

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Jovan Hackley**  
(877) 542-4842 ext. 153  
[jhackley@communityprogress.net](mailto:jhackley@communityprogress.net)

## **New Scholarship Program Creates and Supports New Land Banks to Help with Equitable Revitalization**

*Community Progress' New Land Bank Incubator Scholarship Program Supports New Local and State Land Banking Efforts*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 23, 2021 — The Center for Community Progress (Community Progress) announces the launch of a new scholarship program offering free technical assistance to communities seeking to create and use land banks to advance equitable recovery efforts.

The new [Land Bank Incubator Scholarship Program, supported by Arnold Ventures](#), will competitively award free legal aide and technical support to approximately eight communities. The efforts will expand the number of America communities with land banks and the ability to minimize the harms of vacant and abandoned properties and transform these liabilities into assets.

“The Great Recession proved that land banking is an innovative, impactful tool that should be in every community’s toolbox for protecting people and place together,” said Dr. Akilah Watkins, President and CEO for Community Progress. “These scholarships will help ensure that new communities are prepared to respond and eliminate vacancy resulting from historic challenges and the growing impacts of COVID-19.”

### **The Growing Land Bank Need in the Face of COVID-19**

Since 2010, more than 200 land banks have emerged across the United States, largely as a response to the Great Recession’s destabilizing impacts to neighborhoods. Land banks are created by state legislation and are granted special legal powers to effectively tackle vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties in ways that advance community priorities and return these properties back to productive use. These governmental entities—operating across diverse geographies like Toledo, OH, Omaha, NE, Houston, TX, Huntington, WV, and rural counties in New York—have proven to be effective tools for communities facing widespread vacancy stemming from economic crises, natural disasters, or other disruptive events.

Today, another national crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, is not only threatening public health, but also disrupting real estate markets, household security, and neighborhood vitality—with a

disproportionate impact on communities of color. It is anticipated that communities across the country will see increases in the prevalence of mortgage-distressed, vacant, tax-delinquent, and blighted properties. These problem properties, if not effectively and efficiently addressed, can weigh down home values and increase municipal costs. This downward pressure will make it harder for families to find safe and stable housing, cause stable homeowners to lose equity, and erode tax bases that support vital community services. While this issue may occur anywhere, it will likely be particularly acute in struggling urban centers, lower-income neighborhoods, and communities of color – many of which were exploited by subprime lending and widespread foreclosures, and have only just begun to recover from the Great Recession. The need to start planning for the future in these communities, in order to mitigate the potential damage and advance an equitable recovery, is great. Over the next few years, it is expected that more state and local leaders will again turn to land banks to help minimize the harms of vacant, distressed properties and to assist in an equitable recovery.

The Land Bank Incubator Scholarship Program is a proactive effort to fill a fast-growing critical need.

As America's leading organization helping communities address systemic vacancy, abandonment, and deterioration, Community Progress has led a number of initiatives to further one of the fastest growing community development tools, land banks. Those efforts include producing the seminal publications on land banks for the field of practice, generating research on the [State of Land Banks](#), collaborating to garner support for the [National Land Bank Network Act](#), and helping develop land bank enabling legislation in 15 states.

### **About the Scholarships: Helping High-need, Limited Resource Communities**

The new [Land Bank Incubator Scholarship Program](#) will support growing the number of land banks across the country, and driving transformative and innovative land bank practices in the face of emerging challenges to our communities and neighborhoods triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This initiative will offer scholarships to competitively selected applicants in the form of customized, high-impact technical assistance, which will be delivered at no cost by the team of national experts at Community Progress.

The three primary objectives of this initiative are to:

1. Expand the number of land banks in states that already have state enabling land bank legislation;
2. Help local and/or state partners design and adopt new state enabling land bank legislation where no state law currently exists; and
3. Help local and/or state partners reform and optimize their state's existing enabling land bank legislation.

“We are excited to support Community Progress to grow the impactful work of land banks in neighborhoods,” said Chris Hensman, Director of New Programs at Arnold Ventures. “Land banking can provide important answers to the historic and systemic built environment

challenges we face. We know this program will make a sizable impact for the health, safety of communities and work towards closing the wealth gap for disadvantaged communities across the United States.”

The Land Bank Incubator Scholarship Program is a national, competitive program open to eligible applicants from all 50 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico. The program invites applications from all communities—urban, suburban, and rural. Communities interested in launching new land banks or seeking to advance optimal statewide land bank legislation are invited to learn more and apply for a scholarship at [communityprogress.net/LBIncubator](https://communityprogress.net/LBIncubator).

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, and will be evaluated on a first-come, first served basis.

Understanding the capacity challenges many communities and organizations are currently experiencing as they seek to handle urgent relief and recovery efforts due to COVID-19, Community Progress designed the application process with a focus on accessibility, convenience, and timeliness. A final decision will be made within 60 days of the online submission of a complete application.

For interviews or more information on the Land Bank Incubator Scholarships, email [media@communityprogress.net](mailto:media@communityprogress.net) or call (877) 542-4842.

###

### **About the Center for Community Progress**

Founded in 2010, the Center for Community Progress is the national leader for building strong, equitable communities where vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties are transformed into assets for neighbors and neighborhoods. Today, Community Progress has affected change in more than 48 states and seven countries through leadership education and collaborative systems, policy, and practice reforms. Simply, we work to transform “Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Places.” For more information, visit [communityprogress.net](https://communityprogress.net).

### **About Arnold Ventures**

[Arnold Ventures](https://arnoldventures.org) is a philanthropy dedicated to tackling some of the most pressing problems in the United States. We invest in sustainable change, building it from the ground up based on research, deep thinking, and a strong foundation of evidence. We drive public conversation, craft policy, and inspire action through education and advocacy.

We are a team of more than 90 subject-matter experts headquartered in Houston with offices in New York and Washington, D.C. We work in four key issue areas: Criminal Justice, Education, Health, and Public Finance. Our work is guided by Evidence-Based Policy, Research, and Advocacy.