



NeighborWorks America:  
**Strengthening the  
NeighborWorks Network**

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# Strengthening the capacity and sustainability of the NeighborWorks network

NeighborWorks America has long recognized the importance of investing in the capacity and sustainability of the NeighborWorks network, the major delivery channel through which NeighborWorks achieves its mission. Through a comprehensive package of supports that includes funding, capacity building, technical assistance and learning/collaboration opportunities, NeighborWorks builds the strength of individual network organizations as well as the bonds between them, leveraging the collective knowledge, expertise, and experience of network organizations to support one another as well as the field as a whole.

Ensuring that network organizations are stable and well run allows NeighborWorks America to confidently steward precious taxpayer resources. Each network group is assigned a Relationship Manager who serves as a connector, conduit, resource, and strategic advisor to the organization. Based on a deep understanding of the unique context of each network organization, the Relationship Manager serves as a trusted partner to organization leadership, helping to implement changes, facilitating strategic planning sessions, and assisting with developing and maintaining relationships with funders, government officials, and other organizations.

NeighborWorks supports organizational resilience by ensuring network members have sufficient knowledge and resources to assess community needs and access the resources to deliver critical services. As the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic underscored, network organizations must position themselves to respond to the next crisis, be it economic, disaster-related or another systemic calamity. In addition, NeighborWorks is working to address the community development industry's long-term human resource capacity needs by piloting new ways to build a diverse talent pipeline to sustain and grow the field.

NeighborWorks leverages a comprehensive, data-informed suite of tools to develop, enhance, and monitor the health and sustainability of the network. Together with training and technical assistance, these tools promote the development and adoption of resilient business strategies, strong organizational leadership and management, and stable organizations. By capitalizing on a two-way flow of information, NeighborWorks assists network organizations to make data-supported decisions while also creating transparency and accountability.

## Organizational Health Tracking System (OHTS)

A critical aspect of ensuring excellence in the network is NeighborWorks' commitment to assessing the financial health, organizational management, and performance of each NeighborWorks organization annually. The assessment system is designed to function as an early warning system to identify organizations facing challenges, triggering a process through which NeighborWorks provides tailored supports and resources for corrective actions to assist in their recovery and restore the health of the organization. Following the assessment, NeighborWorks works with each organization to implement the improvements in business processes and organizational structure recommended through the assessment process, providing additional resources where necessary. However, in instances where these efforts fail to adequately reposition the organization, NeighborWorks can resort to disaffiliating the organization from the network.

To provide ongoing assessment of each network organization, NeighborWorks uses a system of on-site and off-site assessments. This system includes an annual review of independent audits submitted by each NeighborWorks organization for compliance and financial health; the collection, validation and evaluation of production and performance data; and NeighborWorks' Organizational Health Tracking System. NeighborWorks uses this information to assess risk factors, analyze capacity to mitigate risk, and make recommendations on how to increase organizational capacity and performance. The results of these assessments are monitored and reported to appropriate staff within NeighborWorks America and directly to each NeighborWorks organization. Based on the outcomes, Relationship Managers then connect organizations with appropriate resources.

Largely beginning in FY 2023, NeighborWorks began monitoring three trends affecting the health of the network: 1) increasing insurance rates, 2) inventory and interest rate pressure on the housing market, and 3) decreasing commercial lending. First increased insurance costs have slowed production and development pipelines in the network and have reduced the profitability of operating rental housing. Reduced housing inventory and increased interest rates have made the current housing market the least affordable in

### **OHTS in Action**

Following an assessment which revealed significant weaknesses, NeighborWorks assisted a Western Region organization to continually improve its health and performance, bringing their health rating from Vulnerable to Exemplary. As part of this process, the NeighborWorks Relationship Manager used the series of assessments as a tool to focus on financial, board governance, and programmatic improvements that would help get the organization back on track. The success of these supports was evident in the most recent annual assessment, which found that over the last three years the organization expanded its rental portfolio, deployed over \$2 million in lending capital, and created 171 new homeowners. By bolstering their financial position, the organization was able to pursue real estate development projects, thus expanding the ways it serves the community.

40 years. The number of homeowners created declined approximately 30 percent from 2020 to 2023. Finally, decreased commercial real estate lending has reduced capital available for the NeighborWorks America network. The Organizational Health Tracking System includes members from Community Housing Capital and NeighborWorks Capital, two organizations that provide loans to the NeighborWorks America network. By reviewing risk trends in the industry through the OHTS process, we can better anticipate challenges in the network and provide resources to help network members respond.

NeighborWorks is dedicated to continuous improvement and is undertaking an evaluation of the OHTS process in FY 2024. Staff working groups have been formed to focus on risk-based scheduling, report enhancements, training, processes/policies/procedures, and culture. Looking to the future, NeighborWorks is restructuring the organizational assessment process with a focus on risk, deploying resources to ensure that its annual assessments help network organizations strengthen their operations and improve their stability, efficiency, and effectiveness. In FY 2023, network organizations resolved 257 issues relating to organizational health through the organizational health assessment process.

Through a detailed review of existing assessment systems, NeighborWorks is ensuring that the assessment criteria focus on sustainability and capacity to provide network organizations with the information and resources they need to succeed. For example, NeighborWorks developed a financial sustainability dashboard tool to allow network members to track their financial performance over time and benchmark it against peer organizations in the network.

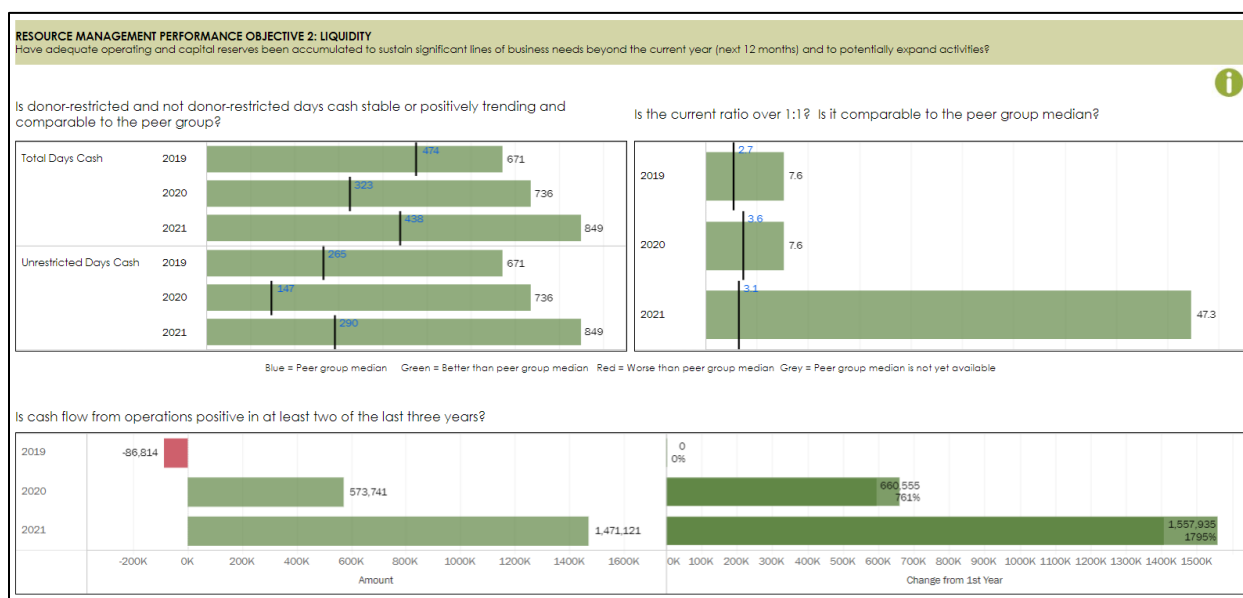


Figure 1. Example of Financial Sustainability Dashboard

Through regional outreach sessions, NeighborWorks provided training to users to help integrate this tool into management practices. NeighborWorks will continue its commitment to investing in strengthening the governance of network organizations and promoting new ideas and opportunities for collaboration between network organizations.

## **Business Intelligence Services and Fellowship**

### Data Dashboards

Through quarterly and annual surveys, NeighborWorks America collects and aggregates detailed client and service data from network organizations. These data serve not only to help NeighborWorks measure and understand the impacts of the network as a whole, but also as opportunities to provide insights back to individual organizations, using technical resources and expertise to create network-wide interactive tools that stakeholders can access to deepen their understanding of their work and the communities they serve. Network organizations employ these data to inform their strategies, identify opportunities, and tailor their programmatic offerings. They also utilize these data to communicate the impact of their work to their internal and external stakeholders. Examples of the dashboards, which include data visualizations, include:

- Homeownership Production: charts and geographic representations to illustrate the intersection between services and client demographics and location;
- Lender Dashboard: residential lending program data by type of product and organization role to enable the network to identify possible partnership or peer learning opportunities;
- Rental Portfolio and Production: production and portfolio to illustrate properties' geographic distribution and other characteristics such as financing sources or target populations;
- Salary Dashboard: average and median salary data for executive and non-executive positions based on region or user-defined organizational cohort; and
- Financial Capability: charts and geographic representations to illustrate the intersection between financial capability services and client demographics and location.

The Business Intelligence (BI) team also serves as internal consultants for NeighborWorks America's divisions, consistent with NeighborWorks America's commitment to consistently using data to drive learning and decision making in all facets of the work. For example, in 2022, Business Intelligence staff partnered with National

Homeownership Programs and Lending to take a data-driven approach to identifying which NeighborWorks organizations are most “investor-ready” and able to deploy capital swiftly, conducted a survey of the NeighborWorks network to better understand network organizations’ work with communities of color and equity initiatives, and provided semi-annual presentations comparing NeighborWorks network outputs with overall national housing trends.

## Custom Analysis

In addition to offering network-wide business intelligence tools, NeighborWorks provides organizations with individualized services to visualize and understand impact through custom data products and guidance. Recognizing that each network organizations’ research questions are unique to their circumstance and the communities they serve, NeighborWorks offers tailored in-house service to develop products such as dashboards and map reports to assist organizations with distinct data analytics for their reporting, strategic planning, program evaluation or development needs.

When staffing changes and organizational capacity challenges made updating their internal management tools too complex, Mid Central Community Action Agency (Bloomington, IL) reached out to the BI team for help rebuilding and refining their existing scorecard. Mid Central’s main goal was to make the scorecard easier to update and maintain so they could easily track progress on their strategic goals. BI worked closely with the CEO to produce a final version of the simplified scorecard, which will serve as a centralized repository for key metrics used in grant proposals and reports.

## Business Intelligence Fellowship

Now in its fifth year, the Business Intelligence Fellowship, a partnership between NeighborWorks and a Tableau-certified training entity, will support the 2023 cohort of 15 fellows from network organizations. Prior to selection, each fellow demonstrates a clear interest in learning data visualization skills and promoting the use of analytics and evidence-based decision making in the day-to-day culture of their organization. A sixth cohort is planned to launch in 2024.

The multifaceted fellowship program gives participants experience with hands-on training, networking opportunities, and time to apply their new skills at work. Fellows participate in four cohort-based trainings and benefit from mentorship from the NeighborWorks network and NeighborWorks America staff. By training a cohort of network staff, the fellowship program aims to:

- empower fellows to develop their analytical and data visualization capacities using Tableau,
- improve the analytical capacity of NeighborWorks organizations through the work of the fellows and their commitment to bringing data into organization-wide programmatic and strategic decision-making conversations,
- foster a network-wide evidence-based and data-driven organizational culture by connecting fellows to analysts and practitioners within the network and NeighborWorks America,
- bring data analytics to underrepresented practitioners and historically underserved communities, and
- improve the ability of participating NeighborWorks organizations to demonstrate and communicate impact.

## **Sustainable Business Initiative**

NeighborWorks promotes innovations that bolster network organizations' financial sustainability and self-sufficiency. Given fiscal pressures and competing demands on public resources, NeighborWorks has encouraged network organizations to adapt their business models by diversifying their lines of business and shifting towards earned income models in which program costs are supported, in part or in whole, by associated revenues. In many cases, shifting towards a social enterprise model has allowed NeighborWorks organizations to expand their impact to additional geographies or customers while becoming increasingly resilient in the face of swings in subsidy programs and funder priorities.

Recognizing the need for new business models that support network organizations' financial sustainability, NeighborWorks launched the Sustainable Homeownership Project (SHP) in 2012. Through the pilot, NeighborWorks provided support to network members working to transform their organizations by transitioning their culture and business model from a social service model to social enterprise. In recognition of the significant positive outcomes of the pilot, NeighborWorks embarked on a longer-term Sustainable Business Initiative (SBI) to mainstream the successes of the pilot, expanding from a focus on homeownership lines of business to an organization-wide approach. By continuing to broadly distribute the learnings and tools from SHP, NeighborWorks lives up to its statutory directive to "...experimentally replicate neighborhood preservation projects which have demonstrated success" (42 USC § 8105).



The SBI program strives to create more agile and resilient organizations by moving from a social service model to a social enterprise model by embedding a culture that allows organizations to be agile and open to change while improving their double bottom line. The 77 network organizations participating in SBI work to increase operational efficiencies, grow in production scale, and achieve greater sustainability through increased earned revenue, leading to lasting impact in their communities. By developing strategies to increase their earned revenue generation through fees, organizations can reduce their reliance on philanthropic and grant funding, allowing greater independence, financial stability, and resilience. Across participating organizations in the initiative, total earned revenue increased to 63% from FY2022 to FY2023, for an increase of eight points. As part of the ten-year anniversary celebration, NeighborWorks will highlight these and other successes of the initiative.

In FY 2023, NeighborWorks completed a series of webinars on how to sustain SBI throughout an organization. To support this work, NeighborWorks is developing training materials for participating organizations to use when onboarding new staff to educate them on SBI and what their organization has done. In 2024, NeighborWorks will host a convening for SBI participants. Planning for the event will be led by a working group of participating organizations, who will identify timely and relevant topics. The convening will also create opportunities for peer connection to share successes and obstacles. In addition, NeighborWorks plans to continue to offer 1:1 coaching and access to discipline Subject Matter Experts to help support business strategies and evolving businesses.

Technology tools were one of the most significant contributors to the success of the initial SHP pilot. NeighborWorks developed a custom Salesforce-based customer relationship management system for participating organizations to manage and track customers and service delivery, enabling organizations to create efficiencies, serve more customers, and improve the customer experience. What began in the pilot as “SHP Tech” is now known as NeighborWorks Compass; in FY 2021, NeighborWorks Compass became a separate project with its own leadership, funding, and staff.

## **NeighborWorks Compass™**

The success of the Sustainable Business Initiative and the impact of the technology built to facilitate these business transformations led NeighborWorks to begin developing a new counseling management system for the network and for others in the housing industry. The tool went live in FY 2021, and the process of onboarding the NeighborWorks network and other housing counseling organizations to the new system began in phases, with new training resources and guidance for organizations as they convert and migrate data from their current platform to NeighborWorks Compass.

In FY 2023, NeighborWorks began development of Compass 2.0, an enhanced release focused on improved user experience and seamless integration. The first ten organizations are being onboarded in early 2024, setting the stage for a more extensive onboarding effort aiming to bring approximately 375 organizations on board by 2026. Additional tools and functionalities remain under development and will be integrated into the product when completed.

## Professional Learning

NeighborWorks America is the national leader in housing and community development training, providing professional training and certification, community leadership development, and tools and services to staff and board members of nonprofits, housing finance agencies, public housing authorities, financial institutions, and various municipal and state agencies. Network organizations rely heavily on training resources provided by NeighborWorks to develop the skills of their own staff and to build the collective strength of the field. By elevating the standard of practice and professionalizing the field, NeighborWorks training creates possibilities for partnership, develops a talent pipeline, and builds recognition around the NeighborWorks brand. In FY2023 NeighborWorks awarded 15,600 professional training certificates of completion to 17,500 course enrollees.

NeighborWorks training addresses pressing community needs with a relevant, forward-thinking curriculum tailored to build the skills of community development practitioners nationwide. In response to a 2023 survey of 2,600 training participants, 90 percent indicated that the training they received was useful in building their skills and knowledge to better do their work 3-6 months later. Additionally, 84 percent said that the training they received had significantly contributed to the impact of their work on the customers or communities they serve.

In FY 2023, NeighborWorks embarked on a strategy of continued investment in the training catalogue, beginning with a comprehensive audit of all materials. As outdated materials are retired or updated and the catalogue is expanded to cover timely topics, NeighborWorks is also actively future-proofing, ensuring that all content is available both in-person and online. The catalog currently consists of over 250 in-person courses and more than 100 online courses. In addition, as part of a larger technology update project, Training will be working towards having each course in the NeighborWorks catalog micro-credentialed and digitally badged to accelerate the ability of NeighborWorks professional learning to ladder into higher education certificate and degree programs nationwide to advance the community development profession.

NeighborWorks is also working to offer course instruction and other training materials in languages other than English, utilizing data and survey responses to determine demand. A selection of professional development and certification training courses for nonprofit community development staff are available in Spanish, and NeighborWorks is working to expand the roster of Spanish-speaking faculty. NeighborWorks will also continue to promote the [\*Realizing the American Dream\*](#) and [\*Keeping the American Dream\*](#) publications/curriculums, which are available in English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and French in both hard copy and e-versions. These core publications serve as resources for pre-purchase and post purchase homeownership and financial capability education.

## In-Person Training

Established in 1987, the NeighborWorks Training Institute (NTI), an intensive five-day “mobile university,” is the centerpiece of NeighborWorks’ training offerings. Each NTI offers more than 75 courses to between 1,200 and 1,800 participants. These industry-leading training opportunities offer immersive learning experiences with some of the field’s preeminent instructors as well as the opportunity to network and connect with other practitioners working in communities across the country. Afternoon workshops, mobile labs, and an in-depth policy and practice symposium focusing on topical issues and important themes round out the offerings, making NTIs one of the most effective means of developing the expertise and capacity of professionals working across the housing and community development industry. In FY 2024, NTIs are scheduled to take place in San Francisco, CA and Pittsburgh, PA.

For communities looking to bring focused training to a group of local/regional practitioners, residents, and other stakeholders, NeighborWorks offers “place-based” training. These highly customizable training experiences bring NeighborWorks’ faculty into regional venues to conduct trainings for 25 to 200 participants, offering one or more courses complete with materials and interactive activities. These place-based trainings, often conducted in partnership with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, financial institutions, and other partners, serve an important role as a secondary classroom delivery mechanism by making training opportunities more affordable and accessible for a wide range of participants.

## Online Training

Community development practitioners do not always have the time or resources to travel for in-person training events. Even before the pandemic necessitated a world-wide shift to online learning, NeighborWorks America offered a robust and diversified online learning curriculum with several formats to suit a range of needs. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NeighborWorks quickly pivoted to deliver its signature training

offerings through a new Virtual Training Institute (VTI) format. After rapidly converting in-person class curricula to a remote format, the first VTI was held in August 2020 with over 1,200 registrants for classes that included an in-depth symposium focused on preserving and rebuilding homeownership and wealth in communities of color. Although in-person NTIs resumed in 2022, NeighborWorks recognizes the important role that virtual offerings play in expanding access to training and has integrated VTIs into its permanent training offerings. In FY 2023, over 1,000 participants enrolled in the VTI, taking 5,300 seats in courses, networking and peer learning activities during the event. Two VTIs will be held in FY 2024.

In addition to VTIs, NeighborWorks offers online training in five formats:

- Self-guided courses are interactive computer-based courses available to practitioners twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. These courses cover much of the same content as in-person courses but allow participants the flexibility to log on and off and complete a course over a 60-day period. Each class incorporates learning checks to ensure that participants are gaining knowledge. In FY 2023, 1,111 participants enrolled in 2,291 self-guided online courses.
- Faculty-led courses are an online option similar to online university programs that allow participants to take a live NeighborWorks course with sessions spaced over three to six weeks. Each course accommodates multiple participants, forming an online “learning community” that can continue beyond the duration of the course. Courses incorporate interactive learning tools (e.g., discussion boards, live webinar sessions with the instructor), and allow participants to discuss their unique challenges with their faculty and fellow learners. In FY 2023, over 500 participants enrolled in faculty-led online courses. In FY 2024, a new faculty-led course type will be piloted and rolled out as an accelerated learning model.
- Interactive Webinar Training courses are highly focused, 90-minute faculty-facilitated online trainings to develop new skills or learn the latest best practices. These live training sessions engage participants in exercises and interaction with the course content to ensure meaningful learning and skill development rather than passive listening. Each session ends with a quiz to test comprehension. In FY 2023, 1,148 participants enrolled in 3,086 interactive webinar courses.
- Hybrid courses are live, in-person courses delivered at the NeighborWorks Training Institutes and live streamed to an online audience simultaneously. Using technology for interactive activities and peer discussions, the course materials for all attendees are also provided digitally through the NeighborWorks virtual classroom platform. Whether in-person or online, attendees experience the same faculty, the same course content, and the same activities. In FY 2023, hybrid

courses were put on hold as the team focused on developing a new faculty-led course model to meet customer demand.

- Blended courses are in-person NTI courses that include an online component after the in-person course takes place. The online portion of the course is typically two weeks long with live sessions where participants can learn and practice application of concepts taught in person.

In FY 2024, NeighborWorks is also making a significant investment in developing a new technology solution to support online learning. In addition to hosting VTIs, this platform would serve NeighborWorks' larger peer learning applications, providing a means for organizations to connect virtually to share their expertise and experience to mentor, coach, guide, and support one another.

## Professional Certificates and Certifications

To complement the array of courses and flexible learning modes, NeighborWorks administers professional certificates and industry certifications. These offerings provide participants with a structured, comprehensive opportunity to develop in their professions while delivering greater impact to their organizations and communities. Upon completion of required coursework and testing, candidates can earn:

- Professional certificates in eight content areas, each comprising 9-12 courses and a final comprehensive test,
- One-week skill-building certifications in thirteen specific competencies, and
- Nine professional certifications awarded through the NeighborWorks Center for Homeownership Education and Counseling, which help qualify participants for HUD funding and approval. Over 19,200 NCHEC certifications have been awarded to date.

## Professional Development and Leadership Training

Strong organizations require strong, committed, and supported leaders. NeighborWorks has several offerings designed to hone the skills of network organization leaders, equipping them with tools and resources to improve the functions of their organizations and, ultimately, the outcomes they achieve for their communities. NeighborWorks provides tailored professional development for the technical specialties within our field, including rental housing asset managers and nonprofit CFOs. To support these core

positions, which are critical to the outcomes and business success of their organizations, NeighborWorks hosts annual convenings exclusively for these professions.

The two most common reasons nonprofit housing organizations fail are weak leadership, including board governance, and poor financial management. As a funder, NeighborWorks requires consistent and strong leadership and board governance throughout the network. To ensure network organizations are well-positioned to meet this requirement, NeighborWorks provides comprehensive resources to strengthen network organizations' executive leadership and boards through technical assistance, training, coaching, and peer learning opportunities.

## Excellence in Governance

NeighborWorks offers its Excellence in Governance (EIG) program to help the boards of network organizations create lasting, adaptive change and transform from simply being responsible to being exceptional. Using a performance-based framework paired with governance principles and consistent coaching, each participating board defines their own success and measures effectiveness in the context of the organization and the community it serves. Through five cohorts, 64 organizations graduated from the original program.

Based on learnings from ten years of the largely in-person Excellence in Governance program and one round of the virtual EIG ReConnect program, NeighborWorks redesigned Excellence in Governance as a hybrid, two-year certification program. EIG Academy will bring together 100-125 network board members for an organizational capacity building program focused on sharpening leadership skills, strengthening governance strategies, and experimenting with promising practices. The program offers a comprehensive educational experience, including virtual monthly: live training sessions, peer learning groups, technical assistance, and a variety of resources, plus two in-person convenings. EIG Academy is set to launch in August 2024.

In preparation for the launch of EIG Academy, Excellence in Governance hosted an in-person convening and a four-part webinar series for network board members and CEOs. In August 2023, over 95 network participants spent two days sharing real-live examples, creating take-home strategies and building peer relationships. Close to 80% of participants said they would recommend an Excellence in Governance weekend to a colleague on their board. In the fall of 2023, Excellence in Governance continued to test new content through a governance webinar series focused on recruitment, onboarding, and retention.

## Achieving Excellence

The NeighborWorks Achieving Excellence Program is a 16-month program conducted in collaboration with Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Seasoned executive directors and senior staff of community-serving organizations are guided with cutting-edge content, one-on-one executive coaching and structured peer group work as they learn to transform their organizations for an increased focus on results and outcomes—all by tackling a real-life challenge that is critical to the success of their organizations.

The eleventh class began in early 2023 with 50 senior leaders from across the country, including 60 percent who identify as people of color. The class includes a cohort of eight leaders who are Native and/or working in Native-serving organizations. Approximately half of participants are from NeighborWorks organizations and half serve in chief executive officer positions. By the time of their graduation in spring 2024, each member of the class will have accomplished significant outcomes toward addressing a critical issue for their organization. They will join a nationwide alumni network of over 500 professionals.

The twelfth class is expected to begin in late 2024, bringing together a new group of 50 high-performing leaders from across the country, learning and building upon the 20 years of the NeighborWorks Achieving Excellence Program.

## VISTA Program

Since 2009, more than 1,000 AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteers have completed service with the NeighborWorks network, participating in diverse range of activities including creating new partnerships with schools, marketing and designing compelling outreach materials, and developing and implementing business systems such as data collection or resource development. VISTAs help train other staff on these systems and on strategies and tools including social media and other technologies. In FY 2023 NeighborWorks placed 27 full-year VISTA members with network organizations and 16 VISTA Summer Associates, with plans for another round of full-year placements in FY 2024. In response to an end-of-year survey of the FY 2022 members, 100 percent reported that their assignments were rewarding and meaningful. Equally important, 100 percent of the NWO host sites that responded to the survey reported their VISTAs are making a significant contribution and that participation in the program resulted in moderate to significant value to their organization.

## Support for Capacity Building, Strategic Planning, and Leadership Transitions

The affordable housing and community development field has enjoyed the benefit of a generation of talented professionals who have committed their careers to this work. Many of these leaders, whose uniquely high retention and long tenures have offered stability and tremendous depth of experience to local organizations, are now reaching the end of their careers, and boards of directors are faced with the challenges of managing leadership transitions. In FY 2023, 15 percent of network organizations reported being in some phase of transition, whether it be starting to plan, engaging in a search, hiring, or supporting a new CEO/ED in their first years. Furthermore, 23 new network leaders started in the role of CEO/ED during FY 2023. Throughout its history, NeighborWorks has recognized the importance of supporting executive transitions in the network to ensure organizational success. To smooth the impact of these transitions, NeighborWorks America has made concerted investments to support proactive succession planning, board training, and leadership development, cultivating the next generation of executives who will continue to uphold the network's tradition of excellence.

For more than a decade, NeighborWorks America has supported the California Coalition of Rural Housing's (CCRH) Internship Program for Diversity in Nonprofit Housing and Community Development. The program trains a dozen college seniors a year and places them at housing and community development organizations. To date, more than 200 students have gone through the internship program to learn about a range of developments from the building side, including single-family homes, multifamily homes and manufactured housing. Insights from the program prompted NeighborWorks to develop a training course on building pipelines of leaders of color in rural communities.

In 2019, NeighborWorks began the process of conducting a landscape analysis to research and identify programs that focus on recruitment and/or leadership and skills development in addition to strategies and opportunities currently in place to recruit and develop individuals, specifically to the community development field. This effort culminated with a report entitled [“Recruiting and Developing Leadership in Community Development: Key Ingredients for Success,”](#) which was released in September 2021. The report identifies the core challenges to attracting, retaining, and developing staff in nonprofit community development and assesses 50 programs from around the country to extract learnings and best practices for overcoming these obstacles.

As a result of the study, NeighborWorks America initiated the Strong Leaders Program in 2022. The nine-month pilot focused on a cohort of 20 mid-level managers and included



courses from the NeighborWorks Training Institute, along with one-on-one mentoring. Knowledge distilled from this program was used to inform other talent and leadership development programming. NeighborWorks is particularly attuned to the challenges of attracting, supporting, and retaining leaders of color. In 2022, NeighborWorks hosted a Symposium entitled “Investing in our Teams: Creating a Representative and Resilient Workforce” to highlight strategies for building a diverse pipeline of talent across the network and in the broader field.

NeighborWorks also launched the Advancing Leaders in Real Estate pilot program, bringing together eighteen aspiring real estate professionals from network organizations to participate in a nine-month cohort with training courses, mentoring and cohort meetings. Following the program, 100% of participants reported that the program assisted them in their current position and expanded their professional networks and 82% said they would likely or most likely be at their current organization in two years in a project manager role. Among their supervisors, 100% reported that their staff demonstrated new skills or behaviors since participating in the program and nearly half observed increased confidence at work.