

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

ADVANCING ECONOMIC MOBILITY RAPID GRANT OPPORTUNITY

'BACKGROUND

All cities, towns and villages, regardless of size, possess the authority to influence their residents' upward economic mobility. They can promote equity and opportunity through their day-to-day operations, programs and services. They can use their unique municipal roles and levers, whether a community partner, model employer, funder, priority setter or equity leader, to build lasting outcomes for all residents.

Proposal Due: 5 PM (EDT) Friday, June 21, 2024

Project Dates: July 2024 – February 2025

Information Session: 2 PM (EDT) Monday, May 20.

[Register today!](#)

Submission Applications Online by the proposal due date.

<https://www.nlc.org/initiative/grant-opportunity-advancing-economic-mobility/>

Email questions to eofe@nlc.org.

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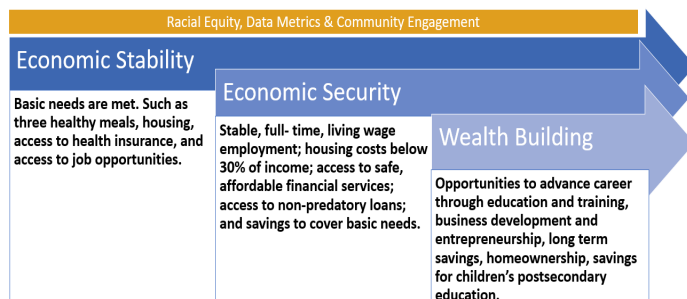
PART 1. BACKGROUND

Advancing the upward economic mobility of city residents directly impacts the financial health and long-term viability of municipalities. Research indicates that economically secure families with as little as \$250 in savings are better able to weather the ebbs and flows of income drops and unexpected expenses. They are also less likely to rely on local services for housing support and cash assistance.

According to [Opportunity Insights \(OI\)](#), children's chances of earning more than their parents have been declining. Ninety percent of children born in 1940 grew up to earn more than their parents. OI has found that only half of all children earn more than their parents did. This matters to cities because economically secure individuals are more likely to provide greater revenue via sales, property ownership or income taxes that can provide more predictable municipal budgets. Additionally, economically secure residents tend to be more civically engaged.

National League of Cities envisions local economic mobility programs and services within a framework that begins with services that support financial stability or basic needs for residents. Over time, residents may transition to programs or services that promote security, helping them gain full-time employment with a living wage, and finally, to opportunities to build long-term wealth. However, the journey through this continuum is often obstructed by personal or external crises and structural racism. Municipalities are well-positioned to meet residents where they are on this continuum and, through targeted and comprehensive programs, help them achieve greater economic mobility.

Economic Opportunity and Mobility Framework



NLC is working to ensure that local leaders have the tools and information they need to advance economic mobility within their communities. With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, NLC has an opportunity to provide grant funding of up to \$20,000 to cities committed to boosting the economic mobility of residents. The funding is available to members of NLC's Economic Mobility Peer Network (EMPN), which all municipalities can join at no cost. EMPN is a group of city leaders, staff, and partners interested in learning about topics and strategies that advance economic mobility through a racial equity lens.

[JOIN THE ECONOMIC MOBILITY PEER NETWORK](#)

PARTICIPANT BENEFITS

In addition to receiving grant funding, municipalities selected for the grant opportunity will:

- Participate in monthly coaching calls with NLC staff to receive guidance and troubleshoot challenges. Municipal teams will also have opportunities to engage with their peers through monthly EMPN engagements between July 2024 and January 2025.
- Receive training on how to use key economic mobility resources, including Opportunity Insights' [Opportunity Atlas](#), Results for America's [Economic Mobility Catalog](#) and the Urban Institute's [Upward Mobility Framework](#).
- At NLC staff discretion, selected municipal teams will have the opportunity to participate in a site visit to another city that is advancing economic mobility in their community.
- Selected municipal teams will also be invited to attend an Economic Mobility Convening in late January/early February 2025, where they may have the opportunity to showcase their work. NLC will cover travel expenses for approved municipal team members.

RAPID-GRANT FOCUS AREAS

Municipalities can apply for grants of up to \$20,000 designed to spark new ideas or leverage additional funding to promote economic mobility and equity. Grants can be used to test ideas and begin to plan projects that respond to community needs. Up to 12 municipalities will receive funding. NLC will consider applications from municipalities of varied sizes and progress in existing economic mobility efforts.

Cities that apply for and are selected for this rapid grant opportunity should demonstrate that their efforts are focused on one of the three following areas:

- ◆ Creating quality employment opportunities for residents
- ◆ Equitable support to strengthen or start small businesses.
- ◆ Helping residents connect with services or public benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), etc.

SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary team within NLC, and municipalities will be selected based on: 1) capacity to complete the work within the grant period, 2) proposed work will impact those making less than 200% of the federal poverty level; and 3) directly impact the economic mobility of residents. Applicants must also demonstrate that municipal staff will be directly engaged in the work.

ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED DATES
RFA release	May 13, 2024
RFA information session	May 20 at 2 pm ET
Proposal due	June 21, 2024 5:00 PM ET
Announcement of selected municipalities	Mid July 2024

PROGRAM TIMELINE

ACTIVITIES - ESTIMATED DATES

Announcement of selected municipalities

July 2024

Municipal Coaching Calls

July 2024 – December 2024

Economic Mobility Peer Network Engagements

July 2024 – January 2025

City Site Visits

October 2024 - January 2025

Economic Mobility Convening

January/February 2025

Program Ends

January 2025

Final Report to NLC

February 2025 (to be confirmed)

Selection Criteria Proposal Instructions

To apply for this rapid grant opportunity, municipalities must meet the following criteria:

- Be a member of NLC's Economic Mobility Peer Network (the network is free to [join](#))
- Funded programs should impact those making less than 200% of the federal poverty level
- Municipalities that previously secured an Economic Mobility Rapid grant from NLC in 2023 will not be considered.

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

To be considered for this initiative, the applicant must submit a fully completed application online.

Required Proposal Materials

- A. Contact Information
- B. Local Municipality Context
- C. Team Information

D. Budget

E. Mayor or City Manager Letter of Commitment with Quote

Optional information

A. Supporting Information

PART II. APPLICATION

All proposals must be submitted online by 5 PM (EDT) Friday, June 21, 2024.

If you have questions or would like more information, contact the NLC Economic Opportunity and Financial Empowerment team at eofo@nlc.org.

Application

A. Contact Information

NAME OF PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

TITLE OF PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

EMAIL OF PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

MUNICIPALITY/ORGANIZATION OF PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

ORGANIZATION ADDRESS:

NAME OF SECONDARY POINT OF CONTACT:

TITLE OF SECONDARY POINT OF CONTACT:

EMAIL OF SECONDARY POINT OF CONTACT:

PHONE OF SECONDARY POINT OF CONTACT:

MUNICIPALITY/ORGANIZATION OF SECONDARY POINT OF CONTACT:

ORGANIZATION ADDRESS:

B. Proposal Narrative

Respond to the following questions to help NLC understand your environment and readiness to take action to improve the economic mobility of your residents. Be sure to frame your responses carefully and candidly.

Provide any supporting information (such as documents, reports, press releases, etc.) that provides evidence related to your responses and clearly indicate why the supporting information is relevant.

Questions

Select which area your proposed work will focus on (choose only one):

- Creating quality employment opportunities for residents.
- Equitable support to strengthen or start small businesses.
- Helping residents connect with services or public benefits (i.e., government-sponsored residential services, SNAP, the Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Tax Credit, or free tax preparation services).

What is your municipality's vision and overarching goals for the work that will be funded by a rapid grant and support from NLC? *(Limit your response to a maximum of 250 words.)*

Describe your proposed project and note any populations that will be prioritized and why. *(Limit your response to a maximum of 500 words.)*

Note any potential challenges or obstacles you anticipate encountering during the implementation of your proposed project and how you plan to mitigate them. *(Limit your response to a maximum of 250 words.)*

What, if any, existing municipal priorities or initiatives support the selected focus area? *(Limit your response to a maximum of 250 words.)*

Describe any specific opportunities you would capitalize on if selected for funding and support. This could include new state or federal investments in your community, emerging community needs or trends, etc. *(Limit your response to a maximum of 250 words.)*

What outcomes do you hope to measure to gauge your teams' success in meeting your previously stated goals? *(Limit your response to a maximum of 250 words.)*

What key partners are (or will be) engaged and committed to realizing your plan and meeting your outcomes? What will their roles be? How can they contribute to the strength of the team? *(Limit your response to a maximum of 500 words.)*

C. **MUNICIPAL-LED TEAM INFORMATION:**

List each senior leader or high-level staff with expertise related to the objectives of the *Advancing Economic Mobility Rapid Grant* who will serve on your local municipal team. For each, provide a brief description of their expected role. Note that the project lead must be a municipal leader or staff member.

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	CITY, STATE	ROLE

Required Supplemental Materials

Provide links or attachments for the following required materials to supplement your application.

- D. **Budget:** Complete and submit [the budget template](#) demonstrating the anticipated use of funds.
- E. **Mayor or City Manager Letter of Commitment:** Provide a brief letter of commitment from your mayor or city manager articulating how they will ensure the success of your local municipality's engagement in the *Advancing Economic Mobility Rapid Grant*. The letter must specify the senior-level staff member designated to be their team's lead for the project. The letter should also include a quote from the Mayor or City Manager to support the economic mobility goals or their participation in the grant to potentially be used in NLC's communications materials about the project.

Optional information

- A. **Supporting Information:** Provide any supporting information (such as documents, reports, press releases, etc.) that clearly provides evidence related to your response. In your narrative responses, clearly indicate where the supporting information is relevant. Alternatively, this information can be sent to eofe@nlc.org. please make it clear that the materials are supporting a rapid grant application.

PART III. RESOURCES FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION

To help you develop your proposal, NLC has gathered resources that may help you expand your thinking about programs, policies or procedures that your municipality could implement as part of the rapid grant program. You may find some of the resources more useful to you than others, but NLC encourages you to look them over.

Local Practice Examples

Many communities across the country are working on their own or with outside organizations like NLC to create programs, policies or procedures that help their residents become more economically mobile.

City of Akron, OH

In partnership with their local workforce community development corporation, the City of Akron developed a training program for minority women who were recent or expecting mothers. These individuals received wrap-around services, including on-site child care during the program, child care assistance post-job placement, access to mental health services, and access to a developed network of program graduates. Within a short period, the program saw 34 individuals successfully graduate, with 50% of them securing employment at a living wage within six months of completion. The City of Akron has directed Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, and the County Health Department has helped the CDC become eligible for Medicaid screening funding, which will be used to continue and expand the program.

City of Dallas, TX

The City of Dallas demonstrated a commitment to addressing community needs and promoting financial stability among residents through targeted outreach and engagement initiatives. The city successfully engaged 7,721 residents across neighborhoods, facilitating 106 benefit redemptions, conducting 21 financial counseling sessions, and distributing 101-period products. While the success varied across neighborhoods, with increases in WIC benefit usage ranging from 3% to 24% and varying rates of financial counseling service utilization, these efforts have undeniably impacted residents' lives. Dallas plans to sustain these efforts through ongoing community events, leveraging grant funding and collaborating with relevant city departments.

City and County of Denver, CO

The City and County of Denver launched the Family Business Preservation Program (FBPP) to support locally owned businesses in strengthening their operations, mitigating involuntary displacement and increasing multigenerational business ownership to build community wealth. The city received 53 applications, and 23 of those businesses were accepted into the program after review for alignment of business type, business location and capacity to participate. The curriculum was tailored to advance each business owner's acumen and strengthen their current business operations to ensure they have the knowledge and expertise needed to survive, thrive, and offer quality jobs. The program, sustained by Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funding, has graduated over 40 businesses. The city is working on tracking the businesses after they complete the program to see how they grow (i.e., revenue, staff, etc.) via business licensing renewals and survey outreach.

City of Gaithersburg, MD

The City of Gaithersburg's targeted outreach efforts showed promising outcomes in promoting economic stability and community empowerment within city apartment complexes. The success of two outreach events is evidenced by the engagement of 135 residents. Notably, 35 residents provided their contact information for follow-up, and 28 applications for benefits/services were completed on-site, with 12 participants attending

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follow-up appointments. The events facilitated meaningful conversations with service providers and raised awareness of previously unknown city services. By translating event materials into Mandarin and Spanish and engaging bilingual staff, the city ensured accessibility for residents with diverse language needs.

City of Nashua, NH

The City of Nashua successfully trained local trainers in entrepreneurship through CO.STARTERS, a national organization working with communities to help entrepreneurs start small businesses. The city also established partnerships with financial institutions and regional organizations, and facilitated the integration of entrepreneurship initiatives into the city's revolving loan fund. The enthusiastic community response has accelerated the growth of a vibrant startup ecosystem, with plans to sustain these efforts by maintaining CO.STARTERS licenses and exploring minimal workshop fee structures. This sustainable approach ensures continued accessibility and affordability, empowering individuals from all backgrounds to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and contribute to the city's economic vitality.

City of Roanoke, VA

In collaboration with their local workforce board, the City of Roanoke served 48 underemployed individuals and placed 39 of them into employment opportunities in the biotech field with a living wage. The individuals who were supported through the program received wrap-around support and services, which helped them with transportation issues, licensing, and post-graduation work equipment and clothing costs. Additionally, the city worked with local schools to create career exploration activities for high school and middle school students to help these young people better understand the possible employment opportunities within their region. The city and workforce development organization are exploring partnerships with the regional hospital to secure additional funding to support similar workforce opportunities for more residents.

NLC Materials

National League of Cities - Economic Mobility Toolkit

www.nlc.org/resource/improving-opportunities-and-boosting-economic-mobility/

National League of Cities - Increasing Quality Employment for Residents brief

www.nlc.org/resource/increasing-quality-employment-for-residents-part-of-a-brief-series/

National League of Cities - Raising Residents' Wages brief

www.nlc.org/resource/raising-residents-wages

National League of Cities - Expanding Economic Mobility through the Municipal Workforce brief

www.nlc.org/resource/expanding-economic-mobility-through-the-municipal-workforce/

Advancing Economic Mobility Rapid Grant Opportunity

National League of Cities - Working Parents, Thriving Cities report

www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/working-parents-thriving-cities.pdf

National League of Cities – Keeping the American Dream Alive report

www.nlc.org/resource/keeping-the-american-dream-alive/

National League of Cities - How Hard-to-Fill Infrastructure Jobs Impact Building Our Future

www.nlc.org/resource/how-hard-to-fill-infrastructure-jobs-impact-building-our-future/

National League of Cities – Employee Ownership brief

www.nlc.org/resource/the-municipal-playbook-for-employee-ownership/

National League of Cities - City Inclusive Entrepreneurship Program Summary brief

www.nlc.org/resource/city-inclusive-entrepreneurship-program-summary-brief/

National League of Cities - Maximizing the Earned Income Tax Credit in Your Community

www.nlc.org/resource/earned-tax-credit/

Partner Resources

The Aspen Institute, Economic Opportunities Program - Measuring Good Jobs and Good Companies

www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Measuring-Good-Jobs-and-Good-Companies.pdf

Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia – Occupational Mobility Explorer

www.philadelphiafed.org/surveys-and-data/community-development-data/occupational-mobility-explorer

Get It Back Campaign - Tax Credit Outreach Planning Guide

www.taxoutreach.org/outreach-strategies/materials/tax-credit-planning-guide/

Advancing Economic Mobility Rapid Grant Opportunity

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Living Wage Calculator

livingwage.mit.edu/

Opportunity Insights – Opportunity Atlas

opportunityatlas.org

Results for America - Economic Mobility Catalog

catalog.results4america.org

Urban Institute - Mobility Metrics

upward-mobility.urban.org/measuring-upward-mobility-counties-and-cities-across-us