

Neighborhood Networks Week

October 14-22, 2000

**Conquering the Digital Divide:  
Delivering the Promise of Technology  
To America's Families**

Event Planning Guide

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## About Neighborhood Networks

HUD's Neighborhood Networks are innovative private/public partnerships establishing computer-based multi-service centers to help people in public and assisted housing learn critical computer skills and prepare for 21st century jobs. At our community technology centers across the country, HUD residents can enhance their computer literacy, launch new careers, make the transition from welfare to work, obtain expanded access to needed health services, and participate in inter-generational learning activities.

Neighborhood Networks has been described as a "visionary federal program," by *USA Today*. In 1996, it won the coveted National Performance Review Hammer Award, recognizing new standards of excellence achieved by federal, state and local government employees who work to build a better government. In 1999 and 2000, dozens of centers received the prestigious Best of the Best and other awards at HUD's Best Practices and Technical Assistance symposiums.

## About Neighborhood Networks Week

Secretary Cuomo encourages all community technology centers to participate in HUD's first-ever National Neighborhood Networks week. The theme is *Conquering the Digital Divide: Delivering the Promise of Technology to America's Families*, chosen because of the achievement of centers in helping residents of HUD housing become self-sustaining.

All centers are encouraged to kick-off the weeklong celebration with an event on Saturday, October 14, 2000. For many centers, we hope that will be just the start. From October 14-22, centers nationwide will host events that highlight their successes and showcase their community partners.

Your center's participation in Neighborhood Networks Week:

- provides an opportunity for public education
- fosters good community relations
- encourages resident participation
- promotes partnership building
- brings attention to valuable community partners, and
- affirms your center's place within the family of Neighborhood Networks centers.

## **Join the Party Celebrating Nationwide!**

Neighborhood Networks Week gives centers nationwide an opportunity to truly be a part of the Neighborhood Networks family of centers by participating in regional and national events.

Among the planned events are several exciting Web casts that are educational and fun! For instance, residents -- especially kids -- will have a rare opportunity to join in a Web chat with the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. For sports enthusiasts, centers are invited to a soccer clinic and a soccer game.

Centers are encouraged to check the Neighborhood Networks Web site, e-mail and fax to get up-to-the-minute information on activities planned for their participation.

Celebrate Neighborhood Networks Week and join the hundreds of centers celebrating, too!

## **HUD and Center Staff Working Together**

Neighborhood Networks Week is a HUD-wide event for highlighting the many successful Neighborhood Networks that operate as a result of a variety of HUD programs. All HUD employees in the field are working together to ensure the success of the local Neighborhood Networks events. Center staff should be in touch with the local field office. HUD and Center staff contacts are listed on the web at [www.hud.gov/neighborhoodnetworks](http://www.hud.gov/neighborhoodnetworks).

## **About the Event Planning Guide**

This guide will help you plan your Neighborhood Networks Week kick-off and events throughout the week, but it does not exhaust all the possibilities. Just as every Neighborhood Networks center is different, so are the ways it can celebrate.

Also, keep this guide as a planning tool for any event throughout the year.

Once you have decided on the event -- or events -- you want to hold, turn to the section in this guide on *Steps to Planning a Successful Event*. This covers the logistics and timing.

## Ideas for Neighborhood Networks Week Events

### Why Plan Events?

A celebration of Neighborhood Networks Week is an opportunity to:

build interest and excitement among residents about your center's programs

get more local partners excited about helping and publicly thanking those already involved; and

educate community leaders about your center's accomplishments and foster partnerships with them.

### It's Celebration Time!

Looking for a reason to celebrate your center's accomplishments? A new angle to reach out to those potential partners in your neighborhood? A way to get more residents involved in your programs? A "hook" for getting the media to notice your center?

The answer is closer than you think -- hold an event during Neighborhood Networks Week.

This section offers ideas for events you can pull together fairly quickly and inexpensively – with great results. Sure, sometimes the task of planning a special event on top of day-to-day duties can seem a bit overwhelming. But it's important to remember that an event doesn't have to be complicated to be successful. A little up-front planning and a few volunteers can go a long way to help. And the event planning process can have its own rewards—people who are a part of your successful event planning team may well be energized to make a longer-term commitment to your center.

The ideas listed here are only suggestions — you know best what will work in your own neighborhood and with the resources you have at hand. Also, while these events are geared to celebrate Neighborhood Networks Week, they would work just as well to celebrate another occasion – for instance, a one-year center anniversary, the 100<sup>th</sup> participant in your programs, or even a public "thank-you" celebration for your partners.

**Open House.** On October 14<sup>th</sup>--the day Neighborhood Networks Week kicks off nationally -- hold an open house at your center to showcase the various programs you offer. Invite all the residents to be there to “show off” what they’ve learned. As an incentive for residents to attend, ask a local partner to donate a giveaway – tee shirts or pizza, for instance – in return for some great publicity. Invite the media and your partners, and offer the media a chance to talk with folks involved -- residents and partners alike.

If your center is small or there are a number of centers in your community, think about joining forces to showcase the work of all of your area’s community technology. Pick one center to host the event — media would be more likely to attend an event at one location — and bring residents and programs to the host center for a demonstration. That day, it might even be fun for open house guests to be able to e-mail the other centers in your community.

**Health Fair or Community Festival.** Use Neighborhood Networks Week as a reason to hold a fun event with a serious theme, such as helping residents to learn about access to affordable health care. A number of community technology centers around the country already help residents sign up for their state's Children’s Health Insurance Program, which provides health insurance for qualified families. If you’re equipped for this, hold an event to sign up residents. And if you’re not already partnered with a neighborhood health care facility, now is a great time to forge a partnership. Why not invite representatives to your center to provide health information and screenings? That provides a great service to residents and publicity for you and your partner.

You can also make the event about much more than health. Invite local agencies that provide support services for residents – such as transportation, education and job training — to come to your center for a day of fun and education.

Make the day fun by creating a “fair” atmosphere with games, giveaways and snacks. As with an open house, area businesses are usually happy to help -- in return for some acknowledgment and publicity. Of course, this also makes a great media event.

**Celebrate Your Programs.** Why not invite residents and your community partners to your center and show off a program while it's in action? Have a mock demonstration, provide refreshments and mingle!

**Center Spruce-Up.** Make Neighborhood Networks Week an occasion to give your center space a new lease on life. Hold a painting project. Build some new shelves. Cheer up a classroom that looks dull. Convert a storage room into a cozy study space. Invite residents for a day of work and fun that also builds everyone's pride in his or her Neighborhood Networks center.

**Have a Contest.** Contests generate excitement and Neighborhood Networks Week is a great time for one. This is a wonderful way to increase program participation. Contest ideas can be more general in nature – such as those listed here -- or tied to performance in center programs.

The whole idea is to generate excitement through a little bit of friendly competition. In the end, the message should be that just by being a part of a Neighborhood Networks center, you're a winner! Here are a few ideas for a contest:

Ask residents of all ages to write a slogan, cheer or song that celebrates your center's work. Then, hold a "talent contest" where everyone "performs" their entry. Give lots of prizes – "funniest," "most clever," "best overall," etc.

Hold an essay contest – 100 words maximum — asking center participants of all ages to write about the most interesting thing they've learned or done at their community technology center.

Ask kids to draw a picture with a caption that celebrates your center's work. Hold an "opening" to display all of the works, and ask each child to talk about his/her work. Award ribbons – "funny," "great colors," "creative," etc. -- to all participants.

Reward the kids who study after school at the center for the most days during a two-week period.

Let your senior residents take a virtual trip around the world! Whoever sends an e-mail to the farthest relative or friend wins.

Each contest would be easy to publicize with a flyer to residents. The flyer should: briefly describe the contest and judging criteria; announce the prizes include information on when and where awards will be given; explain how to submit entries -- and state the deadline.

You also may want to create a contest entry form, which could be distributed with the flyer. If you need judges, one solution is to ask those who are active at the center.

The entry form should be a fill-in-the-blank form with spaces for:

- name of contest
- entrant's name
- entrant's address/phone number (and age, for kids):
- one-line description of the entry

NOTE: Whether or not you use an entry form, make sure to stress that all entrants must put their names on their entries!

## **Steps to Planning a Successful Event**

With Neighborhood Networks Week almost upon us, you'll be in quick-planning mode to execute your event. Here are some guidelines for planning any event, though some of these steps are more relevant to larger events with a longer planning time.

We've also included an event planning timeline, with specific steps for executing an event. Again, steps you'll need to take will vary by the complexity of your event, and the time and resources at your disposal. Because of that, we've also included a "quick steps" list that highlights key steps for making an event happen quickly and successfully.

Please choose from the information here to suit your needs for planning a Neighborhood Networks Week event, or a larger event sometime in the future.

### **Getting Started**

Answering a few questions up front will help you plan the best event for your needs and resources. You probably have your own questions to add to the list, but these will get you started.



- Is the goal of your event to attract new partners? Draw more participants to your center programs? Get on the 6 o'clock news? Answers to these questions will help shape your event.
- Will your event appeal to those you want to attract? Will the date, time and location work for everyone?
- Do you have time to successfully produce the event you want? Make sure to develop a detailed "to-do" list and budget early. Is it possible to recruit sponsors to donate goods and services?
- Is weather a factor? Do you have an alternative plan, including a rain date or indoor location?
- If you want to attract media, do you have a story to tell? A profile of residents who have benefited from your center makes an appealing story. This is also a great way to publicly thank and acknowledge partners and supporters.
- Do you need food vendors? Sanitation facilities? A clean-up crew?
- Is your event location fully accessible?

## **Planning Tips**

More things to think about as your planning moves ahead:

Be creative — now is the time to let your imagination run wild and consider all possibilities.

Make sure your goals are realistic and specific enough for what you are trying to accomplish. Goals like "raise visibility" and "get residents excited about the center's program" are fairly general. But you may want to be more specific, setting a goal like "sign up 50 residents."

Develop a realistic budget and timeline, and make sure your event is on a scale to match.

Depending on timing, your event team can be a quick, ad-hoc team of two or three volunteers, or something more formal. Give all team members specific

assignments – such as publicity, refreshments, invitations -- and deadlines. This will help everyone remain on track — and make things easier for everyone.

For bigger events, consider partnering with a local radio or television station. The media partner can offer expertise and may provide in-kind advertising. Good planning committee candidates include advertising and public relations professionals, special events planners, journalism professors and graduate students, graphic designers or printers.

If possible, find a way to involve local partners and supporters – and to publicly thank them for their help. Involve all partners in the planning process.

Give your publicity plan the attention it needs. Whether you are just staying as simple as under-the-door flyers or planning a full-blown media campaign, make sure you reach those you need to reach with clear, timely information.

Ask your HUD Field Office staff person to coordinate media attention for your event through HUD’s Office of Public Affairs. An event only works if it reaches the folks you want to reach.

Also, if there’s a way to involve your whole community, now is the time! You never know whom you’ll reach -- children, senior citizens, churches and schools, youth groups, block clubs and neighborhood associations. Look for ways to get everyone excited about your event!

Right before the event, it never hurts to plan an event walk-through. Anticipate any problems and devise solutions.

After the event, remember to send thank-you notes and/or award certificates to all participants.

Finally, conduct a formal or informal evaluation of the event. Did you achieve your goals? What lessons did you learn? How can you improve your event next year?

### **Quick Steps” List**

For a successful quick-turnaround event, here are key planning elements. The “Media and Event Checklist” at the end of this booklet will also help.

- First, round up a few good helpers.

- Make sure you are clear on what will mean “success” for your event, and keep that goal in mind throughout your planning.
- Make a detailed “to-do” list, complete with deadlines. Set a budget. If you need donations from local merchants or partners, now’s the time to ask.
- If you’ll have speakers or important event participants, call to invite them as soon as possible. Then, follow up with a written invitation. Find out if they will need support materials, such as an easel or audio-visual equipment.
- Decide whom you want to invite and how you’ll get the word out. Think about a variety of mediums. For neighborhood events, great tools include flyers under doors and posted in high-traffic areas, information in local newspapers and contacting key community leaders. HUD Field Office staff will coordinate media attention through HUD’s Office of Public Affairs.
- Arrange early on for logistics: podium, microphones, seating, decorations, refreshments, signs. If the location is hard to find, prepare signs that will direct people to the location.
- If your event is outdoors, have a rain plan. Also, make sure the location is fully accessible.
- Invite top metro/neighborhood newspapers, TV and radio stations. Send a media advisory a few days before, and a news release the day of the event.
- Print an event program that has a schedule and lists speakers and their titles – watch for spelling.
- If you can, follow-up with important media after the event-- those who attended and those who didn’t. There may still be an opportunity for coverage at a later date.
- Finally, don’t forget the thank-you notes!

## **Media and Event Checklist**

Here's a checklist that will help you execute a successful Neighborhood Networks Week event – or any other special event you plan to celebrate.

### **Participants**

- Speakers contacted/confirmed
- Master of Ceremonies confirmed
- Speeches/talking points drafted
- Participants briefed
- Speaker biographies received/developed
- Event packets prepared
- Agenda drafted

### **Materials**

- Media advisory written/approved
- Press release written/approved
- Invitations sent
- Charts, graphics and other visuals created
- Press packets prepared
- Flyers developed/distributed

### **Site**

- Staging in place (platforms, chairs)
- Light and sound ok? (electrical outlets, etc.)
- Podium/lectern
- Parking accessible? Accessible for persons with disabilities?
- Mult boxes in place (for television and radio speaker systems)
- Electrical outlet
- Press sign-in table
- Literature/handout table
- Area/tables for partners/local organizations
- Refreshments
- Entertainment

### **Media Outreach (HUD Public Affairs)**

- Invitations mailed
- Media advisory sent

- First follow-up calls to press
- First follow-up calls to invitees
- Pitch calls to key press
- Press release sent
- Press packets assembled
- Press materials distributed
- Speaker/participant thank you letters developed/distributed

# Registration Form

Yes, we plan to participate in Neighborhood Networks Week!

Center \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Center Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Property owner/manager \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of property (HOPE VI, PIH, Multifamily) \_\_\_\_\_

We will kick off the national celebration on Sat., Oct. 14 with an event at our center. Type of event:

- Open house/reception
- Health fair
- Other [please describe]

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description of Oct. 14 kick-off event:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We plan to invite (circle):	Residents	Partners	Elected officials	HUD representatives
Expected attendance (circle):	10-50 people	51-100	101-200	Other:

During the week, we plan to hold the following events. We have indicated dates and times [please mark all activities]:

Host a tour of our center	Date:	Time:
Highlight a technology program	Date:	Time:
Highlight a program for children	Date:	Time:
Highlight a program for families	Date:	Time:
Highlight a program for seniors	Date:	Time:
Highlight a literacy program	Date:	Time:
Have an awards ceremony	Date:	Time:
Grand opening or ribbon cutting ceremony	Date:	Time:
Have an art and/or writing contest	Date:	Time:
Other (please tell us about your plans) _____ _____	Date:	Time:

**Register early!**

Please send the completed registration form to:

Mail: Ms. Christine Pelosi  
Office of Special Actions

Office of the Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Room 10142  
Washington, D.C. 20410

Fax: (202) 401-6725

E-mail: [Christine\\_P.\\_Pelosi@hud.gov](mailto:Christine_P._Pelosi@hud.gov)

**Have a question? Contact:**

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Mr. Jeff Riddel  
HOPE VI  
(202) 401-8812, x7378

Mr. Earl Evans  
Office of Native  
American Programs  
(202) 708-1790, x6103

Ms. Dina Lehmann  
Office of Multifamily Housing  
(202) 708-0614, x2921

Ms. Jerry White  
Office of Public and  
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Multi-FamilyNeighborhood  
Networks Information Center  
(888) 312-2743