

Know Your Message: A Guide to Media and Communications from the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink

The talking points below are intended to prepare you for a variety of situations—speaking to the media, meeting with potential funders, talking to policymakers, or presenting at town hall meetings. Incorporate the language that works for your community.

What is a Promise Neighborhood?

- A Promise Neighborhood is a community of opportunity that allows children to learn, grow, and succeed.
- The Promise Neighborhood model is not a new concept; it builds on successful efforts already underway.
- Strong schools are at the heart of a strong Promise Neighborhood, but responsibility extends beyond the school walls. It includes the health clinic, the tenant association, the grocery store.
- A Promise Neighborhood is a local, community-driven effort.
- Inspired by the model of the Harlem Children’s Zone, Promise Neighborhoods wrap children in high-quality, coordinated health, social, community, and educational support from **cradle to college to career**.
- Promise Neighborhoods allow children to grow up healthy and well-educated so they can reach their full potential. Promise Neighborhoods keep our workforce and communities strong.

Why are Promise Neighborhoods the Answer?

- Every community has islands of excellence. Promise Neighborhoods build bridges between these islands.
- Promise Neighborhoods address the interconnected problems that plague distressed neighborhoods—poor health, high crime, underfunded schools, insufficient affordable housing.
- We must dismantle the pipeline to prison, and build a pipeline from the cradle to college to career.
- Promise Neighborhoods are efficient and data-driven.
- Promise Neighborhoods are inspired by the proven method of the Harlem Children’s Zone, which has demonstrated results at every developmental age of a child and currently has over 600 youth in college.

How Can Promise Neighborhoods Be More than a Federal Program?

- The Promise Neighborhood model is not a new concept; it builds on successful efforts already underway. The federal program provides a much-needed boost to these ongoing efforts, and inspires more communities to become Promise Neighborhoods.
- The Promise Neighborhoods planning process has been a catalyst for change, bringing together community leaders in an unprecedented way, and will allow communities to thrive with or without federal funding.
- Promise Neighborhoods leverage federal, private, and public dollars to ensure the longevity and stability of their programs.
- Because Promise Neighborhoods align resources from a variety of sources, the investment in children and community continues beyond the federal grant.
- Promise Neighborhoods operate with full community support at all levels—from banks and foundations, to schools and social service organizations, to families and kids.
- Dozens of communities are building Promise Neighborhoods even without the guarantee of federal funding because they know their challenges, and they know Promise Neighborhoods are the solution.

General Tips

- Storytelling is compelling—talk about something you’ve experienced, and mention a specific community member by name.
- Listen to your colleagues to hear how they talk about Promise Neighborhoods; you’ll find new ideas, and remain consistent in your messaging.
- Give specific examples of how your Promise Neighborhood will be—and has been—effective, and how many years you and your community partners have been engaged in this type of work.
- Make *everybody* feel that what they do is key to the project’s overall success.
- When speaking to funders and policymakers, emphasize the data-driven, results-oriented nature of the work.
- When asking for support, remain optimistic in your assessment of your program and your potential for success.
- Control your message—be consistent with your language.

Every Child Deserves a Promise Neighborhood.

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink provides support to Promise Neighborhoods to ensure that all children live in communities of opportunity that enable them to learn, grow, and succeed. The Institute—a nonprofit, independent organization—helps build and sustain Promise Neighborhoods that wrap children in education, health, and social supports from the cradle to college to career.

Contact Shantha Susman at shantha@policylink.org with questions.