

# NAHRO and Community Action Partnership **Survey Findings**



2017 | An assessment and examination of partnership and collaboration between  
Community Action Agencies, Public Housing Agencies, and Local Redevelopment Agencies.



# Why We Conducted the Survey

## About NAHRO

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) is the leading housing and community development advocate for the provision of adequate and affordable housing and strong, viable communities for all Americans—particularly those with low- and moderate-incomes. Our members administer HUD programs such as Public Housing, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, CDBG and HOME.

## About CAP

Community Action Partnership is a national, 501(c)3 nonprofit membership organization that provides technical assistance, training and other resources to Community Action Agencies, nonprofit and public groups funded by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), a federal program that allocates funding to states to combat poverty across the United States. The Partnership's efforts allow CAAs and Community Action State Associations to stay up-to-date on the latest best practices to fight poverty and empower low-income individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency. We are committed to strengthening, promoting, representing and serving our Network of Agencies to assure that the issues of poverty are effectively presented and addressed.

Far too many Americans face poverty. As a result, many families do not have access to decent housing, children face food insecurity, seniors struggle to sustain a modest lifestyle, and parents are forced to make hard choices for their limited resources. Nationally, Housing Authorities help over



4.8 million families and individuals by providing safe, decent, affordable housing for families in need. Community Action Agencies provide critical programs to more than 15 million people with low-incomes every year. Services provided by Community Action Agencies and local Housing and Redevelopment Agencies play an indispensable role in helping combat poverty.

**We hope to grow a new and exciting relationship to help address poverty in communities across the nation...**

NAHRO and CAP created a survey to help identify existing joint efforts to combat poverty through housing and redevelopment agencies and Community Action Agencies. The information included in this document will help us examine and assess where there is crossover between the nation's existing network of CAA agencies and local PHAs and better understand where the intersection of work now being done by PHAs, LRAs, and CAAs are making a difference in the fight to combat poverty and income inequality at the local level.

We hope to grow a new and exciting relationship to help address poverty in communities across the nation by strengthening partnerships between these essential and in many cases indispensable organizations. We believe that the mission of local housing authorities and Community Action Agencies is strengthened through collaboration, and when the programs and services of Community Action Agencies are available to public housing residents, localities are in a far better position to combat poverty.



# SEVENTH

## **Public Housing Agencies**

A Public Housing Agency (PHA) is responsible for the management and operation of its local public housing program. They may also operate other types of housing programs, including tenant-based rental assistance (Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), wherein a voucher remains with a tenant, and Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers (PBV) wherein a voucher remains with a unit, as well project based rental assistance.

Sometimes PHAs provide other services that might include such things as: homeownership opportunities for qualified families; employment training opportunities, and other special training and employment programs for residents; and support programs for the elderly. PHAs are federally funded through different funding streams, and are required to maintain a Board to direct the agency. Many PHAs have the words “Housing Agency” or “Housing Authority” in their names, however this is not true for all PHAs.

## **Community Action Agencies**

Community Action Agencies (CAA) deploy a range of services and strategies in local communities designed to help individuals and families become stable, achieve economic stability and engage in building strong communities. Services and strategies include Head Start, Weatherization, Meals-on-Wheels, emergency assistance, homelessness prevention, health care, job training, and a wide variety of other programs that vary from location to location.

Through a network of 1,000 local agencies, CAAs have been working in local communities for more than 50 years and currently reach 96% of America’s counties. In many rural areas they are the primary human service organization present. By statute, CAAs are required to have a tri-partite board, consisting of one-third democratically selected from low-income communities, one-third elected officials, and one-third from the private sector. Many CAAs have the words Community Action in their names, however this is not true for all CAAs.

## **Local Redevelopment Agencies**

The definition of what constitutes a Local Redevelopment Agency (LRA) varies state to state – some are instrumentalities of state governments, while others are instrumentalities of local governments, and others are special purpose units of local government. However, local redevelopment agencies typically support local economic development through community revitalization and addressing neighborhood blight and disinvestment.



# Summary Of Findings

NAHRO and CAP conducted their survey in the spring of 2017. In total, 467 PHAs, CAAs, and LRAs responded.

**A**lmost all PHAs and CAAs that responded to the NAHRO/CAP survey are aware of their local PHA or CAA. Virtually all CAAs that responded (132 of 133) are aware of their local PHAs, and 90 percent of PHAs are aware of their local CAA. Eighteen of the respondents noted that they functioned as both their local CAA and PHA. An especially high percentage of rural CAAs noted that they interact with two or more PHAs.

PHAs refer their residents to many different services provided by CAAs. Of the PHAs that are aware of their local CAA, only 3.5 percent did not refer their residents to services. Of those that referred residents to CAAs, 68 percent reported referring their residents to energy assistance programs through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), 63 percent referred their residents to a food pantry or bank, and 50 percent referred their residents to CAAs for information and other referrals. PHAs also refer their residents to other services provided through CAAs, including: Head Start and Early Head Start (48 percent), Meals on Wheels (45 percent), weatherization programs (43 percent), and case management and transportation services (40 percent each). Of the PHAs that refer their residents to services provided by CAAs, 85 percent noted that their residents utilize services provided by local CAAs even without referral. Of the agencies that are not aware of their local CAA, 86 percent noted that opportunities to collaborate with their local CAA exist. Furthermore, 46 percent reported that their residents need volunteering opportunities that could be fulfilled through programs offered by the local CAA.

CAAs also reported referring their clients to services provided by local PHAs. Of the CAAs that refer their clients to services provided by a PHA, 83 percent refer their clients to Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher services, 71 percent refer their clients to public housing rental units, and 58 percent refer their clients to general housing assistance. Sixty-three percent of CAAs reported a need for volunteers that residents of public housing could provide.

Connections between PHAs and CAAs go beyond service referrals as well. Half of all CAA respondents report that they work in at least one coalition with their local PHA – a finding that is even more pronounced in rural areas where 72 percent of CAAs are a part of at least one coalition with their local PHA. Thirty-nine percent of PHAs responded that they work in at least one coalition with their local CAA. CAAs and PHAs also noted that they frequently work together through local Continuum of Care (CoC) related activities. Although there are numerous collaborations, many respondents expressed interest in partnering more.

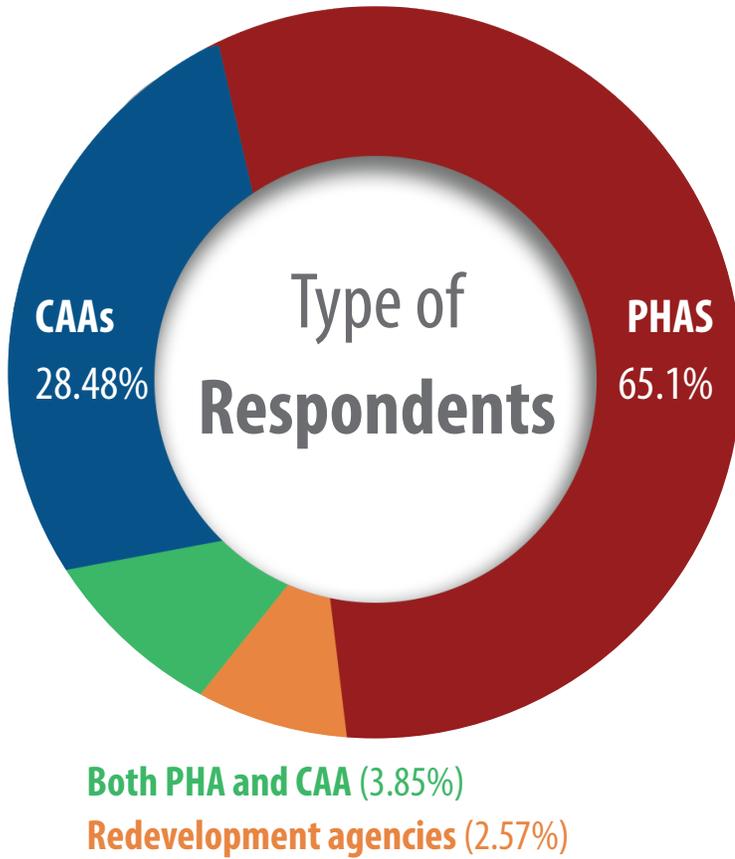
Although PHAs and CAAs would like to work together more often, not all PHAs and CAAs are aware of the CAA Needs Assessment and the PHA 5-Year Plans, respectively. About 42 percent of CAAs responded that they are aware of their local PHA 5-year Plan, and of them just one-fifth participated in the data collection process for the drafting of the 5-Year Plan. About 43 percent of PHAs reported that they were aware of their local CAA Needs Assessment, however only 22 percent participated in the data collection process for drafting the Assessment.

All responding LRAs are aware of their local PHA and CAA, and only 26 percent of PHAs and CAAs are not aware of a local LRA. In general, however, CAAs and PHAs expressed less interest in partnering with local redevelopment agencies. PHAs and CAAs were less likely to utilize services provided by their local redevelopment agency as compared to each other.



# Infographics

 467 respondents



## Awareness



## Coalition Involvement



## Top 3 Services Used

### PHA



energy assistance



food pantry



information and referral

### CAA



Section 8



Public Housing



General Housing

# PHA CASE STUDY:

## Fresno, CA

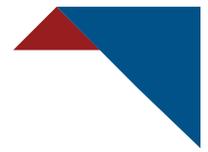
FRESNO VIBRANT  
COMMUNITIES  
QUALITY HOUSING  
HOUSING AUTHORITY ENGAGED  
RESIDENTS



Fresno  
Economic  
Opportunities  
Commission

The Fresno Housing Authority and Fresno Economic Opportunity Commission realized they served many of the same families and partnered to strengthen their community impact.

The local housing authority and the local community action agency had always had a collegial relationship in Fresno, California. However, this relationship strengthened considerably in 2010 when the Fresno Housing Authority and the Fresno Economic Opportunity Commission (EOC) decided to focus on an “intentional alignment” of resources to address poverty. This included working not only together, but also with local schools, the city government, and the county Departments of Social Services, Health, and Behavioral Health. Recognizing that they served many of the same families, the agencies strengthened their partnership to provide a more effective community impact.



Education is one of the many partnerships forged between the agencies. Getting an education in Fresno can be difficult for many reasons, and many young residents drop out of high school and lack important job skills. To address this need, the Fresno Housing Authority and the Fresno EOC began the Learn2Earn program, which helps adults finish high school, college, and other training programs. Learn2Earn has opened new career paths and job opportunities for 1,605 participants, and through the right alignment of resources, needed no additional funding.



The Fresno Housing Authority and Fresno EOC also realized that each year 1,500 students enter the Fresno Unified School District through the Head Start program, operated by Fresno EOC, and that many of these students were also residents of the Fresno Housing Authority. It became evident that each agency should be more intentional about a vision of educational success. Many joint or aligned projects and activities have stemmed from that joint vision.

The Fresno Housing Authority and the Fresno EOC have also partnered to address disinvestment in certain neighborhoods in Fresno. The “Street Saints” program stresses community engagement and participation to strengthen families and encourage leadership through social interactions and collaborative partnerships.

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To advance a more coordinated and comprehensive service-delivery model in Fresno, the two agencies, along with Fresno Unified, began practicing strength-based case management. One-hundred-twenty case workers at Fresno EOC and Fresno Unified, along with their counterparts at the Fresno Housing Authority, have received training through the Cornell University Family Development curriculum, which has created a unified vision of family development for the community. The curriculum is provided to the community by Fresno EOC at no cost, unless the participants want formal course credentials.

The success of the partnership between the Fresno Housing Authority and Fresno EOC was contingent upon making a commitment to strengthen their relationship. This commitment starts with leadership. Success is more than just what the agencies accomplish together, but requires understanding, meeting, and connecting to build trust. A defined mission where each participant knows their strengths is critical. Focusing on the mission of the collaboration ensures agencies can accomplish big things together to address poverty.

# Connect With Your Local PHA/CAA

- Have Public Housing residents provide community service to local CAAs .
- Encourage locating Head Start sites and other services at Public Housing properties.
- Create MOUs between CAAs, PHAs, and LRAs.
- Encourage the formation of local think tanks involving all 3 agencies to come up with best practices.
- Provide funding to implement top ideas to pilot for replication.
- Refer PHAs residents and CAA clients to their local CAA and PHA, respectively.
- Encourage local PHAs and CAAs to meet together on a regular basis.
- Have annual community events to make the public aware of PHA and CAA programs.
- Host a meet and greet for PHA and CAA staff to begin dialog and familiarity with each other.
- Have each PHA and CAA materials and applications available on-site.
- Invite CAAs to state NAHRO meetings, and PHAs to state CAP association meetings to discuss services.
- Create contact and website lists highlighting services offered by PHAs and CAAs to PHA residents and CAA clients.
- Provide staff trainings between CAAs and PHAs to better understand services offered.
- Jointly apply for housing grants.
- Pool resources to leverage additional funding for housing development and financing for first time home buyers.
- Form a coalition to coordinate resources and avoid duplication of services.

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