

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation

d/b/a NeighborWorks America

2019 Chief FOIA Officer Report

By

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Who We Are

Established by an act of Congress as a nonpartisan nonprofit corporation, NeighborWorks America has created places of opportunity in communities across the country for 40 years. We build the skills, supplement the funding and amplify the reach of grassroots organizations so they can leverage additional resources to achieve their missions.

We strengthen distressed urban, suburban and rural communities through a formal national network of local community-based partnership organizations composed of community residents, private sector and local government entities – known collectively as the NeighborWorks network.

[Our network of more than 240 independent, nonprofit organizations](#) helps individuals, families and communities thrive through comprehensive approaches to affordable housing and community development.

We support our network and the broader field through:

- **Grants.** In fiscal year 2017, NeighborWorks network members reported more than [\\$8 billion of investment in their communities](#). This level of investment is possible because for every \$1 of federal appropriation we award, NeighborWorks organizations are able to attract another \$59 to expand local impact.
- **Technical assistance.** We offer multiple grant, capacity-building and peer-exchange opportunities designed to help our members expand their work, pilot and replicate new approaches, build new partnerships, and improve their performance and governance.
- **[Training and leadership development.](#)** NeighborWorks America is the nation’s leading trainer of community-development and affordable-housing professionals, awarding nearly 19,000 certificates in fiscal year 2016. Our offerings serve residents, network organizations and the field generally. All courses are regularly updated to reflect industry standards and current trends.
- **[Organizational assessment.](#)** To ensure that our network organizations are strong and healthy in their operations—and remain that way—we conduct rigorous assessments before their acceptance into NeighborWorks and every year thereafter. We also help our members incorporate evaluation into their own “ethos” through [Success Measures](#), a NeighborWorks social enterprise that helps nonprofits and their funders measure the impact of their community-development efforts and investments.

- Congress established NeighborWorks America as a non-profit corporation by passing the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation Act, Pub. L. 95-557 (1978). The enabling legislation, 42 USC §8101 (1978), states that NeighborWorks America is subject to the FOIA statute, 5 U.S.C. §552. The enabling legislation also states that the corporation shall not be considered a federal agency, department or instrumentality of the Federal Government.

Introduction

The demands of FOIA requests on NeighborWorks America have been steady over the past year. We have integrated the directives communicated in the DOJ's [2009 FOIA Guidelines](#) and other FOIA policy guidance into our FOIA operation.

Presumption of Openness

NeighborWorks America strives to fulfill the guiding principle of the presumption of openness in our FOIA activities. This guiding principle has been communicated to staff members at all levels of the organization involved in FOIA requests. To ensure we collect all information relevant to a request, staff are informed that the FOIA statute requires the presumption of openness and their searches for information related to requests must be as thorough as possible.

NeighborWorks America's Annual FOIA Report for fiscal year 2018 is available in our [FOIA Reading Room](#).

Proactive Disclosures

NeighborWorks America proactively discloses information about our internal operations and program performance on a regular basis. In fiscal year 2018, we proactively disclosed over fourteen reports on our website. The reports cover areas including internal audits, program performance, policy statements, and Congressional updates.

Greater Use of Technology

Consistent with the prior years, FOIA requests FY18 were complex and involve very large amounts of information. We continue to use document review technology in our FOIA review process to enable us to respond to the requests in a reasonable amount of time. Use of cloud-based data management services and special document review software enabled us to process large amounts of data more efficiently.

Commitment to a Spirit of Cooperation

Guided by the presumption of openness, NeighborWorks America works in a spirit of cooperation with parties requesting information. We communicate on a regular basis with the requester regarding the progress and challenges encountered in processing their request. We have established a FOIA Requester Service Center call-in number. Requesters can call our Requester Service Center contact to find out the status of their request. This service provides an additional layer of support to fulfill our commitment to cooperation.

Conclusion

NeighborWorks America is committed to integrating the directives communicated in the DOJ's [2009 FOIA Guidelines](#) into our FOIA operations. We believe this guidance will result in the continuation of our open and responsive FOIA operation in the coming year.