

## REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

# ADVANCING ECONOMIC MOBILITY RAPID GRANT OPPORTUNITY

## BACKGROUND

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

**Proposal Due:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025, by 5 p.m. ET

**Project Dates:** June 2025 – January 2026

**Information Session:** Tuesday, April 1 at 2 p.m. ET

**Submission Information:** Please submit completed applications online at

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

Questions? Contact the NLC Economic Opportunity and Financial Empowerment team at [eofe@nlc.org](mailto:eofe@nlc.org).

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## PART 1. BACKGROUND

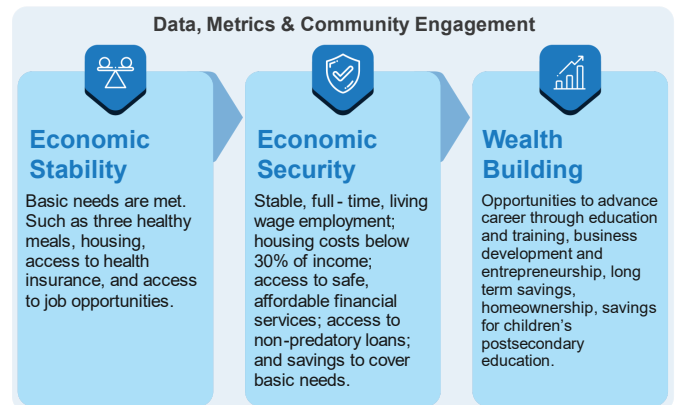
Advancing the upward economic mobility of city residents directly impacts the financial health and long-term viability of municipalities. Research indicates that economically secure families with as little as \$250 in savings are better able to weather the ebbs and flows of income drops and unexpected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

Over the past 50 years, there have been stark decreases in economic mobility nationwide. According to Opportunity Insights (OI), children's chances of earning more than their parents have been declining. 90 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 decline in economic mobility opportunity 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.

NLC 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.

The National League of Cities (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 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 only available to members of NLC's Economic Mobility Peer Network (EMPN), which is

### Economic Opportunity and Financial Empowerment Framework



open to all NLC members to join. The EMPN is a group of city leaders, staff, and partners who are interested in learning about topics and strategies that advance economic mobility.

### [JOIN THE ECONOMIC MOBILITY PEER NETWORK](#)

### Participant Benefits

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

- Participate in bi-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 Economic Mobility Peer Network engagements between June 2025 and December 2025.
- Be trained 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 expected to attend an Economic Mobility Convening in October 2026, where they will

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. Grants can be used to test ideas and begin to plan projects that respond to community needs or to expand existing initiatives. 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 government-sponsored residential services or public benefits such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Child Tax Credit (CTC), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), or free tax preparation services.

### Selection Process

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

ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED DATES
RFA release	March 3, 2025
RFA information session	April 1 at 2 pm ET
Proposal due	April 30, 2025 5:00 PM ET
Announcement of selected municipalities	Early June 2025

## PROGRAM TIMELINE

Estimated Dates	Activity
Early June 2025	Announcement of selected municipalities
June 2025 – December 2025	Municipal coaching calls
June 2025 – December 2025	Economic Mobility Peer Network engagements
August 2025 – December 2025	City Site Visits
October 2025	Economic Mobility Convening
January 2026	Program Ends
Late January 2026 <i>(to be confirmed)</i>	Final Report to NLC

## 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 strategies should impact those making less than 200% of the federal poverty level.
- Municipalities that previously received an Economic Mobility Rapid grant from NLC 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 5:00 PM ET on Wednesday, April 30, 2025.**

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

PHONE 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

Please respond to the following questions to help NLC understand your current 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 indicates where the supporting information is relevant.

### QUESTIONS

**Please select which area your proposed work will focus on (select only one):**

- Creating quality employment opportunities for residents.
- Equitable support to strengthen or start small businesses.
- Helping residents connect with government-sponsored residential services or public benefits such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Child Tax Credit (CTC), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), or free tax preparation services.

1. **Please write a short description of how you will use the rapid grant funds in one to two sentences.** *(Your response should be no more than 75 words.)*
2. **Share a brief background on your municipality, its current economic mobility work landscape, and why the rapid grant funds are necessary for your economic mobility work.** *(Your response should be no more than 500 words.)*
3. **Describe your proposed project and note any populations that will be prioritized and why.** *(Your response should be no more than 500 words.)*
4. **Please note any potential challenges or obstacles you anticipate encountering during the implementation of your proposed project and how you plan to mitigate them.** *(Your response should be no more than 250 words.)*
5. **What, if any, existing municipal policies, priorities or initiatives support the selected focus area?** *(Your response should be no more than 250 words.)*
6. **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.** *(Your response should be no more than 250 words.)*
7. **How will your team continue to sustain the work outlined in your rapid grant proposal after the grant period?** *(Your response should be no more than 250 words.)*
8. **What are some key policies, procedures, programs, or partnerships that will contribute to the success of the work outlined in your rapid grant proposal?** *(Your response should be no more than 500 words.)*
9. **What specific and measurable outcomes do you hope to measure to gauge your team's success in meeting your previously stated goals? Please identify outcomes that are achievable in the six-month rapid grant time frame.** *(Your response should be no more than 250 words.)*
10. **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?** *(Your response should be no more than 250 words.)*
11. **Please share the approximate time from receiving notice of a grant award to when city leaders appropriate the money for use.** *(Your response should be no more than 100 words. This question will not impact your scoring; it is solely to understand the administrative timeline necessary for grantees.)*

**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. Please include any key partner staff who are necessary for the completion of the objectives listed in the grant proposal. For each, please provide a brief description of their expected role. Please note who is the project lead on this document. The project lead must be a municipal leader or staff.

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	CITY, STATE	ROLE	Please Indicate if this Person Will Participate in the Economic Mobility Peer Network

## Required Supplemental Materials

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

- D. Budget:** Please complete and submit the budget template demonstrating the anticipated use of funds.
- E. Mayor or City Manager Letter of Commitment:** Please 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 municipal leader or senior-level staff member designated to be their team's lead for the project. **The letter should also include a quote by 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:** Please provide any supporting information (such as documents, reports, press releases, etc.) that provide evidence related to your application. In your narrative responses, please clearly indicate where the supporting information is relevant. This information can be sent to [eofe@nlc.org](mailto:eofe@nlc.org); however, please make it clear that the materials support a rapid grant application.



## PART III. RESOURCES FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION

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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.

### 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.

#### Previous Rapid Grant Recipient Examples

City of Burlington, VT  
(pop. 44,743)

The City of Burlington expanded its successful Personal Care Assistant (PCA) Workforce Training Program by providing training in Arabic to support the growing Arabic-speaking and Muslim population. This unique pilot expansion combined AI-powered direct translation from a real-time trainer and a culture monitor with a background in the medical field and fluency in both English and Arabic to ensure a holistic learning experience. This program expanded on an existing city priority of training and placing more healthcare workers to fill much-needed vacant positions, especially within the new and under-represented Arabic community. Additionally, the city used this pilot as a proof of concept on the effectiveness of AI-powered translation training, which could be leveraged for future opportunities to provide training in languages other than English and Arabic for in-demand skills and employment sectors.

City of Grand Island, NE  
(pop. 53,131)

The City of Grand Island created the Grand Island Community Kitchen Pilot Project, for which the city provided \$2,000 in direct funding assistance for nine entrepreneurs who want to grow their food production business. Business owners could utilize the direct assistance funds toward renting a shared commercial kitchen space, purchasing supplies, or creating marketing. This program met a direct need from local business owners to support a shared commercial kitchen space to grow their operations from home-based to commercial. As a part of the direct funding, the business owners attended four classes at the local community college focused on setting up their own business and marketing plans, developing a web presence, and more.

City of Linden, AL  
(pop. 1,859)

The project supported a series of community-focused workshops, meetings, resource fairs, and other targeted events, which provided comprehensive sessions on a wide range of financial empowerment topics such as financial literacy, workforce readiness, and access to government benefits. These events were directly tailored to their targeted demographics using specific activities such as providing childcare for sessions targeted at parents. Additionally, residents were provided incentives to attend multiple sessions. This funding allowed the City of Linden to expand existing programming and partnerships with nonprofit partners and neighboring cities.

## Advancing Economic Mobility Rapid Grant Opportunity

City of Dallas, TX  
(pop. 1,302,868)

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  
(pop. 716,577)

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 - revenue, staff, etc. via business licensing renewals and survey outreach.

City of Gaithersburg, MD  
(pop. 69,563)

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 onsite, with 12 participants attending 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.

## **NLC Materials**

National League of Cities - Economic Mobility Toolkit

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/improving-opportunities-and-boosting-economic-mobility/>

National League of Cities - Increasing Quality Employment for Residents brief

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

National League of Cities - Raising Residents' Wages brief

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/raising-residents-wages>

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

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/expanding-economic-mobility-through-the-municipal-workforce/>

National League of Cities - Working Parents, Thriving Cities report

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

National League of Cities – Keeping the American Dream Alive report

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/keeping-the-american-dream-alive/>

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

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

National League of Cities – Employee Ownership brief

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/the-municipal-playbook-for-employee-ownership/>

National League of Cities - City Inclusive Entrepreneurship Program Summary brief

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/city-inclusive-entrepreneurship-program-summary-brief/>

Advancing Economic Mobility Rapid Grant Opportunity

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

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/earned-tax-credit/>

## **Partner Resources**

Opportunity Insights – Opportunity Atlas

<https://www.opportunityatlas.org>

Results for America - Economic Mobility Catalog

<https://catalog.results4america.org>

Urban Institute - Mobility Metrics

<https://upward-mobility.urban.org/measuring-upward-mobility-counties-and-cities-across-us>