



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES**  
**Institute for Youth, Education, and Families**

*Economic Opportunity for All: City Roles in Building Stronger Families and More Inclusive Communities*

June 21, 2007

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Institute for Youth, Education, and Families  
National League of Cities (NLC)

*Speakers:*

**Mayor Bob Kiss**, City of Burlington, Vt.;  
**Kathy Emery**, Community Affairs Manager, City of Dayton, Ohio; and  
**Lynn Knox**, Economic Opportunity Program Manager, City of Portland, Ore.

*HOLSCLAW:* Thank you and on behalf of NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, I want to welcome all call participants to our monthly conference call. This month, we are focused on "Economic Opportunity for All: City Roles in Building Stronger Families and More Inclusive Communities." We have a great agenda set up for you today and I hope that you enjoy the conversation. I will note that at approximately 1:00 P.M., I will open up the phone lines for questions. So, if you have a question, make a note and our operator, at that time, will instruct you on how to get into queue and ask the question.

Again, our conversation today is focused on economic opportunities for all and as many of you are acutely aware, in your own communities, between 1999 and 2005, the number of Americans that are living in poverty has increased. In fact, the number of families living in poverty has risen from 34 million to 38 million, inflation-adjusted incomes for many families has unfortunately been declining, while the number of full-time workers who are considered poor or near poor has only increased.

So, what we are finding here at the NLC is that in response to these trends, and in the absence of a concerted federal strategy to address these problems, municipal leaders are taking action to reduce poverty and inequality in their own communities. Some examples of this renewed focus on poverty at the municipal level include New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's creation of an economic opportunity commission, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's set of ambitious recommendations to curb poverty in Los Angeles, and commissions, task forces, or initiatives established in cities such as Miami, Milwaukee, Portland, Providence, R.I., and Savannah, Ga.

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So, with us today, I want to take a moment to introduce three individuals who are going to tell you more about what is happening in their communities and I want to start with Mayor Bob Kiss from the City of Burlington, Vt. Mayor Kiss has lived in Burlington since 1972 and before entering the state legislature and becoming mayor, he had a long career in social services. He has worked for the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity for 18 years, and the last 12 years as executive director. This group is a community action agency that works with the city, state, private sector and nonprofit groups to meet the social and economic needs of residents of Northwestern Vermont. He has also served on the Board of Commissioners for the Burlington Housing Authority and the Board of Directors for the committee on temporary shelter. He has also been elected to the Vermont House of Representatives and was re-elected twice before being elected mayor of Burlington. So, today, you are going to hear Mayor Kiss describe how the city has worked with a diverse set of partners to address poverty and create greater equity among residents. Mayor Kiss, would you like to say, "Hello?"

*MAYOR KISS:* Hi, Abby. How are you?

*HOLSCLAW:* Great.

*MAYOR KISS:* Good to be here.

*HOLSCLAW:* Wonderful. Now, I want to introduce Kathy Emery, who is the community affairs manager for the City of Dayton, Ohio. Kathy has worked for the city since July of 1993 and has worked in the Division of Community Affairs, which is part of Dayton's Department of Planning and Community Development. She is responsible for developing and implementing initiatives in poverty reduction, human services, work force development, housing and reduction of homelessness. Before joining the city, she established new futures for Dayton area youth, and served as the executive director from 1988 to 1993. Today, Kathy is going to tell you more about the City of Dayton's multifaceted approach to addressing poverty, which includes efforts to train young people in high load job sector, combating predatory lending, developing a living wage ordinance for public sector workers and expanding the city's Earned Income Tax Credit outreach campaign. Kathy, would you like to say hello?

*EMERY:* Yes. Hello, Abby and hello to everyone else on the call.

*HOLSCLAW:* Thanks, Kathy. Finally, I want to introduce Lynn Knox, who is the economic opportunity program manager for the City of Portland, Ore. She has led the design and implementation of the Portland Economic Opportunity Initiative that began in late 2004. Previously, she assisted in the city's targeted neighborhood revitalization program and managed multiple city work force and micro enterprise activity. She has also held positions with training and consulting firms for "Catalysts for Change: Help Options for Teens," which is a school improvement and youth engagement program, serving middle and high schools in Oregon, the Midwest Corrections Reform Program and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Lynn is going to talk to us about the City of Portland's Economic Opportunity Initiative, which is a citywide poverty reduction program that focuses on workforce development and micro-

enterprise, to enable residents to reach financial stability. The initiative also involves the creation of a continuum of services that helped residents become self-sufficient and build assets. Lynn, would you like to say hello?

*KNOX:* Hi. I am looking forward to talking to everybody.

*HOLSCLAW:* Great. Well, I am going to want to go right into questions and again, I encourage you to make a note if you happen to have a question and we will certainly open up the phone lines later in the call. I would like to throw out the first question to all of my speakers and ask, "Why poverty reduction?" Tell us what specifically motivated you in Dayton and Portland and Burlington to address poverty.

*EMERY:* Well, I guess I will start. This is Kathy Emery from Dayton. It was really the 1990 census data that was the big wake up call for the City of Dayton, when we discovered that among the hundred largest cities in the U.S., we had the sixth highest rate of poverty among that group. We also had 14 of our census tracts that had poverty rates of 40 percent or higher. So, that was a big kick at us, and the city decided that it really needed to get much more proactive. Up to that point, it was kind of relying on Montgomery County to take the leadership on these issues.

*HOLSCLAW:* Mayor Kiss, what about in Burlington?

*MAYOR KISS:* Well, I don't know if this is a New England phenomenon or not, but when you drive around the state through different towns and cities, there is often a poor farm road. That is the deep history of Vermont. I think that people try to kind of take care of their own needs locally and the state has been a poor state historically.

I think that everyone is aware of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which really was a signal federally that we had to do something about poverty and I think that we never stopped, once we got that investment and it has been clear that there are poor people in Vermont and that working with people, you can actually move people out of poverty. The Reagan administration helped to grow the disparity between rich and poor and we have been struggling with the issue, I think, harder and harder since then. So, I think Burlington made a commitment to work hard on this issue, because while we have 20 percent of the county's families, 43 percent of that county's low-income families live in Burlington, which was really a clear city issue.

*HOLSCLAW:* And what about in Portland, Lynn?

*KNOX:* Well, also because of the new information from the 1990 census, it became concretely clear that what our bureau, as the engine for revitalization in the city, had been worrying about was true and that was that we were succeeding with the physical placed revitalization, but that poverty was being pushed out of its historic neighborhoods and dispersed very widely throughout the community, but not reduced at all. And that dictated some new approaches and the strategic planning process, where we got massive community input that said that you need to be people-based and you need to go deep to assist people rather than doing what

government usually does and spread the money so thin that it accomplishes nothing. So, that led to our best practices study and the establishment of the Portland economic opportunity initiative.

*HOLSCLAW:* That leads me right into wanting to give you all a chance to tell us what are some of the highlights of your poverty reduction efforts? If you had to pinpoint, you know, two or three pieces of your initiative that you would want to surface so callers could really understand what is happening in your respective communities, what would those be? Maybe I will start with you, Kathy?

*EMERY:* Well, I would say that it has been a multi-pronged effort. One has been to try to retain and grow more living wage jobs, although we have really been buffeted with the manufacturing job losses, not only during the 1990s, but since then. But that led us to get involved with the NLC work force initiative back in 1999, which led, by partnering with Montgomery County, to the county rethinking and redistributing dollars, much more focused at the neighborhood level to provide a whole range of work force services as well as other family and child support services.

I think another important component of what we have been working on is our home ownership efforts and one of the things that we are really proud of is that between 1990 and 2000, the rate of homeownership among African-American families in the city of Dayton rose from 33 percent to 45 percent. Then, I would say that the third area has been our efforts with the Earned Income Tax Credit campaign and our development of free tax preparation sites as an alternative to the pay day lenders and the refund anticipation loans, and the fourth thing, which we are a partner on has been in the reform and regeneration of the Dayton public schools.

*HOLSCLAW:* Sounds like you are busy in Dayton.

*EMERY:* Sure.

*HOLSCLAW:* Mayor Kiss or Lynn, I am not sure who wants to go next, but we would like to hear the highlights that are happening in your communities, to give us the flavor for how you are addressing poverty.

*MAYOR KISS:* Let me jump in.

*HOLSCLAW:* Okay.

*MAYOR KISS:* I think that now almost 25 years ago, Burlington invested in what was then called the Burlington Duty Land Trust and it helped start the land trust and then put money into supporting it year after year and even was able to put a million dollars in from its pension fund to support initial purchases. The land trust itself pays for the land and then that decreases the cost to the homeowner, which makes the property perpetually affordable by having an appreciation rate that is limited to 25 percent of any appreciation, if the homeowner sells later. It really has been effective in putting more and more people into homes that otherwise they would not be able to afford. The land trust is actually now joined with the Lake Champlain Housing Development

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Corporation that controls 2000 units in Northwestern Vermont and I think it has been a really effective force in putting lower income people into home ownership positions.

We have worked hard on the livable wage campaign. It sounds like we are going to have some common themes here. What was really clear, by talking about livable wages, it really moved the minimum wage discussion along. So, the state of Vermont has a minimum wage now of \$7.53 an hour, that is indexed. It is not a livable wage, but in general, the whole discussion and understanding of what it takes to be able to live has improved in Vermont and in Burlington.

We have a strong micro business development and small business component in partners in the city, but also supported by the city's community economic development office and I think that has been a really positive influence to encourage lots of different people to build their own small business, really micro business, really accenting ownership and I think the last thing that I would say is that we built a really strong third sector network. We have a strong nonprofit sector that provides emergency housing, food, and a lot of support services to lower income people that really has made the difference.

*HOLSCLAW:* Wow, that's great. What about in Portland?

*KNOX:* When we did our strategic plan, three strategic objectives emerged from that that all feed our mission, which is to make Portland a more livable city for all by bringing low income people and community resources together. Those three objectives were a campaign to end chronic homelessness in ten years, like many cities have, to increase the supply of housing opportunities for very low income people and to expand economic opportunity for very low income people.

Through the expansion of economic opportunity, we have established a program called the Portland Economic Opportunity Initiative that takes the best practice model programs that exist in any community, but have never been scaled up, that have never been given funding and attention, where there has been no effort at local replication usually, so that we now have 35 different best practice programs that all have the same design elements, but serve as best practice dictates, different target populations in different sectors of the work force and different sectors of small business and we work with them together, so that the common services they need, we become their staff, actually as city employees, to advocate with other community resources to bring to the collection of 2,000 participants in our 35 projects. So, that it creates a role that almost ensures that the project is being led from the grass roots and the city provides a funding and coordination and advocacy function at their direction.

*HOLSCLAW:* This is very helpful to hear. And I know that we would go very deep on several items. I would like to take the call to the microenterprise development piece first, specifically and ask each of you to talk to me a little bit more about what your city is doing to work with particular employment sectors and of businesses around employment and training programs. You know, have you found this to be successful. What have been some of the lessons that you might have learned?

*KNOX:* Well, in Portland, as part of this initiative, we support nine different microenterprise development organizations that serve different segments of that population. There is one that serves immigrants. There is one that serves African-Americans. There is one that serves people in the home-based child care business, one that serves small contractors, well, you get the gist. So, by clustering them so that there is a natural affinity, you achieve an ability to have real peer support, and where there is a commonality of type of business, they can really go deep and also almost have the benefit of a business association and purchase materials and services together and achieve an economy of scale that enables them to compete with larger businesses and our results from these small businesses, which are run by people at 50 percent of median or below, far exceeds those of other micro enterprise organizations in the country, according to the Aspen Institute.

*HOLSCLAW:* And Mayor, you mentioned looking at livable wage and being able to influence minimum wage. What other efforts have you all had around work force development strategies as part of your poverty reduction work?

*MAYOR KISS:* There are obvious ones. We have a group called Recycle North that is city funded that has a program called Youth Build, that works with young people, particularly around building trades, helping them developing skills for them to be able to move into the work force and sort of per your information, in Vermont, the average age of our building trade people is in the 50s. It is an area that has a high demand for new employees and they are just not there and not skilled and so anyhow, that is just one avenue for developing youth skills that has a ready set potential. Our building trades are unionized and so this is a hopeful place for people to build careers. Vermont Works for Women; this is again around training geared to women.

We have a company called Vermont High Tech that has been very successful at training and retraining people for medical transcription area, for web development and there are jobs in Vermont for those kinds of skills. I think that we have been trying to adapt to provide training skills that have a ready market and I think we have done this with some success.

*HOLSCLAW:* That's great. Kathy, I would love to hear from you, but I want to shift questions and feel free to weigh in on that one as well. I would like us to pull out some additional information for the call participants on the work that is happening in relation to poverty reduction around asset building. So, can you also tell me more about how your poverty reduction initiative has helped residents either build or protect the money that they are able to earn. Kathy, do you want to kick that conversation off?

*EMERY:* Sure. As I mentioned before, home ownership or increasing home ownership has always been a critical part of our poverty reduction policy that was adopted in 1999. And so, in addition to making our federal dollars for need development block grant in home dollars available and leveraging those to increase home ownership, we have not directly run the individual development account, or IDA program, but we have supported our nonprofit organization to do that and they serve probably about 100 or 150 households a year. We were able to work with the banks in terms of the matching dollars.

The other thing that has been developed now is that we have a home ownership center, which provides a whole range of services, some of which are funded by the city, but others that are funded by the county or the banks. So, we have down payment assistance, mortgage credit counseling and we also, because of the horrible problem with predatory lending, predatory mortgage lending, we have a number of programs to try to help people that have been caught in that cycle and are about to lose that home or have already lost their homes through foreclosures. I just want to mention that the state of Ohio has really had some of the more lax laws on the books when it comes to reigning in predatory lenders. So, we have really been fighting that battle for years.

*HOLSCLAW:* Kathy, this is a question for the Mayor and Lynn to also weigh in on, but could you, before we move on, specifically mention how you might be connecting these asset building services to the EITC outreach and pre-tax prep work you are doing and/or to the work force development work that you are doing. That is one specific question that we had from New York.

*EMERY:* Well, one of the things about Dayton is that we are about 188,000 population, or 166,000 population, I guess, by now. So, we are kind of a small town in a way, so a lot of the neighborhood-based organizations that are concerned about homeownership are also at the table, as far as our earnings and tax credit coalition and as I said, Montgomery County is the big workforce player. You know, we have the biggest job center in the universe here. It covers, I don't know, 40 football fields. But they recognize with our pushing and encouraging, that they needed to not only run this big job center, but also get very engaged in the neighborhood. It is all very linked together, because many of our community organizations are concerned about home ownership. They are concerned about if their folks are working and they have been key partners in the EITC outreach.

*HOLSCLAW:* Mayor, what about in Burlington?

*MAYOR KISS:* Well, you know, if Dayton is 166,000, and it is small, you have to appreciate that Burlington is just under 40,000 and it is smaller. I think it is true, you know, the intimacy of sort of the relationship really plays out in that a lot of organizations work closely together and support each other and encourage people who are using services to combine them. I am sure that does not work in every case, but there is a familiarity of Burlington and in that respect, it works well. I do not know if that is helpful.

*HOLSCLAW:* No, it is. I would encourage you to tell the callers on the line a little bit more about the free credit score day that you all have there in Burlington.

*MAYOR KISS:* Well, we have worked with local banks to give people the opportunity to get a free credit score and along with that, there is an opportunity for sort of economic literacy. You know, the skills building. I think it does give people a better sense of where they are and unfortunately, in the U.S., more and more people have heavy debt. So, we have provided this sort of ongoing sort of resource of free credit score days and I think as we have done it the number of people that have taken advantage of this has continued to grow.

*KNOX:* In Portland, where we are a large community of around 600,000 in just the city, the linkage of all these types of things is difficult. So, that is part of what our model has done, is that for the participants that we are going deep with and we have worked with for three years, we offer through their projects, their case management system; IDAs, home ownership opportunities, financial education programs that they are required to participate in. They are assisted with the EITC. They get in debt credit repair through a leveraged service that we created that works with them for up to a year, you know, one on one, hand holding them through the process of how do you write a letter to your creditors to get things improved and clean things up. How do you read a credit report? We have gotten one of the banks here to set up an automated system for banking for people who are on the state “no bank” list because of their past record. We have given free commercial accounts to the micro enterprises and then it is all wrapped in by their weekly contact with the case manager that provides all these services as well as their link to their work force training program or their micro enterprise education.

*HOLSCLAW:* I appreciate that, Lynn. I think a lot of cities are struggling with having pieces of asset building initiatives happening. You might have some legal services over here and some credit counseling over here, but they are disconnected. So, creating that continuum of services that allows for an easier system of referral is extremely appreciated.

*KNOX:* It has to be under one roof. I mean that is what participants to past programs said to us when we designed our system, was I cannot be trying to pursue employment and go here and there and have this person and that person.

*HOLSCLAW:* So, that facilitated access is something that Portland is finding as a huge lesson learned?

*KNOX:* Yes.

*HOLSCLAW:* Well, that is great. I want to put out one more question, but I want to give the callers on the line a chance to ask questions as well. I want to start with Mayor Kiss, and as, you know, mayor of the city, what have you specifically done to support this broader poverty reduction work? What are the various roles that you have played that might signal to the call participants, opportunities that their elected officials could play and then Kathy and Lynn, I will turn to you and ask, what have elected officials done in Portland and Dayton to support that? Mayor?

*MAYOR KISS:* Well, I have been mayor for just over a year and it was a campaign with just five candidates and part of the theme that I ran on was definitely a 25-year commitment by Burlington to social equity. I ran as a progressive third party and for 25 years, except for two, there has been a progressive mayor. What I said I was running on was 25 years of values that represented a quality of life that people here appreciate. One of the themes I also stressed was putting people first, so I think from the mayor’s office, the City of Burlington has made a strong commitment to equity and justice for a long time and we have made investments behind that.

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So, I mean to the extent that a mayor can sort of lead the charge and encourage, and also support for equity across the economic spectrum, you know, I did that and I think I do that, and I think it plays out and I think that the people of Burlington in general support making sure that all the people are set.

*HOLSCLAW:* We certainly applaud that leadership, Mayor. Kathy, what about in Dayton?

*EMERY:* Well, Commissioner Dean Lovelace has really been our moral compass here on this whole issue. He got elected to the city commission in 1993, so he has 14 years on the city commission and really almost the day he got elected, he started putting in motion his efforts to make sure that poverty was viewed as an issue that the city needed to address. So, in 1995, the city commission adopted a poverty reduction policy and he worked with his colleagues and it was obviously unanimously adopted and then he has continued to play a leadership role in virtually everything that we have done since that time. He put together a poverty reduction task force and that was a very broad-based community team. Then we had the opportunity to become part of the NLC workforce initiative, so the poverty task force morphed into that and then it kind of morphed into the EITC coalition and in every case, Dean has chaired that and he is the dean, no pun intended here, of this issue in this community and everybody looks to him and respects him for that.

*HOLSCLAW:* That's great. Lynn, what about in Portland?

*KNOX:* Well, in Portland we have a strong commission form of government and our commissioner, Erik Sten, has been a leader in programs that tried to respond to the needs of low income people for as long as he has been in office. One of his areas of strength is that he really is responsive to the community input that arrested the design of our initiative and then he shares that information with the other commissioners and brings the constituents in to share their view points with other commissioners and then that becomes a cycle of reinforcement. It has been a very grassroots fed process that our commissioners have stepped up to the plate and are very good listeners.

*HOLSCLAW:* It sounds like they have really embraced that model. It can come with its own challenges.

*KNOX:* Absolutely. They have been the best kind of leaders that are the responsive and listening kinds of leaders and saying, "You know best," to community and city staff that work in these areas about what the design needs to be. Just tell me what you need, because I have heard your pleas and your arguments and I am with you.

*HOLSCLAW:* Okay. I want to now ask the operator, Debbie, if you would not mind telling callers how they can ask questions. Let's open up the phone lines and see if others have questions for our three speakers.

*OPERATOR:* If anyone would like to ask a question, you can hit \*1 on your telephone key pad and I will access your line.

*HOLSCLAW:* Thanks, Debbie.

*OPERATOR:* We have a question from Brian White from Savannah. Please go ahead with your question.

*WHITE:* We have started a poverty initiative here in Savannah and I am kind of curious how you arrange the, this is actually for Portland, how do you arrange the case managers? Who do they work for and who do they report to?

*KNOX:* We have an RFP (request for proposals) process every few years for projects of the initiative and the community based nonprofit organizations that apply and are awarded the contract hire the case managers as part of their project design.

*HOLSCLAW:* Debbie, do we have any more questions at the moment?

*OPERATOR:* The next question is from Angel Ysaguirre from Seattle.

*YSAGUIRRE:* Yeah, my question is not really for Portland, but anybody can answer. It sounds like a bit of partnerships with local nonprofits to provide programs, a variety of programs including credit counseling, IDA. Does the city help fund these nonprofit programs? Do they help build capacity there?

*KNOX:* In the Portland model, it is a Community Development Block Grant and city general fund combined with a grant from the Northwest Area Foundation that has provided all of the funding for the best practice based 35 projects that are part of our system.

*HOLSCLAW:* And tell us what would that total budget, approximately, be?

*KNOX:* At this point, it is around \$4.4 million.

*HOLSCLAW:* Okay, and do you have percentages of how much of that would be city funds, either community development block grant or a general, as compared to foundation support?

*KNOX:* Oh, it is like 90 percent city funds.

*HOLSCLAW:* With contributions and local foundations.

*KNOX:* Right.

*HOLSCLAW:* Kathy and Mayor Kiss, what about in your communities? How is the city specifically supporting the nonprofit sectors and growing their capacity?

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*MAYOR KISS:* Well, we use CDBG money in the same way. We dedicate some of that throughout the community process to the nonprofit sector, to build nonprofits and to provide services. We also have a community economic development office that does some of the work directly or working with partners, so that we get the services out there. And like I said, it has been a long history of supporting nonprofit networks that is now pretty mature and I think effective.

*EMERY:* We use home funds for our neighborhood development corporations. You know, we provide them with administrative costs and so, they tended to be the folks that would, run the IDA program, and where we consolidated a lot of services in the home ownership center, the city continues to put either home or community development block grant into that, but we are definitely just one of several partners. We have made it a point not to have any one nonprofit be really dependent upon us for its livelihood.

*HOLSCLAW:* Debbie, do we have anymore questions at the moment?

*OPERATOR:* Our next question is from Carla Tucker from Fresno. Please proceed with your question.

*TUCKER:* Hi. I am with United Way of Fresno County and I have a specific question for Mayor Bob Kiss. Can you tell how we can specifically, or give me a specific example of how we can get our elected officials to support and be involved in our EITC outreach efforts? We are really struggling with how to do that.

*MAYOR KISS:* Well, what is amazing is that the results are so significant. It really does make work pay and in Vermont, it is helpful because not only is there the federal EITC, but there is a state EITC on top of that, so that people who work at not really high-paying jobs, get a pretty significant benefit and it seems to me if you were able to just talk to people and show them the results of the benefit, that they would be encouraged to participate and support the effort. Have you tried that without success?

*HOLSCLAW:* She may no longer be on the line. I would offer to Fresno one thing that we can do here at the NLC and that is we have several resources, including a toolkit for municipal leaders on how to promote the EITC into the level that you all are interested in engaging in your efforts and we would be more than happy to help reach out to the city and do what Mayor Kiss suggested, help demonstrate the benefits of investing in this type of model, whether it be through actual hard dollars or in kind contributions or leadership. All of those things can be quite powerful in helping to spread the word about eligible residents taking advantage of the EITC.

*EMERY:* I would also like to chime in here that the Brookings Institution has great data on the actual total amount of dollars that come into individual communities, through the EITC and it is some of those dollars that really got the attention of some of the leaders in our community. You know, we are talking \$50 million a year that comes into Montgomery County, Ohio.

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*MAYOR KISS:* It is pretty significant. It is amazing. So, I think you just look at the numbers and say, why wouldn't I support that?

*EMERY:* Right. It is such a key part of the local economy, really.

*HOLSCLAW:* And that information is the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Center, that portion as Brookings Web site ([www.brookings.edu/metro](http://www.brookings.edu/metro)), so feel free to go there and you can actually enter the city name and get specific numbers for your community. Other questions, Debbie?

*OPERATOR:* Yes, we have a question from Angela Carey from Salem, Ore.

*HOLSCLAW:* Thank you.

*CAREY:* Hi. I was just wondering, talking with a lot of nonprofit organizations around Salem, is there any sort of common database for nonprofit agencies in your city and if there is, how did you guys implement it?

*KNOX:* For the initiative that we have in Portland, we have a common database for all 35 of our economic opportunity projects, but we track things very differently than other kinds of nonprofit services. We are not service counters, we are wage and revenue increase counters, so it is a different system that is needed.

*HOLSCLAW:* And was that, Lynn, developed locally or is it a national product that you could name?

*KNOX:* Currently, we are piggybacking on our bureau's homeless information management system service point. We are in the process of determining whether that is the best system.

*HOLSCLAW:* Okay. That is helpful. Other questions, Debbie?

*OPERATOR:* The next question is from Ellen Merca.

*HOLSCLAW:* Ellen, where are you from?

*MERCA:* Santa Cruz, and I just wanted to say also in terms of good information, on promoting EITC, the Annie E. Casey Foundation ([www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)) has already released their report on best practices from the last tax season.

*HOLSCLAW:* Thank you. That's right. That report just recently came out. Are there other questions, Debbie?

*OPERATOR:* We have a question from Angel Ysaguirre.

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*HOLSCLAW:* Please proceed with your question.

*YSAGUIRRE:* Yes. My question is around measurements. How many people do your programs reach? How do you measure long-term effectiveness?

*HOLSCLAW:* That is a great question. Who wants to tackle this one first? I am sure that question depends on which program. Do any of you want to weigh in?

*KNOX:* Well, again, in Portland, in the economic opportunity initiative, we have one system for currently a bit over 2,000 participants. We are funded, at this point, unfortunately, only to reach about 6 percent of the population that fits our income criteria, so our hope is that it grows over time. But we work with participants for three years each and we track over those three years; their income or business revenue growth, but beyond the three years, what we have in place is an agreement with the Oregon employment department to receive wage and data information on folks after they are actually outside the program.

*EMERY:* As it relates to homeownership, we track the number of people who go through the IDA program, complete it successfully and actually purchase a home and through our homeownership center, we certainly know how many families have been helped to prevent foreclosure or those who have been able to participate in this thing called a rescue fund. With earnings from tax credit outreach, we keep very good numbers on how many families or individuals we serve and the amount of tax refunds they receive as a result of using our pre-tax preparation services. Montgomery County, I think, keeps track of their program, but in terms of how many folks are placed in jobs and at what wage rate, and so on, but they do that and so the City of Dayton is a partner in that, but we do not actually control those dollars.

*MAYOR KISS:* I do not have all the numbers in front of me, but I think we really do subscribe to several result-oriented processes, where we want to see the numbers at the other end and I think, by and large, the investment that we bid in economic and social justice issues has seen progress over the years, end results. One thing I would say that is only just mentioned, moving someone out of poverty does not happen overnight. It really is something that you have to have a sustained investment in. It might take two, three, four, or five years, in some cases for people to develop skills to move out of poverty. On the other hand, it is just an issue of getting a job that actually pays you enough. It could happen overnight.

*HOLSCLAW:* That actually leads me to a question that I had about how each of the cities on the line has reached out to isolated or diverse populations and involved them in the planning and the policy making efforts around poverty reduction. Can all three of you briefly address how you might be engaging different groups in this type of work?

*MAYOR KISS:* I would start out maybe. Burlington for a long time now has had neighborhood planning assemblies. So, we have seven wards. We have actually five neighborhood planning assemblies. A couple of the wards have condensed their assemblies. The monthly meeting that

occurs and everyone is welcome to come. I think it has been in Burlington, reasonably effective, even in the Old North End, which is our lower-income section of the city and the numbers who attend really increase or decrease sort based on the issues that people are confronting, but it has created an ongoing vehicle for people to participate in issues of the city.

Another thing is as we develop our CDBG request, we create a citizen panel to make those recommendations that has definitely included people from all parts of the community to help make those decisions and they get to hear from the nonprofit providers and others and actually direct funds toward people based on need. One of the more recent things that happened this year, well, it started last year, we created a citizen's budget committee to help build the city budget. It includes people from the different walks of life and so more people understand the details of the budget and get to make recommendations on how it is used.

*HOLSCLAW:* Great. What about in Dayton or Portland?

*EMERY:* Well, Dayton has a long history of citizen elected priority boards. We have seven of them that cover portions of the entire city and then we have, oh, I don't know, probably about 45 different neighborhood associations, but frankly, to really get at some of the more disconnected citizens in our community, we rely on access through some of our more grass roots neighborhood associations and nonprofits and our mayor does mayor's walks from the spring through the fall and we have about 75 neighborhoods in the City of Dayton, so she probably does mayor's walks in about 13 of them each year and they rotate and our elected officials are very up close and personal with the citizens in residence of the city. They are all elected city wide, so they really have to represent the whole city and I think that they really do a lot of reaching out in the community.

*HOLSCLAW:* What about in Portland, Lynn?

*KNOX:* In Portland, an initiative was developed, based upon citizens where we went to a myriad of existing congregating points of low income people. We met with the parent board of the Head Start, the opening of a new shop in the heart of a low income neighborhood, where we had a table and talked to people. You know, it was just a wide range of any kind of nontraditional approach that we could find. We did some neighborhood canvassing. It was quite wide ranging to get the base input that started the project and then as we proceed, there is an annual customer feedback survey that participants in the project, review the performance of the people working with them and of the project as a whole, to talk about how it can be improved and what it has done well. So, it is an integrated concept in our initiative to have continuous quality improvement.

*HOLSCLAW:* Debbie, do we have any more questions?

*OPERATOR:* We do have a question from Chanel White from Washington, D.C.

*WHITE:* I am Chanel and I am calling from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and I would like to know if you or any of your organizations have encouraged your county, or in the case of Ohio, the state, to implement a state EITC?

*EMERY:* We are working on it. We have a new governor and there has been a slight change in the composition or the balance in the state legislature and I do not think that we are going to have one in place when the state budget goes into effect July 1<sup>st</sup>, but I have very high hopes that we are going to be able to push through with one this next legislative session and I just wanted to say that Ohio did vote as a state constitutional amendment to raise the minimum wage in Ohio, this last election. So we are pretty excited about that.

*HOLSCLAW:* And Vermont has a state EITC, right?

*MAYOR KISS:* That's right. I think it is a 32 percent piggyback off the federal.

*HOLSCLAW:* And you have an increased minimum wage.

*MAYOR KISS:* Right. We are at \$7.53 an hour in its index to CPI (consumer price index) now.

*HOLSCLAW:* That's great. And what about in Oregon?

*KNOX:* In Oregon, we need a state EITC and a development of a whole policy agenda for poverty reduction is now beginning to get on the radar. We just had a major shift during the last election in legislature and they have been straightening out some other issues this year that they knew exactly how to proceed on, so we need to do some planning right now and through the next months, after the session is over, about a policy agenda for the next legislative session. We do have similar to Vermont, our minimum wage is \$7.25 and hour and it is indexed to inflation.

*HOLSCLAW:* That is great. And our good friends over at the center on budget and policy priorities would be happy to help in any way that they can with state EITC efforts and they are a great resource for information and background on what other states have done to help pursue that. Debbie, do we have any more questions?

*OPERATOR:* There are no further questions.

*HOLSCLAW:* Okay. You know, another question that I had specifically, as many of you have mentioned partners, especially community-based partners, can you point in your specific communities a unique partnership that you have had that has really paid off or something that you would encourage callers on the line to consider when thinking about broader poverty reduction initiatives and who should be at the table?

*KNOX:* Well, from Portland, I would point out that in our multiple work force programs, the most important partner and the partner to get on board at the beginning of the design of the project is employers. Most of our projects are sector-based. They work with multiple

employers, say from the metals industry or manufacturing, construction and they sit at the table, they design the curriculum together. The employers deliver part of the curriculum. This not only gets the employer what they want and gets the employer involved in hiring the participants, it takes people who have never had the hope that they actually would get something out of the program and create incredible trust and motivation that there is a job at the end. There have been so many historic training programs where, you know, after the training program is over, it is like, “Oh, that industry is not hiring,” or, “Nobody will hire me because I have a criminal record and I did all of this work.”

*HOLSCLAW*: Right. And how are you getting the employers to the table?

*KNOX*: One by one.

*HOLSCLAW*: Are there specific pieces of advice that you would offer to call participants?

*KNOX*: Follow through. Make sure that your nonprofits are as skilled as you can assist them to be in outreach to employers, as smart about how they are doing it to work in the clusters that are important in your local economy and that they understand the employers interest and respect it, but also it is important to understand, I think, that at least in our economy at this moment, the dynamic is shifting and the employers need us as much as we need them.

*HOLSCLAW*: Yes. That is a really good point, Lynn. Mayor Kiss and Kathy – your thoughts on partners?

*MAYOR KISS*: You know, I would say that we have a lot of partners and they are the usual suspects and they are the allies that work. I agree that if we have components of the poor profit sector and have them be sort of allies with the nonprofit sector, it can make a big difference, particularly in getting people jobs and sometimes having sort of new investment opportunities that come from the for profit side. It is hard to think of unique players in that.

*HOLSCLAW*: Yes. I see, and Kathy?

*EMERY*: Well, I would have to say that probably one of our most important partners, if not the most important partner is Montgomery County. They are the recipient of all the one stop in the work force dollars and we also have a county wide human services levy that we all contribute to and we all vote on, but it is about an 80 million dollar a year fund. The fact that the county is really on board... we also did a homeless solutions plan and it was co-chaired by the county administrator and the city manager and I think we have a much stronger plan as a result of that.

*MAYOR KISS*: Let me jump in again. Some things make a difference. For us, the fluctuation in healthcare and the major hospitals in the city makes a difference when they participate. The University of Vermont, when it is a big player, makes a difference, but those are not necessarily unique players, but the extent that they participate more or less heavily, it makes a difference, I think, in the outcomes of people’s lives.

*HOLSCLAW:* Well, I am noticing the time and am cognizant that we promised an hour and I want to, on behalf of the National League of Cities, express my sincere thanks to Mayor Bob Kiss, Kathy Emory and Lynn Knox and appreciate the opportunity to chat with you all and share all of your experiences around poverty reduction.

I know that the callers on the line have themselves a lot of experience in this topic, so certainly make sure that we hear from you on that. There are two resources that I want to point out that are on the NLC Web site, if you are interested. One is that EITC toolkit that I offered. If you go to [www.nlc.org/iyef](http://www.nlc.org/iyef) and look under publications for the EITC toolkit ([www.nlc.org/iyef/eitc](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/eitc)) and also under our family economic success part of that Web site, you will find a cataloged audioconference call that we hosted on San Francisco's Project Homeless Connect. Portland, as Lynn Knox brought up, the work that they have been doing around homeless and I just want to mention that as a resource if you, in fact, are interested in San Francisco's model to connect homeless to services.

Finally, I wanted to mention that the schedule for future YEF Institute audioconference calls will be posted on the Institute's Web site at [www.nlc.org/iyef](http://www.nlc.org/iyef) in the coming weeks and, again, to find that EITC toolkit, it is located at [www.nlc.org/iyef/eitc](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/eitc). I think I mixed that up a few moments ago. For all of our loyal listeners on the audio conference calls, we are taking a summer break, but we will resume in September, so we look forward to having you all back in September. So, again, thanks on behalf of the NLC for joining us today and thank you again to the speakers. Goodbye.