governance structure for the proposed Promise Neighborhood, including a governance or advisory board representative of the target area.

Experience, organizational capacity, and partners

- Describe the lead agency’s (nonprofit, institution of higher education, or Indian tribe) experience and lessons learned and how you plan to build the capacity of the project’s management team and project director. Highlight any solutions that are already in progress and give specific examples.
- Focus on your organization’s experience managing large grant projects and multi-year contracts, community redevelopment projects, educational reform projects, etc.
- Talk about fundraising success and the organization’s relationships with funders, community partners, schools, businesses, etc. Give specific examples of current and past collaborations and successful projects.
- Describe successes in securing funds to institutionalize, sustain, or expand a project.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Management

- Provide examples of your organization's experience collecting, analyzing, and using data, and experience using longitudinal data across systems and agencies.
- Describe your capacity to reference, report, and make available *rapid-time* data to inform educational practices and family and community supports.
- How will you ensure that all segments of the community have access to the data and are involved in the analysis and interpretation of it and the subsequent development of solutions?

Creating formal and informal relationships

- Elaborate on your history of collaborations and creating formal and informal relationships. What were some of the strengths of your coalitions?
- Give specific examples of when the lead agency and/or partners collaborated on one or more neighborhood initiatives. How did you do this? What did you learn? What might be useful in developing a Promise Neighborhoods plan that could eventually be brought to scale?
- In drafting and reviewing your preliminary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), make sure that the information in the MOU corresponds with and reflects the information in your project narrative.
- Cross-check the partners' financial and programmatic commitment information with the financial information that is included in the budget narrative.
- Give examples how existing activities of the lead agency and partners will align with the proposed Promise Neighborhood Plan.

Governance Structure

- In your description of the governance structure, make sure that you highlight how the composition of the governing or advisory board will be representative of the proposed geographic area to be served.
- Describe the means that will be used to ensure that residents of the geographic area to be served will have an active role in the organization's decision making.
- Describe how the lead agency and partner organizations will be held accountable to each other to provide the services and leadership agreed upon.
- How will the planning grant team ensure input from key stakeholders and make the community aware of the project that is being developed? Be specific (e.g., you will create a website, do e-mail blasts, hold town meetings, do surveys and focus groups, etc.).
- Discuss the specific responsibilities of the Project Director and governance structure and how they will work together (i.e., how often will they meet, outline of planning and decision-making process) to make sure the project is on time and within budget.
- In terms of project personnel, your proposal is stronger if you are able to identify now the staff and consultants you will use, so that you can talk about their background and qualifications and how they will contribute to the success of the project. If they already have experience working together on previous projects, even better! Remember to include resumes for key project personnel.
- If possible, list the ways diverse communities/constituencies were involved in the development of the planning grant application and will be involved during the planning grant.

Securing and integrating funding streams

Consider the following questions as you state your case for how you will secure, integrate, and leverage funds from *multiple* public and private sources:

- Do you have philanthropic partners at the table now? If not, what are your plans to bring them in?
- Do you have existing government grants (Federal, State, and city) that you can build upon?
- What is the fundraising track record of the lead agency? Of the project partners?

- Have you managed large government grants and contracts before? Do you have the systems in place to do so? If not, what do you need to do to get this in place?
- Who will be involved in the efforts to leverage and manage funds?

Absolute Priority 1		
Section 5: Commitment to Work With a National Evaluator for Promise Neighborhoods		
Selection Criteria	Total Points	Breakdown of Selection Criteria Points—What the peer reviewers are going to be looking for in this section
Commitment to Work with a National Evaluator for Promise Neighborhoods	No points	No selection criteria points awarded for this section.
Absolute Priority 1: Requirement 5 Components—What must be covered in this section		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe the applicant’s commitment to work with the Department of Education and with a national evaluator for Promise Neighborhoods or another entity designated by the Department of Education, to ensure that data collection and program design are consistent with plans to conduct a rigorous national evaluation of the Promise Neighborhoods program and of specific solutions and strategies pursued by individual grantees. This commitment include, but need not be limited to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Ensuring that through memoranda of understanding with appropriate entities, the national evaluator and the Department of Education have access to relevant and project data (e.g., administrative data and program and project indicator data), including on a quarterly basis if requested by the Department of Education; (b) Developing in consultation with the national evaluator, an evaluation strategy including identifying a credible comparison group; and (c) Developing in consultation with the national evaluator, a plan for identifying and collecting reliable and valid baseline data for both program participants and a designated comparison group of non-participant. 		

Project narrative section 5-national evaluator: tips and strategies

- Consider the page limit for the Project Narrative as you respond to this section but, at the same time, you should be able to make a convincing case in this section that your institution or organization will be able to respond to the commitments outlined in the memoranda of understanding with the Promise Neighborhoods national evaluator, such as: providing project data on a *quarterly basis*, if requested, and developing a plan to identify a comparable comparison group for evaluation purposes.

Addressing Absolute Priority 2 (AP2) and Absolute Priority 3 (AP3)

You *must* respond to all the requirements in Absolute Priority 1 above if you are applying under Promise Neighborhoods Absolute Priority 2 in Rural Communities or Promise Neighborhoods Absolute Priority 3 in Tribal Communities.

Addressing the Competitive Preference Priorities (CPPs)

If you choose to address any of the Competitive Preference Priorities, be sure to state that in the introduction to your project narrative and, after you have addressed the required sections of Absolute Priority 1, include a separate section describing the CPPs and identify the up to two CPPs you wish the Department of Education to consider for purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Addressing the Invitational Priority (IP)

If you choose to address the Invitational Priority, be sure to state that in the introduction to your project narrative and, after you have addressed the required sections of Absolute Priority 1, include a separate section describing how you will address the Invitational Priority in your proposed planning grant project. Remember, no points will be awarded for addressing the IP.

E. FINAL TIPS

Additional Proposal Planning Pointers

- Do not underestimate the time it will take to register on the Grants.gov system.
- It may be to your benefit to review the slides from the Department of Education's first 2012 Implementation Grant webinar, along with the [Federal Register](#) notices, to identify any additional questions you may have for clarification re: requirements in the grant proposal. You may then participate in the live chat during the second webinar to get answers to your questions.
- Don't forget to take the time to review the [Federal Register notice](#) (pages 23690-23704) final priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria which contains the public comments and recommendations to the Department of Education on the Promise Neighborhoods Program. This may provide additional insight and information to assist with program planning.
- Remember, downloading the related grant application resource materials can be a time-consuming task, aside from the time it takes to read through and truly understand all of these materials.
- Think like a peer reviewer. Review the Selection Criteria and the potential scores to understand what the peer reviewers are going to be looking for in your proposal and how much value is assigned to each section. Use this as a guide in estimating the number of pages for each section of the project narrative.
- Go to the [Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods website](#) to access and download copies of last year's Promise Neighborhood's Planning Grant successful applications and review comments to see how others have conceived their Promise Neighborhood projects at the Planning grant stage.
- Use some of the wording from the Selection Criteria in your sub-headings, and the definitions that apply to the program, to make it easy for the reviewers to see that you have covered the necessary requirements.
- Ask a colleague to serve as an "outside reader" for the project, to double-check that you have adequately addressed the requirements for each section and make sure that your proposal is clearly organized and easy for the reviewers to understand.
- In addition, please read the notice about the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) statement in application package. All applicants must address the non-discrimination policies outlined in the GEPA statement within the project activities outlined in their proposal and state how the applicant

institution meets the GEPA statement within the Project Narrative.

Writing Tips

- What is scored is what matters! Write clearly and concisely—keep in mind that you have a very limited amount of space in which to cover a lot of material.
- Be precise and specific: Your proposal should function as a blueprint for action, which any colleague could then take and carry out if your project received funding tomorrow.
- Keep your audience in mind. According to the Department of Education, the peer reviews will be “individuals with expertise in education reform, community and youth development, strategy and policy, and grant application review.” These individuals may not be familiar with the terms and issues in your particular field so avoid jargon and make sure you explain technical terminology and references.
- Absorb the language of the funder. As you go through the application materials, make a running list of commonly used terms and phrases and consider how you might effectively use these in your proposal. Funding agencies are like people—you want to “speak their language” enough that they can “hear” you, while at the same time being true to yourself.
- Try to have one or two primary writer(s) for the proposal, to ensure consistency of tone and style and information.
- Make sure all your narrative sections are interlinked, in that they refer back to one another and do not contradict each other. Also, make sure that the narrative activities and personnel listed are reflected in the budget.
- Check your spelling and grammar and always have several parties, including individuals outside of the project, proofread each section for clarity, spelling and grammatical errors, and other formatting mistakes. Remember, the reviewers will be looking at a number of applications and, as with student papers, those who “did their homework” will stand out.
- Finally—and this is common sense but far too often overlooked—make sure that the **different sections of the application package match**. Too often sections are done at different times in the proposal’s evolution and are not updated to reflect the latest thinking as planning evolves, or they contain contradictory statements. Make sure that items referred to in the project narrative show up in the budget or personnel sections. Keep checking back and forth between sections during the application preparation process and make this a priority for your in-house reviewers when you double check the application in its final stages and just before submission.

FINAL ADVICE: Use the Application Checklist to make sure that you have included all of the required sections of the application and that your application package is complete.

F. THINKING AHEAD

Becoming a Peer Reviewer and Planning for Future Competitions

If you are not ready to apply for a Promise Neighborhoods planning grant at this time, but are still interested in bringing such a program to your neighborhood in the future, there are two steps you can take to stay involved and get prepared for future competitions:

- Consider becoming a peer reviewer (see the [Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods website](#) for more information); and
- Use the application guidelines as a blueprint for conducting a neighborhood/regional planning process that would position you to apply for a Promise Neighborhoods planning grant in the future. (Note: You would need to absorb the costs or find funding for the planning process on your own).

G. HELP ALONG THE WAY

Resources to Help You Build a Strong Project and Proposal

Please explore Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink resources and links at PromiseNeighborhoodsInstitute.org to help you as you develop your Promise Neighborhoods project.

GOOD LUCK!

Writing Guide Feedback and Suggestions

We hope that this guide has been useful to you in working with your grant team to prepare the FY 2012 Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant. Our goal was to be helpful in organizing the grant application's information and providing writing tips and strategies, based on our experience in the field. We would appreciate any comments on the most helpful aspects of the guide, as well as feedback and suggestions on how we might improve the information included in this guide for future Promise Neighborhoods grant competitions.

Please forward your comments, feedback, and suggestions to the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink: Cara Carrillo, Cara@policylink.org, 510-663-4346.