

# Join the Strong Southern Communities Initiative

Are you concerned about the well-being of children and families in your community? Do you sometimes wish you could do more to help them thrive, reducing the number who are struggling or being left behind? Are you looking for ways to keep more young people and families in your city as a key to quality of life and economic vitality?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” the Strong Southern Communities Initiative, a new effort sponsored by the National League of Cities (NLC), can help you move forward.

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## **What is the Strong Southern Communities Initiative (SSCI)?**

SSCI is designed to provide practical help and advice to municipal leaders in Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana. It brings together local elected officials from across the region who want to improve outcomes for children and families, enabling them to share ideas and discuss the challenges facing their communities. In addition, SSCI helps participating mayors and city councilmembers develop local action plans based on their unique circumstances and needs, and then connects city leaders to national experts and regional partners who can help them implement those plans.

## **Who can join?**

In its initial phase, only elected municipal leaders (i.e., mayors/city councilmembers) from Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana are invited to be part of SSCI. However, other municipal officials, non-profit partners and community leaders working with municipalities in the region can encourage their local elected officials to participate in SSCI and/or contact NLC for more information.

## **What are the benefits?**

By joining the SSCI, local elected office will become part of a peer learning network within the region that helps them improve the lives of children and families in their communities. Each participating city will develop a local action plan and receive guidance from staff experts at NLC’s Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) as well as NLC’s national partners.

## **What are the expectations?**

As part of their commitment to join SSCI, city leaders will identify a specific “result” in their community that they seek to improve. YEF Institute staff will then help local elected officials assess their existing barriers, opportunities and assets, and through that process support their efforts to develop a local action plan. City leaders who are part of SSCI are also expected to participate on a regular basis in conference calls and occasional meetings with peers from other communities to share ideas and support each other’s local efforts. SSCI will reimburse participants for travel expenses as needed.

## **Background on NLC and its Institute for Youth, Education, and Families**

NLC is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. It works in close partnership with the nation’s 49 state municipal leagues and is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans. NLC’s YEF Institute provides practical help and advice to city leaders across the nation who seek to improve outcomes for children and families, working in five core program areas.

**For more info:**  
[NLC.org/iyef](http://NLC.org/iyef)

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# Pledge Form

YES, I am committed to participating in NLC's Strong Southern Communities Initiative! Please use the following information to keep in touch with me and share information regarding the initiative.

Elected Official Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Contact Name/Title (if appropriate): \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Optional Comments: *My current goals/priorities for children and families include:*

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Please return this completed form:

**BY MAIL:**

NLC Institute for Youth, Education, and Families  
660 N. Capital St, NW, Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20001

**BY E-MAIL:**

santiago@nlc.org

**For questions about  
the Challenge:**

Contact Anthony Santiago  
(202) 626-3022 or [santiago@nlc.org](mailto:santiago@nlc.org)  
[NLC.org/iyef](http://NLC.org/iyef)