

# Family Strengthening Awards



The Annie E. Casey Foundation has generously invested in United Neighborhood Centers of America to create an annual awards program to honor the innovative and creative programs of our member organizations, which connect families and children with the community resources they need to attain economic success.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has concluded practical solutions must be found to help low-income parents achieve economic stability and assist high poverty neighborhoods in becoming more supportive environments for low-income working families.

The Foundation believes that establishing durable connections between families and neighborhoods and the mainstream economy is one of the most important building blocks for family strengthening and neighborhood transformation. Families have the best opportunity to secure adequate incomes, accumulate savings, and live in economically viable neighborhoods through a combination of workforce development, family economic supports, and community strategies. The most effective strategies are those that are comprehensive, results-orientated, and sustainable.

## The Families Count: Family Strengthening Awards Program is designed to:

Promote the award winning programs to encourage adaptation and/or replication.

Recognize and reward member organizations with exemplary family and youth centered programs that strengthen families.

Facilitate cutting-edge learning and knowledge through education and on-going peer-to-peer technical Assistance training.

Produce and distribute a annual Family Strengthening publication describing models and used to bring or connect families to economic development opportunities.



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For more information about The Annie E. Casey Foundation, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)

## UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS OF AMERICA ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



*Children do well when their families do well and families do better when they live in supportive communities*

## FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

## 2008 PROGRAM APPLICATION

# Families Count: Family Strengthening Awards Program



## Background

In July 2004 the Annie E. Casey Foundation partnered with UNCA to develop a national Family Strengthening Award program tailored to its mission. Since that time UNCA has embarked on a number of planning activities to begin to define the components of the UNCA/Annie E. Casey Family Strengthening Awards program. The planning process included gathering the environmental scan from members, developing committee structures, and designing the application. UNCA initiated the formal application to improve Family Strengthening in March 2005, and the first Family Strengthening Awards were presented in September 2005. In April 2006 the second annual Family Strengthening Awards program was released. In the time honored traditions of the historic settlement movement, UNCA believes that neighborhoods and their residents are major assets and therefore, all programs aimed at building supportive communities must engage them in all program designs and implementation. This practice and philosophy is directly in line with the Casey Foundation's definition of family strengthening. UNCA, as does Casey, emphasizes the importance of supportive communities for the strengthening of children and families. The family unit, as defined for this program, is comprised of a child or children and their caregiver (s). The caregiver (s) may be the biological parents of the children, foster parents, adoptive parents, grandparents, or surrogate parents.

## What is UNCA?

United Neighborhood Centers of America, Inc. was founded in 1911 as a national nonprofit association to advocate on behalf of the poor, to provide training, leadership skills and management assistance to neighborhood centers. Its mission is to strengthen and empower its member organizations in their work to empower individuals, families and communities.

## Who are our member organizations?

Currently, UNCA has 152 members from across the United States. This collective membership represents some 700 neighborhood facilities in some of the toughest and most challenged urban areas. This network provides services to over 950,000 individuals ranging in ages from pre-school children to senior citizens through the dedication of 43,000 professional staff and 23,000 volunteers.

## Eligible applicants and activities

To be considered an eligible applicant for the UNCA Family Strengthening Award Program your organization must be a UNCA member in good standing. Both Federations and individual organizations are encouraged to apply. Programs that strengthen families do not need to be large in size or scope to be effective. Programs must be in current operation at the time of application. Only one program per Federation or individual organization per year will be considered for the award.

### Each Federation or settlement house application must:

- 1) Uphold the founding principles of being a settlement house (see what is UNCA)
- 2) Prepare to demonstrate results
- 3) Not be a previous Full Award Winner; developmental award winners can apply but will only be eligible for the full award.
- 4) Must be represented during one of the technical assistance teleconferences March 26, and March 27, 2008. Instructions will follow via mail and will be posted on the UNCA web-site at [www.unca.org](http://www.unca.org) (Please make sure you are on the mailing list.)
- 5) Be designed to support family strengthening with the engagement of those to be served by the programs; *and*
- 6) Fit into one or more of the following categories:
  - Family Housing Support • Educational Support (Including Arts Programs)
  - Social Service Support • Health Care Support • Family Economic Support • Civic Engagement/Community Building

Some examples of programs that fit into these categories are:

homeless family transitional programs, housing crisis intervention programs, family crisis intervention, fathering programs, anger management programs, juvenile offender family programs, financial literacy, job training and readiness programs, neighborhood/community development training, family early reading programs, cooking healthy food programs, and health services connections.

**Please note, these are only examples and this is not meant as an exhaustive list of eligible programs.**

## The Award



In partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, UNCA will award one cash prize of \$20,000 annually in each of three categories to Federations or organizations with annual budgets up to \$999,999; organizations with annual budgets between \$1M - \$4,999,999, and organizations with annual budgets equal to or in excess of \$5M. In addition to these three (3) awards, UNCA will also award three (3) \$5,000 development awards to family strengthening programs showing great promise as future award recipients. Receipt of a mini development award, however, ought not to be construed as assurance for a future major Family Strengthening Program award. The UNCA Family Strengthening Awards Program will enable UNCA to create an education network and peer learning opportunities among its members regarding best practices in family strengthening programs.

## Award Selection

UNCA understands that measuring the success of family strengthening programs is complicated. In recognition of this, evidence of the success of family strengthening programs can be presented in a combination of quantitative information (e.g. numbers of clients served, measurements of pre- and post-program behaviors, program demographics, etc.) and qualitative information (e.g. client testimony, stories of neighborhood-wide attitude changes, etc.).

### The UNCA Family Strengthening Awards Program will have the following selection process:

Initial review of all applications will be completed as a part of a leadership training opportunity for UNCA member program managers and supervisors representing UNCA member agencies throughout the nation. Through a facilitated process, these future UNCA membership leaders will blindly evaluate all applications and eliminate all those applications that do not strictly meet award program guidelines.

### Reviewers will select award winners based on the following criteria:

- Focus on family strengthening
- Program/service effectiveness
- Program/service design and approach
- Ability of program to help create and expand the neighborhood network
- Extent to which community residents/consumers are involved
- Extent to which program strengthens the community in addition to helping specific individual families
- Unique and innovative
- Replicability
- Willingness to share program specifications
- Sustainability
- Organization's demonstration of financially sound practices
- Are comprehensive and holistic
- Proven effectiveness
- Utilize volunteers

## Award recipients can expect the following from UNCA:

- A check for 25% of the award upon selection, and the remaining 75% of the award when the awardee has completed and submitted its best practices and lessons learned to UNCA within six months of initial award (exact deadline date to be determined at a later date).
- Assistance from UNCA in documenting, preparing, publishing and disseminating program curriculum, best practices and lessons learned.

## What UNCA expects from award recipients:

- Each award-winning organization must send a representative to the appropriate national UNCA meeting to accept the award and participate in a panel discussion.
- A commitment to document program curriculum, best practices and lessons learned in collaboration with UNCA and submit them by the appointed deadline.
- A commitment to be available to provide technical assistance and consultative services to other UNCA member organizations interested in replicating or adapting their model, including, but not limited to, conference calls and site visits.
- An annual report to UNCA that includes:
  - Documentation of the use of award funds.
  - Additional information on program curriculum, best practices and lessons learned as the awarded program changes or expands.