
Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

About the *Advocates' Guide*

The *Advocates' Guide: A Primer on Federal Resources Related to Affordable Housing Programs 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 field, with a singular purpose: to educate residents, advocates, and affordable housing providers of all kinds about the programs and policies that make housing affordable to low-income people across America.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) is pleased to present the 2019 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 resident living in subsidized housing, 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 *Guide* 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 people in America.

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

A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

The *Advocates' Guide* was compiled with the help of many of our partner organizations. We are deeply grateful to each 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.

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