

# Promoting Community Solutions and Civic Participation to Solve Pressing Social Needs:

## An Overview of Initiatives under the Obama Administration

President Obama recognizes that the best solutions to our nation's social challenges are found in communities across the country. In order for Americans to benefit from successful local efforts in their communities, we must find these effective approaches and support their development and growth.

Three key strategies the Obama Administration is using to facilitate the expansion of effective community solutions are:

- 1) Promoting **service as a solution** and a way to develop community leadership
- 2) Increasing **investment in innovative community solutions** that demonstrate results
- 3) Developing **new models of partnership**, including collaboration – between nonprofits, foundations, philanthropists, private organizations, academia, and all levels of government in solving shared problems.

Below is an overview of specific Obama Administration initiatives to support and grow community solutions:

### *The White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation (SICP)*

[www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/sicp](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/sicp)

- Created within the White House's Domestic Policy Council, leads the Administration's community solutions agenda
- Engages individuals, nonprofits, the private sector and government to foster innovation and working together to make greater and more lasting progress in addressing the nation's challenges

### *The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act*

[www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/index.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/index.asp)

- Bipartisan effort that expands opportunities for civic participation through service in communities

- Provides for the greatest growth in service opportunities in a generation, including an increase in the size of AmeriCorps from 75,000 members to 250,000 by 2017
- Establishes service as a national strategy for solving the nation's challenges in the areas of education, health, clean energy, veterans' issues, and economic opportunity

***The Social Innovation Fund (SIF)***

[www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/innovation.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/innovation.asp)

- Establishes a new model for public-private investment in effective solutions across three issue areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development and school support
- Provides \$123 million (nearly \$50 million in federal funds and \$74 million in already-secured matching dollars) to invest in high-performing nonprofit organizations that can offer innovative, new solutions to urgent national challenges
- In July 2010, Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees the SIF, selected and announced the first group of 11 organizations and more than 60 collaborating partners to receive SIF funding
- Selected organizations will conduct open competitions across the U.S. to find the most promising nonprofits in which to invest these resources for the expansion of community-based solutions.

***The United We Serve Campaign to Engage Americans in Community Solutions***

[www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov)

- Launched in 2009, calls Americans to serve together and meet growing social needs in their communities, thereby laying a foundation for renewal and recovery
- Provides tools for individuals to locate or to create their own volunteer opportunities in their communities
- Leads initiatives, such as "Let's Read. Let's Move." and the September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance, to focus volunteer efforts nationally around specific needs and opportunities for service.

### *The Let's Move Campaign to End Childhood Obesity*

[www.letsmove.gov](http://www.letsmove.gov)

- Started by First Lady Michelle Obama to solve the childhood obesity epidemic within a generation so that children born today will reach adulthood at a healthy weight.
- Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled. Today, nearly one in three children in America is overweight or obese
- Promotes a comprehensive approach that will engage every sector impacting the health of children and provides schools, families and communities with simple tools to help kids be more active, eat better, and get healthy

### *New U.S. Department of Education Programs to Support Education Reform and Innovation*

- **Race to the Top**

[www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html)

- Invests \$4 billion in federal funds in states that are implementing significant reforms in four areas: enhancing standards and assessments; improving the collection and use of data; increasing teacher effectiveness and achieving equity in teacher distribution; and turning around struggling schools
- States must demonstrate their past success and outline plans to extend their reforms. They must also have no legal barriers to linking student growth and achievement data to teachers and principals for evaluation purposes
- In March 2010, Delaware and Tennessee were praised for demonstrating statewide buy-in for their reform plans and selected as winners of approximately \$100 million and \$500 million respectively to implement their comprehensive school reform plans over the next four years
- In August 2010, nine states and the District of Columbia joined Delaware and Tennessee. The Administration's groundbreaking education reform program will directly impact 13.6 million students, and 980,000 teachers in 25,000 schools. The nine states are Massachusetts, New York, Hawaii, Florida, Rhode Island, Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina and Ohio.

- **Investing in Innovation (i3)**

[www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html)

- Invests over \$600 million in local school districts and nonprofit organizations to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices. Such practices must positively impact student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates or college enrollment and completion rates.
- Provides support to:
  1. expand and develop innovative practices that serve as models of best practice
  2. work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community
  3. identify and document best practices that are shared and taken to scale based on demonstrated success
- Recipients must provide matching funds or in-kind donations from the private sector of at least 20% of the total grant award
- On August 5<sup>th</sup>, 49 i3 winners were announced. The list of these 49 applicants can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/2010/i3hra-list.pdf> with a more detailed summary of each applicant at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/2010/summary-i3hra.pdf>.

- **Promise Neighborhoods**

[www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html)

- Aims to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children in our most distressed communities
- Takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the inter-related challenges faced by communities with a high concentration of poverty

- Promotes the creation of a continuum of cradle to college to career solutions. Strong schools are central to supporting academic achievement, healthy development, and college and career success
- Uses the success of the Harlem Children's Zone ([www.hcz.org](http://www.hcz.org)) as a model
- Awards approximately \$10 million in federal funding as planning grants for non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education to lead community-wide planning activities
- Recipients must provide a 50% match of non-federal funds (25% match for rural or Tribal communities).
- Twenty-one organizations received up to \$500,000 each in planning grants to develop comprehensive education and anti-poverty projects modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone. The organizations come from both urban and rural locations throughout the country. All recipients are working together with other local nonprofit groups, school districts, or colleges and universities on the Promise Neighborhood projects.
- The Obama Administration requested \$210 million for fiscal 2011 to fund Promise Neighborhood implementation grants as well as new planning grants. The House subcommittee reduced the initiative to \$60 million; the Senate subcommittee to \$20 million so depending on the final budget, this initiative may be scaled back significantly in 2011.