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How CILs Can Transform the Housing Landscape

Day 1 Review

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**June 12, 2019
St. Louis, Missouri**

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Relationships with Key Housing Partners

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Ann Denton

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Key Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals in Housing

Find your Allies

Housing is too complicated to go it alone. And, you are NOT alone. In most places, there are others who are concerned with the need for more usable housing. It becomes a question of finding and engaging them!

Follow the money!

- Who holds/controls the money?
- Who typically uses the money?
- Who has an interest in the money?

As you explore these questions, you will find potential allies and rivals.

Find your Allies, cont'd.

Likely allies include people and organizations that are focused on meeting the needs of disenfranchised groups, including people in extreme poverty. This includes people surviving on SSI.

Examples:

- Local homelessness assistance systems (Continuum of Care groups). Rural areas are part of the state system.
- Local service coordination groups
- Local and state advocacy groups – affordable housing advocates, for example

Find your Allies, cont'd. 2

- Broaden your view – are there other groups that might share your interest?
- Possible allies might include local groups focused on ending hunger, improving health care, advocating for a living wage, etc.

Find your Allies, cont'd. 3

- Sometimes, allies come unexpectedly. For example, in the homelessness arena, business associations are often hostile to efforts to help people experiencing homelessness. They often want “those people” to just go away.
- In some communities, downtown business associations have proven to be unexpected allies, providing political support, practical suggestions, and – in some cases – funding.

Public Agencies – Federal

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development sets policy, provides funding, regulates housing programs, helps ensure compliance with federal law and monitors performance.

- HUD divides the country into ten regions; you should know who your regional administrator is:
https://www.hud.gov/about/Field_Leadership
- Each region has a regional office.
- Each region has multiple field offices. You should know those leaders, as well:
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/field_policy_mgt/localoffices

Public Agencies – Federal, cont'd.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates a Rural Development division. This division funds, regulates, and monitors USDA-funded housing activity.

USDA Rural Development (USDA/RD): www.rd.usda.gov/

USDA/RD national Rural Housing Service contacts:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/national-office/rhs>

USDA/RD operates State offices. These are the people it might be useful to know:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

Public Agencies – State

Most states have a housing finance agency.

- “State Housing Finance Agencies (HFAs) are state-chartered authorities established to help meet the affordable housing needs of the residents of their states. Although they vary widely in characteristics such as their relationship to state government, most HFAs are independent entities that operate under the direction of a board of directors appointed by each state’s governor. They administer a wide range of affordable housing and community development programs.”
- National Council of State Housing Agencies, www.ncsha.org

Public Agencies – State, cont'd.

- Your state housing finance agency controls the tax credit program. The tax credit program is the primary funding source driving affordable housing development in most states. Each state has a “qualified allocation plan” (QAP). This is an opportunity for advocacy!
- Find your housing finance agency through NCSHA or google housing finance agency/your state.
- If you don't know much about this, look around for state level affordable housing groups or nonprofit developers who might be willing to give you a quick orientation.

Public Agencies – State, cont'd. 2

- State community development agencies often control some housing or assistance programs that can be helpful.
- The Council of State Community Development Agencies (COSCDA) is a good place to start if you are unfamiliar with these agencies. <http://coscda.org/>
- Many of these agencies administer HUD's Community Development Block Grant (although this can also be the housing finance agency – it depends on the State).
- They also administer the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). This is a common funding source for community action agencies. (A likely or probable ally!)

Public Agencies - Local

Urban communities will have a city (and maybe also a county) office that administers federal housing programs. They may also administer some state programs and any locally funded programs.

- Google affordable housing agency/my community. This usually takes you to the relevant local public agency. For example, googling affordable housing agency/Sacramento takes you to the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency.
- If that doesn't work, the HUD program that reaches the most cities/counties is the Community Development Block Grant. So, you can also try googling CDBG/my community.

Organizations – National

- National Low Income Housing Coalition.
<https://nlihc.org/> Look at their “Out of Reach 2018” publication.
- Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.
www.Bazelon.org
- Technical Assistance Collaborative.
<http://www.tacinc.org/>. Source of information about HUD’s Section 811 program and a key source for advocacy information through their “Priced Out” series of books.

Organizations – Local

Look for organizations linked to your potential allies.

- **Developers:** look for nonprofit developers. Look also for Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs). These are a special category of developer with an expanded public mission and local leadership.
- **Systems:** Homelessness Continuum of Care system; local behavioral health (BH) system. The CoC has HUD-funded housing for homeless; the BH system usually has some activity around housing.
- **Advocacy:** Local affordable housing organizations; local service coordination groups.

Individuals – Find a Champion

Having a champion is a valuable asset. National celebrities take on causes – Brad Pitt worked in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Local philanthropists take on causes. Local foundations have funding priorities that may fit your mission.

- Look at who is on the board of organizations with similar missions.
- Look at the leadership of groups such as the Junior League.
- Meet with political leaders who are sympathetic to some aspect: housing, disability issues, hunger, poverty, social justice.

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