



# Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

YEAR OF ACTION HIGHLIGHTS

White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood  
Partnerships

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# Introduction

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In a commitment to advancing opportunity for all Americans, the President pledged that 2014 would be a year of action. He has spent the last twelve months working with Congress where he could and taking action on his own where needed to revitalize the economy. He also worked closely with leaders from businesses, nonprofits, education, and communities to expand opportunity for more American families. These efforts have helped to create jobs, provide more Americans with high-quality education; promote new sources of energy and protect the environment.

To help advance this work, the Administration has formed partnerships with faith-based and community organizations. Most Americans have ties to at least one faith or community organization, and they frequently turn to these organizations when they need help. Faith-based and community groups are often uniquely positioned to match people with the benefits, services and protections they need. Sometimes these connections make the difference between a life of struggle and one of success. This report highlights a few of these kinds of partnerships as well as others that advance Administration priorities across the nation and around the globe.

In 2008, President Obama described the mission of the [White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships](#) (WHOFBNP) in the following way:

The goal of this office will not be to favor one religious group over another – or even religious groups over secular groups. It will simply be to work on behalf of those organizations that want to work on behalf of our communities, and to do so without blurring the line that our founders wisely drew between church and state. This work is important, because whether it's a secular group advising families facing foreclosure or faith-based groups providing job-training to those who need work, few are closer to what's happening on our streets and in our neighborhoods than these organizations.

A critical function of the [WHOFBNP](#) is to coordinate Centers for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships across twelve Federal agencies. Each Center works with faith and neighborhood organizations on specific challenges to transform communities and change lives. The close of the year provides a timely opportunity to highlight some of this work.

As we end this year and look to the next, we remember President Obama's charge:

Instead of driving us apart, our varied beliefs can bring us together to feed the hungry and comfort the afflicted; to make peace where there is strife and rebuild what has broken; to lift up those who have fallen on hard times. This is not only our call as people of faith, but our duty as citizens of America, and it will be the purpose of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Thanks to our many partners for the opportunity to work with you on achieving these goals. With your help, we are truly becoming a more perfect nation.

Sincerely,

Melissa Rogers

Special Assistant to President Obama

Executive Director, White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

# Year of Action Highlights

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## Getting the Long-Term Unemployed Back to Work

Faith and community leaders have played a key role in addressing the challenges of long-term unemployment, which has dropped considerably since the Great Recession but continues to be a challenge for many workers. Through job clubs, career ministries, and networking groups, faith and community organizations are offering support, guidance, contacts with employers, and job search assistance to help long-term unemployed individuals land new employment opportunities. In 2011, the Department of Labor (DOL)'s Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) launched a [Job Clubs Initiative](#) to reach out to the thousands of faith-based and community-based job search support groups around the country to share lessons learned and best practices, and provide linkages with the public workforce system overseen by DOL. These employment support groups, which are typically run by volunteers and led by peers in familiar community settings, are well-positioned to engage long-term unemployed individuals and other hard-to-reach populations. Through the initiative, DOL provides a community of practice for job club leaders and volunteers, offering information and technical assistance to groups or individuals interested in launching or expanding job clubs. DOL CFBNP has connected with over 3,000 job clubs nationwide to help catalyze state and nonprofit efforts that expand and support job clubs.

Earlier this year, DOL's evaluation office issued a [report](#) on the emergent field of faith-based and community-based job clubs, including recommended steps for more closely evaluating the effectiveness of these groups. Also this year, DOL encouraged eligible organizations applying for the Ready to Work grants to include job clubs as partners in their proposed programs for addressing long-term unemployment. In at least four of the 23 grants awarded in October some of these job clubs are included as [key partners](#). On October 17, DOL issued [guidance](#) to the workforce system on promising practices and resources for addressing long-term unemployment and included job clubs partnerships as a suggested strategy. Further, a number of states have launched new job club partnerships and initiatives, including New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Kentucky.

## **Job Club Partnerships in New Jersey**

New Jersey has been a hub of job club partnerships that include faith-based groups, community organizations, and the public workforce system. One such group, Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN), was formed in 2011 and has chapters in libraries across the state. NHN is run by volunteers and uses a peer advice and guidance model. The group has worked closely with DOL's initiative to help connect NHN with new partners and resources. NHN also has worked closely to help DOL better understand the issue of long-term unemployment and develop responsive interventions. To date, NHN has helped more than 420 people return to work.

Recognizing the growth of job clubs across the state, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development launched the Jersey Job Club program in July 2012. In addition to establishing job clubs in the state's American Job Centers, the program also deepened partnerships with groups like NHN through the support and partnership-building efforts of the DOL Job Clubs initiative. These partnerships were taken to the next level when the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development partnered with the state and NHN to win a \$10 million Ready to Work grant. NHN will be a key partner on the grant, working through its statewide network of job clubs to identify and support long-term unemployed individuals for the program.

## **Helping Children to Thrive**

Through the 2013 Summer Food Service Program, USDA and its partners provided free, nutritious meals to low-income children each day at 42,654 sites during the program's peak month of July and increased meals served by 7 million more summer meals than the previous year. The Summer Food Service Program provides low-income children nutritious meals when school is not in session. Free meals that meet Federal nutrition guidelines are provided to all children 18 years old and under at approved Summer Food Service Program sites in areas with significant concentrations of low-income children.

To prepare for the 2014 Summer Food Service Program, USDA hosted conference calls, webinars, and kick-off events; developed state-targeted technical assistance; and developed a new Summer Meals Toolkit to make sure state agencies, partners and sponsors had the resources available to run smoothly and effectively. In June 2014, the [WHOFBNP](#) co-hosted a conference call with USDA to thank 500 stakeholders for their efforts and encourage them to serve even more meals during summer 2014. As reported by the states for 2014, USDA enrolled 50,000+ schools, community centers, houses of worship, and other locations to serve summer meals to kids across the country, resulting in over 187 million summer meals served, an increase of 11 million meals over 2013.

## Promoting Economic Recovery by Helping Americans Start or Grow Businesses

In 2014, the Centers for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the Commerce Department and Small Business Administration (SBA) launched a new program, *Business Sunday*, that works with faith and community groups to connect current and future business leaders with valuable federal resources to help them start or expand their businesses. This program involves local Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) Business Centers partnering with SBA field offices and local congregations or community groups to 1) present on federal business development resources; and 2) provide attendees with an opportunity to connect with field staff.

With the help of the [WHOFBNP](#), SBA and Commerce sponsored a successful *Business Sunday* pilot event in Washington, D.C. in the spring of 2014. The Commerce and SBA Centers then developed a strategic model and implementation plan to bring this program to communities across the country.

The *Business Sunday* national launch took place in October 2014 in Houston, TX, followed by a *Business Sunday* in Miami, FL. Similar events will take place in more than ten additional cities over the next year, including El Paso, TX; Philadelphia, PA; Denver, CO; Indianapolis, IN; and Seattle, WA. More than 1,250 community and business leaders have already taken part in a *Business Sunday* event. Among attendees, 86% of those surveyed indicated they were preparing to take next steps to strengthen their business as a result of the event. Additionally, federal staff in Houston and Miami have already committed to doing additional *Business Sundays* in their cities in 2015 as a result of the partnerships they formed and new clients they connected with at their initial events.

### **19<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Washington, DC Hosts First *Business Sunday***

Rev. Dr. Derrick Harkins, who serves as pastor of 19<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., the church that hosted the pilot *Business Sunday* event, had this to say about the initiative and its impact:

*Business Sunday* provided great value to our congregation and members of our community. Helping to promote the idea that people can develop and effectively use their creative skills in business ventures that benefit others is one way that we, as a church, live out our values.

## Ensuring Access to Quality, Affordable Health Care

During the first open enrollment period, the Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS Center) and the [WHOFBNP](#) worked with a wide range of faith and community groups to reach the uninsured. In 2013-2014, faith and community groups played invaluable roles in assisting millions of individuals in signing up for coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplaces or through Medicaid. More than 20,000 individuals and organizations participated in webinars conducted by the HHS Center both before and during the first open enrollment period to learn about the health care law and to find ways they could help people in their community enroll in quality, affordable care. In the last month of the first open enrollment period alone, faith and community organizations sponsored over 900 enrollment events. To organize these events, many of these groups benefitted from our [ACA toolkit](#) for faith and community groups.

## Helping Prevent Foreclosures

Since 2009, the HUD Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships has hosted national conferences for faith-based and neighborhood organizations from across the country to discuss the programs and resources available to assist homeowners in crisis. Additionally, HUD CFBNP has held national conference calls to update stakeholders on new opportunities and changes to foreclosure mitigation resources. The HUD Center also has produced and made available a [toolkit](#) on Foreclosure Prevention and Scam Awareness for Faith-Based and Community Organizations to all its faith and community partners. The toolkit provides a comprehensive listing of all government foreclosure programs in one publication. Since late 2011, more than 15,000 copies of the toolkit have been distributed and more than 25,000 copies of other foreclosure and mortgage-related materials have been disseminated at workshops, training events, and denominational meetings. The HUD Center has also promoted foreclosure prevention counseling services that are offered through its network of over 2,400 HUD-approved housing counseling agencies.

## Increasing College Opportunity

Throughout 2014, the U.S. Department of Education's Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships has provided technical assistance on the college financial aid process to students, parents, schools, local government, faith and community leaders, and borrowers. The office collaborated with the Office of Federal Student Aid to offer faith and community leaders the tools they need to support the 21 million students who submit a FAFSA form each year. This year, for example,

a local church hosted the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) festival where more than 2,000 students visited 60 HBCUs. Almost 1,900 students were interviewed on-site for HBCUs. Application registration fees were waived for over 560 students, saving them a collective \$28,000.

## Protecting Our Environment

ENERGY STAR is a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) voluntary program that helps businesses, nonprofit organizations and individuals save money and protect our climate through superior energy efficiency. ENERGY STAR provides tools to leaders of faith and community organizations to reduce their carbon foot print and reach the goal laid out by the President to achieve 20% energy savings in buildings. ENERGY STAR-certified buildings are not demonstration facilities, but rather real-world buildings using cost-effective energy management strategies and proven technologies to return significant money saved to the organizations' missions.

In 2013, congregations, as well as states, cities and community groups, joined together under EPA's ENERGY STAR<sup>®</sup> program, to contribute to a total savings of \$30 billion and 277 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as an additional \$10 billion in [benefits](#) to society due to reducing damages from climate change. More than 2,000 worship facilities had previously benchmarked energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in EPA's ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager<sup>®</sup> tool, and an additional 400 have been added to date in 2014.

## Increasing Disaster Preparedness

In 2014, the DHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships engaged more than 3,000 faith-based and community leaders, emergency managers, and state and local partners to build capacity for emergency preparedness and address other homeland security issues. The DHS Center partnered with FEMA, for example, to conduct workshops and presentations and provide technical assistance to more than 400 faith-based leaders and local government practitioners on the *Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship*. The guidance was adopted by state level emergency management agencies and national faith-based organizations.

In 2014, the DHS Center found particular success within the communities of the City of Los Angeles. The Center used its *Building Resilience with Diverse Communities* engagement process to develop a new network of fifty-three Los Angeles organizations that connect to more than 1,000 houses of worship and grassroots organizations. The city's emergency management department and the city council's public safety committee recognized this effort by presenting certificates and releasing a press announcement on the groups' efforts with emergency management. The effort catalyzed

further engagement with Los Angeles County that resulted in an additional eighty-seven faith and community-based organizations conducting specific preparedness and resilience activities.

In a first-ever *Pledge to Prepare* weekend event in June 2014, 140 houses of worship pledged take action by conducting local preparedness activities such as hosting CPR/first aid training, creating personal emergency supply kits, and developing social media preparedness campaigns. The weekend event also included participation in an active shooter exercise, where faith partners could work through a scenario should it ever occur in their community.

### **Rebuilding After Washington Landslide**

FEMA brought Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs) to work with non-profit organizations in the State of Washington after a mudslide hit in March 2014. Leaders from the DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and a FEMA VAL met with local clergy and chaplains to help them understand the procedures around federal disaster assistance. They also offered examples of other communities' recovery efforts, including the key role of long-term recovery groups. Long-term recovery groups are a cooperative effort among local governments, non-profit organizations, business groups, and faith-based organizations that help a community recover from a disaster.

### **My Brother's Keeper: Helping All Young People Reach Their Full Potential**

To advance the recommendations in the President's My Brother's Keeper Task Force Report, the Centers for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships within the Departments of Education, Justice, Health and Human Services have engaged more than a thousand faith-based and community organizations in efforts like the Fatherhood Buzz initiative and local Fatherhood Heroes events. The Fatherhood Buzz initiative is led by HHS and the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, with support from DOJ and HHS Centers for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. It is a year-round campaign that involves community organizations, program providers, and barbershops generating "buzz" in local communities around responsible fatherhood and its benefits. [Fatherhood Buzz](#) initiatives were held in New York, New York; Dothan, Alabama; Dallas, Texas; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Fatherhood Heroes events are [Champions of Change](#) programs held locally. Selected honorees were celebrated for their work to promote responsible fatherhood.

The Center for Faith-based and Community Initiatives at the Small Business Administration is supporting the goals of My Brother's Keeper initiative through the SBA's *Millennial Entrepreneurs Initiative*, which seeks to address high unemployment and spur skills development among young people of color through self-employment and entrepreneurship. The initiative is a four-part strategy

that will include: 1) a public awareness campaign to educate and inform millennials about the resources available to them; 2) a national tour of community colleges and minority-serving institutions to raise awareness about entrepreneurship and the importance of young people becoming enterprise-ready; 3) a free online training module designed for those with past criminal involvement, to prepare them for successful reentry by exploring entrepreneurship and self-employment; and, 4) a “Business Smart” toolkit for faith-based and community organizations to teach entrepreneurship basics and financial literacy. SBA’s Offices of Entrepreneurial Development and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives are developing resources and partnerships with faith-based and community organizations to support this initiative.

## **Serving Others and Building Understanding Across Religious Lines**

The U.S. Department of Education Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships works with the [WHOFBNP](#) and the Corporation for National and Community Service to lead the President’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge, an initiative inviting institutions of higher education to commit to interfaith and community service programming.

Interfaith service involves people from different religious and non-religious backgrounds tackling community challenges together – for example, Protestants and Catholics, Hindus and Jews, and Muslims and non-believers — building a Habitat for Humanity house together. Interfaith service impacts specific community challenges, from homelessness to mentoring to the environment, while building social capital and civility.

President Obama issued the Challenge in 2011 by sending a [letter](#) to all presidents of institutions of higher education in the United States. Read more about the first two years of the Challenge in [The President’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge Inaugural Years Report](#).

Currently more than 400 institutions of higher education have responded to the Challenge. They include community colleges, public and private universities, and professional schools. Also, more than 100,000 students have responded to the Challenge. Each year, the Challenge gathers in Washington, D.C., for faculty, staff, students, and network organizations to spend two days learning how to enhance the Challenge on their college campus and further engage their community. 525 colleges, universities, and network organizations attended the fall 2014 gathering at George Washington University.

New in 2014, the President’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge merged with the President’s Higher Education Honor Roll to form the Interfaith Community Service Award. The Presidential Award for Interfaith Community Service went to Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. Among other achievements, Loras College is a great example of how AmeriCorps and national service can help institutions of higher learning run quality community service programs that engage and support

more Americans. Loras College's AmeriCorps VISTA program is a principal partner for the College in recruiting and retaining volunteers to tackle a range of challenges. This program builds on Loras College's longstanding history as a champion of community service.

### **Loras College Receives 2014 Presidential Award for Interfaith Community Service**

Loras College, a Catholic college in Dubuque, Iowa, has developed positive, working relationships with Protestant and Muslim faith communities through shared service efforts. The college has been a supporter of the President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge since it began in 2011.

On receiving the President's Higher Education Honor Roll award, President Jim Collins said:

Our mission is as or more alive today than it was 176 years ago. We use our Catholic foundation to instill human dignity into our work which inspires our obligation to be of service to others. In so doing, we work to find commonality with all our brothers and sisters to foster relationships which advance the Common Good. I am beyond grateful to our students, staff and faculty for honoring our mission. They are so committed to building interfaith relationships and being of service to others.

### **Supporting Veterans and Their Families**

The Veterans Affairs Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP), in collaboration with the VA National Chaplain Center, the Center for Minority Veterans, Ministerial Associations, and local churches, train clergy and community members on the spiritual and emotional challenges returning Veterans and their families face. More than thirty U.S. cities were represented in the clergy trainings that took place over the past year.

CFBNP also co-hosted regional and local outreach events to provide an overview of VA resources for faith-based, nonprofit, and community organizations. The primary goals of these events were to provide information to attendees on the programs and services VA provides for Veterans – their families, survivors, caregivers, and other beneficiaries – and to facilitate ongoing, collaborative working relationships among the attendees and with all VA Administrations and staff offices.

## Clergy Training Spotlight

Rev. Dr. Helen Stafford Fleming, Pastor of Douglas Memorial UMC in Washington, DC expressed her gratitude for the clergy training in an email saying:

I thank you so much for using Douglas as a location to train our clergy and laity. I've received positive results from many. I appreciate your hard labor of love in reaching out to the faith community.

## Caring for Children of Incarcerated Parents

The Department of Justice Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (DOJ CFBNP) has worked closely with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the White House, to lead the Administration's efforts to support children with incarcerated parents and their caregivers. During the past year, the Children of Incarcerated Parents interagency group has continued to build and expand the web portal for Children of Incarcerated Parents, which has more than tripled the number of viewers since its launch in 2013.

The DOJ CFBNP worked closely with BJA and the International Association of Chiefs of Police to release the [Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents](#), a model policy for law enforcement to prevent and minimize trauma for children during the arrest of a parent. Additionally, the DOJ CFBNP collaborated with the BOP to enhance their family strengthening programs. DOJ CFBNP Director, Eugene Schneeberg, travelled with BOP Director Charles Samuels to the first ever "[Daddy Daughter Dance](#)" held within a Federal Prison and will continue to work with BOP leadership as they roll out additional programming that encourages parent education and strengthens family connections.

## Engaging International Religious Leaders

In 2014, the Center for Faith-Based Community Initiatives opened at the Department of State (S/FBCI). S/FBCI serves as an entry point for religious leaders and faith-based organizations that would like to engage with the State Department. S/FBCI ensures that these voices are heard in the policy process and creates opportunities to work with those communities to advance diplomatic goals. The opening of this new office also helps diplomats to understand the religious facets of the landscape in which they operate.

As part of a broader effort to reach out to a diverse set of civic actors to achieve Administration priorities, the Obama Administration developed a strategy that seeks to advance key objectives through more robust engagement with religious leaders and faith communities. Among those objectives are: 1. Promote sustainable development and more effective humanitarian assistance; 2. Advance pluralism and human rights, including the protection of religious freedom; and 3. Prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict and contribute to local and regional stability and security.

S/FBCI has engaged in interfaith outreach and the promotion of human rights globally by hosting round tables for religious leaders and by conducting religious engagement studies. Additionally, the Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group, part of the Federal Advisory Committee (FACA)'s Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society, has been reinvigorated over the past year to strengthen dialogue with religious leaders and other members of civil society.

## **Promoting Development**

A key partnership U.S. Agency for International Development's Center for Faith-based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) developed this year dealt with conflict mitigation and humanitarian assistance in the Central African Republic (CAR). In 2014, as violence increased within the Central African Republic, CFBCI engaged over two dozen faith-based organizations as partners. During two separate visits from top religious leaders in Central African Republic, CFBCI and [WHOFBNP](#) convened meetings with senior U.S. government officials, technical advisors, and members of the broader faith community to discuss the leaders' efforts to mitigate conflict and potential ways to collaborate. CFBCI also led a discussion with 10 U.S.-based Islamic organizations on the possible role they could play in-country. As a result of these interventions, Islamic Relief USA became the first Islamic organization to establish an office in Bangui. To date, Islamic Relief has provided emergency aid for approximately 8,000 displaced children and adolescents in Bangui, distributed emergency supply kits to thousands of households in Lobaye, and established child-friendly zones and psychosocial support services. Islamic Relief UK and Islamic Relief Germany have also joined this effort. Thus far, the U.S. Government has contributed more than \$164 million of humanitarian funding for CAR. USAID also created a public-private partnership for CAR that will leverage \$7 million in USG funding and a like amount of private funding to support and strengthen locally-led peacebuilding and atrocity prevention efforts. The partnership will build on current USAID programs in the Central African Republic, including \$7.5 million in peacebuilding programs to empower local voices for peace, promote interreligious and other community dialogue, and improve access to accurate information in local media.

## **Islamic Relief USA Builds Partnership to Provide Humanitarian Assistance in the Central African Republic**

On engaging with religious leaders in the Central African Republic, Anwar Khan, CEO of Islamic Relief USA, said:

The White House encouraged us to come together with people from other faiths to hear firsthand from faith leaders about the violence raging in the Central African Republic last April. This meeting lit a spark in us - as we saw the example of the faith leaders working side by side in the midst of great tragedy, we too were inspired to strengthen our work in the Central African Republic. Now our work there with Catholic Relief Services and World Vision shows that Muslims and Christians can work together to build, not to destroy. Here in America people of our two faiths are working together to support the work of faith communities in CAR - and we thank USAID and the White House for providing that catalytic opportunity.

Another key 2014 partnership involved a wide range of actors that include Ideo.org, American Refugee Committee, business leaders, and local businesses in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). With these partners, USAID helped co-create and fund a social-enterprise platform for child survival and maternal health in eastern Bukavu, DRC. Asili, which means “foundation” in Swahili, unites a network of proven business models in order to provide water, nutrition, and healthcare at affordable prices. To date, Asili has provided 95,000 liters of clean water, offered healthcare services to 634 people, planted three crops while employing about 225 people per harvest cycle, and launched a hotline to respond to consumer concerns.

## Conclusion

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This report highlights only a few of the many partnerships developed in 2014. For more information about our work, or to contact the White House Office or agency Centers, please visit our [website](#).

We are grateful for the achievements of the past year and look forward to building on this work to create greater hope and opportunity for people across the nation and around the world.