

# **STRENGTHENING FOUNDATIONS: THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF FLORIDA'S NONPROFITS FOR SUSTAINABLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

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The Florida Housing Coalition, recognized as the statewide subject matter experts in all things affordable housing and ending homelessness and since 1992, has been the Technical Assistance Provider (TAP) for the Florida Housing Finance Corporation's (the Corporation) Predevelopment Loan Program (PLP) and the contracted agency for the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program. Over time, the Coalition has grown and expanded the wide-ranging expertise of its staff which has helped execute initiatives like the Nonprofit Capacity Building Institute.

It is through this work, in addition to deep engagement with local governments, stakeholders, and developers, that Coalition staff has observed the need for technical assistance aimed at helping nonprofits seeking to emerge into affordable housing development by creating a strong organizational foundation that can support the long-ranging venture into affordable housing development.

The Coalition is the sole TAP for Corporation's Predevelopment Loan Program, through which nonprofits borrow funds for site for pre-development activities, and in some cases site-acquisition. The Coalition staff engage nonprofits in PLP by providing technical assistance to support their endeavors in development. Complimentary to this role, the Coalition's nonprofit capacity building programming helps create a pipeline of nonprofits and their developments for PLP and expanding affordable housing across the state.

Originally funded by a grant from Fifth-Third Bank, the Coalition began to develop the Building Capacity to Build training program, which has evolved into the Nonprofit Capacity Building Institute. It was throughout the years of hands-on technical assistance that the Coalition recognized the need for robust programming to provide support that guides nonprofits through early stages of development, starting with the conceptual phase and into predevelopment processes.

While building the capacity to build among the participating nonprofits, the Coalition identified the importance of using the Institute as a pathway into the Corporation's Predevelopment Loan Program. However, ensuring that the nonprofits are foundationally prepared to proceed with their project and secure a Predevelopment Loan from the Corporation, and subsequent competitive financing when appropriate, requires that the organization itself has the capacity to meet the terms of the loan and prepare itself for the credit underwriting process.

Pivoting to meet the needs of these mission-driven nonprofits who are new to the

development industry, the Coalition's TAPs focus efforts on building the capacity of the participating organizations from the ground up. Instead of doing the work on behalf of the organization like a consultant might do, the Coalition TAPs deploy tools, resources, and training during scheduled meetings so the nonprofit can learn the "how to" of being a developer. Technical Assistance meetings may include training on how to determine feasibility, develop and understand a pro forma, learning about local government planning frameworks that guide development, reviewing contracts and organizational documents with

the intention of mitigating risk to the Borrower and Lender, and instruction about building a capital stack to finance a development project.

Using the stumbling blocks that are known to stall projects as learning opportunities, the TAP

helps the organization preemptively prepare for engaging co-development partners and lenders. Educating the organization about the importance of a robust Board of Directors in which members have specific disciplines associated with residential development and affordable housing is of great importance. Capacity building isn't limited to the senior leadership and staff, and the TAP's engagement with the Board to review participation in these types of programs is essential to advance to the development process.

## **INTERSECTING THE COALITION'S MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS WITH NONPROFIT CAPACITY BUILDING**

Through our work to provide training and education about affordable housing and



ending homelessness, to improve collaboration among stakeholders, local governments, and consumers, to leverage resources that maximizes financial impact when advancing affordable housing initiatives, and to develop and implement strategies, the Coalition is making gains at ensuring that each Florida community has, at minimum, one community-based organization with the capacity to play an important role in delivering housing and related services within their community. With the goal of each Floridian having access to available and affordable housing of their choosing, programs like Nonprofit Capacity Building Institute and the Predevelopment Loan Program provide encouragement to local groups who not only are deeply engaged in their own community, but also can identify areas of opportunity to resolve unmet housing needs for some of the most vulnerable community members.

From the Coalition's Board of Directors to the Technical Advisor staff, the organization in bringing together housing advocates and resources to deploy the best practices and information across the state. Just as the Coalition is focused on casting a wide net to engage members and other important contributors throughout Florida, internally we are coordinating efforts to take a cohesive approach which promotes expanding new opportunities for affordable housing development.

## SHOWCASING SUCCESSES OF NONPROFIT CAPACITY BUILDING

The Affordable Housing Development Team prepared a Nonprofit Capacity Building Symposium for this year's Affordable Housing Conference, which is rescheduled to Friday, December 8, 2023 due to the impending hurricane's impact on ending the conference early. To demonstrate the success of the capacity building programs and TA that is offered by the Coalition, nonprofits who have participated in the Building Capacity to Build

and Predevelopment Loan Program were invited to showcase their development projects while Bank OZK moderated. The following nonprofits presented:

- Drew Warren, Community of Hope  
Brevard County, FL  
Project: Hope Hammock
- Camille Reynolds Lewis and Rebecca Talbert, Hannibal Square Community Land Trust  
Orange County, FL  
Projects: Townhomes at West Lakes, Promenade at West Lakes, Cornerstone at Sixth
- Terri Murray, Neighborhood Renaissance, Inc.  
Palm Beach County, FL  
Project: Coleman Park Renaissance
- Dr. Sarah Combs, University Area CDC  
Hillsborough County, FL  
Project: Uptown Sky

## CONTACT US

The Florida Housing Coalition has a team of experts focusing solely on Affordable Housing Development, Nonprofit Capacity Building, and PLP Support. Contact us today to see how our Technical Advisors can help with your next



**ELISSA PLANCHER** is the Director of Affordable Housing Development and a Technical Advisor with the Florida Housing Coalition. Responsible for management of the Predevelopment Loan Program, she works with emerging nonprofit housing developers in the predevelopment process to plan and finance housing projects while building their capacity to navigate the credit underwriting for construction and permanent loan financing processes. Elissa incorporates almost 20 years of experience in the local government and nonprofit sectors in the housing industry and has worked across all of the Coalition's teams, bringing her knowledge of regulations and inter-agency systems to guide local governments, Continuums of Care, and nonprofits to the tools and strategies required to create opportunities to address the unmet needs of affordable housing across Florida. Elissa holds a Master of Real Estate Development degree from the University of Arizona.