
Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

About the *Advocates' Guide*

The *Advocates' Guide: An educational primer on federal programs and resources related to affordable housing and community development*, is—as the title suggests—a guide to affordable housing. But on many levels it is much more than that. The guide comprises hundreds of pages of useful resources and practical know-how, written by leading experts in the affordable housing and community development fields, with a singular purpose: to educate advocates and affordable housing providers of all kinds about the programs and policies that make housing affordable to low-income people across America.

NLIHC is pleased to present the 2018 edition of the *Advocates' Guide*. For many years, the *Advocates' Guide* has been the leading authoritative reference for advocates and affordable housing providers seeking a quick and convenient way to understand affordable housing programs and policies.

With the right information and a little know-how, all of us can effectively advocate for housing programs with our members of Congress and other policymakers. Whether you are a student in an urban planning program, a new employee at a housing agency or community development corporation, or a seasoned affordable housing advocate looking for a refresher on key programs, this book will give you the overview of housing programs and advocacy tools you need to be a leader in the affordable housing movement and to advocate effectively for socially just housing policy for low income Americans.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The first section orients you to affordable housing and community development programs with articles that explain how affordable housing works, why it is needed, and what NLIHC believes are the highest housing priorities, including the national Housing Trust Fund. The advocacy resources

section provides vital information to guide your advocacy with the legislative and executive branches of government, as well as tips about how organizations and individuals can be effective advocates.

The next few sections cover housing programs for low-income households, additional housing and community development programs, special housing issues, housing tools, community development resources, and low income programs and laws. These are the core affordable housing programs and issues to understand.

Take this *Guide* with you to meetings with lawmakers. And share the *Guide* with your friends and colleagues. The more advocates using this *Guide*, the greater our collective impact will be.

This year's *Advocates' Guide* was published before the enactment of the FY18 spending bills. Therefore, some of the information included reflects the FY17 budget. Updated information is available on our website at: <http://nlihc.org/library/guides>

A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

The *Advocates' Guide* was compiled with the help of many of our partner organizations. We are deeply grateful to all of the authors for their assistance—the *Advocates' Guide* would not be possible without them. Several articles build on the work of authors from previous versions of the *Advocates' Guide*, and we appreciate and acknowledge their contributions as well.

Thank you to PNC for their ongoing support for this publication.

