

A NEW COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Addressing Basic Needs of Postsecondary Students to Improve College Completion and Support Workforce Success

The National League of Cities (NLC) is launching a new Community of Practice for 12 selected city teams to help cities work in partnership with their postsecondary institutions and community partners to remove barriers to basic needs such as food, housing, childcare, mental health services, transportation, or digital access for postsecondary students. Unmet basic needs often derail students' efforts to attain postsecondary credentials, which negatively impacts their ability to succeed in the workforce.

The current COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the inequities many college students experience as they are forced to remain or return home to ensure they and their families are safe, and some may have no home at all. The Community of Practice (CoP) will help city leaders gain knowledge about their residents' postsecondary completion challenges, identify a basic need barrier to tackle, and connect with peers to share and refine approaches that hold promise in overcoming barriers to college completion. This initiative is rooted in goals to increase equity for low-income students and students of color and to position postsecondary completion as a strategy to increase pathways out of poverty.

GOALS FOR PARTICIPATING CITIES

- Develop Greater Awareness Regarding the Basic Needs Gaps of your City's Postsecondary Students;
- Develop Vision, Goals and Action Plans;
- Engage Key Partners to Achieve Desired Results;
- Use Data to Inform Practice;
- Build Rapport and Learn from Cities Tackling Similar Issues;
- Document and Share Best Practices and Lessons Learned;
- Solve a Locally-Defined Problem Regarding Basic Needs; and
- Become a Champion and Voice for Municipal Leadership to Address Postsecondary Basic Needs.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Only one application per city will be considered and must be received with the full support of the mayor and/or city manager.

Please email your application form and responses to Gislene Tasayco at tasayco@nlc.org.

APPLICATIONS DUE

August 14, 2020 by 5:00 pm EST

SELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Cities will be notified about their selection status in late August 2020.

INFORMATIONAL CALLS

NLC will host an informational call for interested cities to learn more about the Community of Practice and to ask questions of NLC staff on July 9, 2020 at 1:00pm Eastern Time. Please indicate your interest in this opportunity by [filling out this form to pre-register](#) for this call. Call-in information: Dial 1 (773) 231-9226 and enter Meeting ID: 502 429 5174.

NLC CONTACTS

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GOAL

To help mayors and other local elected leaders develop policies, practices and programs, in partnership with postsecondary institutions, school districts, business leaders and community organizations, to remove barriers to basic needs that often prevent college students from successfully completing postsecondary degrees, certificates or other credentials needed to gain access to rewarding careers.

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

Cities that meet the following criteria should consider applying for this new NLC Community of Practice:

- Does your city seek to ensure more residents attain postsecondary credentials in fields leading to livable wage jobs and careers?
- Is your city concerned about the inequitable access to postsecondary credentials for low-income students and students of color in your community due to challenges they face meeting their basic needs which have grown even greater resulting from the COVID-19 crisis?
- Is your mayor concerned about the number of college students missing classes, dropping out of school, or never showing up on campus because their basic needs in areas such as food, housing, transportation, childcare, mental health or digital access are unmet?
- Due to high unemployment rates caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, is your city worried that many postsecondary students may not return to school next fall to complete their credential because they are focused on securing income to address their basic needs and/or the total household income of their families?
- Is the city looking for guidance on how to work with cross-sector partners to tackle food and housing insecurity, transportation, childcare gaps and other basic needs to help college students stay on track to graduate and obtain necessary credentials?
- Would your city find it beneficial to be part of a community of cities working together and sharing strategies on how to address postsecondary basic needs?
- Is your city's business community concerned about filling higher-skilled jobs if there are lower numbers of

college graduates or students completing certificate programs as a result of unmet basic needs?

If the answers to the above questions are “yes,” your city is strongly encouraged to apply for this unique opportunity. NLC, through its Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), will provide technical assistance and support over a 12-month period to a cohort of 12 cities tackling this issue using a Community of Practice model. City teams will have the opportunity to bring in a postsecondary institution partner and work alongside other cities to address barriers such as food insecurity, homelessness, and lack of adequate childcare, mental health services, transportation, and digital access.

THE OPPORTUNITY

NLC, with generous support from ECMC Foundation, invites senior municipal staff in mayors'/city managers' offices or economic development offices/agencies to be part of a new Community of Practice (CoP) to address barriers to basic needs that prevent city residents from obtaining postsecondary degrees or certificates. Food and housing insecurity, childcare, transportation, and now digital access are often cited as challenges that can prevent student success in attaining postsecondary credentials. Resources to help students meet basic needs are essential to increase the odds that they will persist through graduation to attain their degree or credential. These findings are well-documented by Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab's research on [*Hunger and Homelessness in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs in Higher Education*](#).

NLC will support selected cities in their efforts to implement policies, practices or programs that remove such barriers. City leaders, in partnership with their postsecondary institution leaders, will identify a locally defined problem that they will work to address over the course of the one-year Community of Practice. Cities will pick one basic need topic (food insecurity, housing insecurity, transportation, digital access, childcare, or mental health) and develop specific policy or programmatic action steps to tackle the problem. Cities are not required to have done any prior work on these issues. NLC foresees this CoP as a beginning-level learning opportunity to introduce cities to the problem and engage them as problem solvers.

Cities will participate in monthly peer-to-peer virtual learning opportunities with the full cohort and receive frequent individualized technical assistance from NLC's staff and national content experts to help advance the city's efforts. To kick off the Community of Practice, NLC

will share research that illuminates the size of gaps in basic needs as a critical impediment to postsecondary attainment nationwide and inspire city leaders to be champions for this work at the local level. NLC will work with city leaders to develop their vision, short-term and long-term goals, and local action plans that will help them make progress on their identified problem. At the end of the 12-month Community of Practice, city teams will share their successes, lessons learned, and plans for next steps to further their progress. NLC will continue to engage cohort cities in Year 2 on a quarterly basis to track continued success and support with longer-term goals.

NLC's established peer learning network, Postsecondary Success City Action Network (PSCAN), includes cities that have already done deep work to promote postsecondary success. After a successful year or two in the Community of Practice, cities may be ready to expand their commitment and efforts to develop a city-wide postsecondary completion agenda tied to workforce development goals. If the city moves in this direction, it may be ready to join PSCAN to remain connected to NLC and peer cities pursuing similar postsecondary agendas.

NLC believes in the power of in-person relationship building and learning, but while social distancing rules are in place, NLC will support the Community of Practice virtually. When it becomes safe for NLC staff and city leaders to travel again, NLC will host an in-person convening bringing together cohort cities to learn from each other. NLC will cover the costs of travel (airfare, hotel, ground transportation, and food) for one person per city to attend the meeting. Cities will be able to bring one or two additional partners to participate in the convening at their own cost.

THE NEED FOR ACTION

The evidence is clear that a postsecondary credential leading to career pathways that pay a living wage is essential in today's economy. Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce [documented](#) in 2016 that Americans with some type of postsecondary credential earn 25 percent more on average over their lifetimes than those with only a high school degree or less. Those with an associate degree or beyond have even greater earning potential. Moreover, individuals with some college education captured all but 100,000 of the 11.6 million net new jobs created during the 2010-2016 economic recovery. While the recovery post COVID-19 shutdowns will likely look different as many workers in the hospitality, restaurant, and service industries return to work, it is safe to assume the nation will experience similar numbers with those with postsecondary credentials faring the best. High levels of educational attainment are directly

linked to a city's economic vitality and well-being, so it is in the best interest of municipal leaders to support and promote postsecondary credential attainment.

The current COVID-19 crisis has pulled back the curtain on existing inequities in postsecondary success and completion. Students who were already food and housing insecure, lacked transportation, childcare, or mental health services, or did not have access to technology or the internet are struggling even more now with most postsecondary institutions only offering virtual learning and remote support. Meeting the basic needs of postsecondary students is crucial to help ensure continued pursuit of their educational and training objectives to obtain a credential that will offer them successful entry into the workforce.

NLC will work with cities to address this issue through an equity lens with the knowledge that expanded opportunity is even more crucial for low-income students and students of color who are more likely to be left behind without bold interventions at the city level. In response to the need to increase postsecondary certificate and degree attainment, city leaders are well-positioned to play a pivotal role to help remove barriers that impede a student's ability to succeed.

BENEFITS FOR CITIES THAT PARTICIPATE IN THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

NLC's Addressing Postsecondary Basic Needs Community of Practice Cohort One runs from September 2020 through September 2021 with a follow up year of light technical assistance support and check-in calls regarding progress through 2022. The CoP seeks to stimulate and support city-level progress by fostering a rich exchange of ideas among municipal leaders, their multi-sector partners and national experts who are steeped in strategies to address the basic needs and barriers to success for college students. NLC's goal is to have lessons from the field inform future work, while lifting up the voices of local elected officials and the roles they can play to improve postsecondary attainment to support workforce development.

NLC will work with selected cities to achieve the following:

- **Develop Vision, Goals and Action Plans:** City action plans and implementation strategies will be designed to address a locally defined problem. Cities' action plans will include timelines, interim targets, partners, peer-to-peer learning and sharing, and benchmarks to create an accountability framework that ensures momentum is sustained. Specific roles, responsibilities, assignments, and metrics will be identified to drive and measure success.

- **Engage Key Partners to Achieve Desired Results:** City leaders will engage their postsecondary institution presidents, deans, or other senior leaders as well as other critical community partners to develop local action plans that outline goals for removing barriers to basic needs for postsecondary students.
- **Use Data to Inform Practice:** City teams will gain guidance on accessing data from their postsecondary institutions to determine the level of unmet basic needs of students. The city may already have data on housing and transportation that can be leveraged to inform this work.
- **Focus on Equity to Change Policies and Practices for Marginalized Populations:** NLC will provide racial equity frameworks and tools to help cities focus their efforts and prioritize students who need the most support in meeting their basic needs.
- **Confer with National Experts and Philanthropic Leaders:** NLC will broker relationships between city teams and key national partners to inform city strategies for removing barriers to postsecondary attainment.
- **Join a National Cohort of Cities Tackling Basic Needs:** Twelve cities will form the inaugural Community of Practice on Postsecondary Students' Basic Needs, raising ideas and strategies to address this topic. The cities will develop relationships with each other and learn how other cities support their postsecondary students. NLC will host monthly virtual webinars or group conversations and possibly one in-person convening (when it is safe to travel again) to bring the full cohort of city leaders and their partners together.
- **National and Local Attention for Commitment to Basic Needs:** NLC will work with each city's press office to announce the selection of the cities as part of a new national initiative engaging municipal leaders on postsecondary basic needs. NLC will produce a blog on NLC's CitiesSpeak.org blogsite as well as use social media to feature the selected cities and help generate media attention and recognition for the city's commitment to this topic, as well as work with the cities to produce their own blogs, articles and social media content.
- **Document and Share Best Practices and Lessons Learned:** NLC will capture the lessons learned from cities throughout the initiative to produce a summary document and description of successful strategies to be disseminated and posted on NLC's website from which other communities may learn.

TIMELINE

Invitation to Apply Released	June 30, 2020
Informational Call for Interested Cities	July 9, 2020 1:00pm ET
Applications Due	August 14, 2020 *
Notification of Selected Cities	Late August
Virtual Orientation Call for Full Cohort	September 9, 2020 2:00pm ET
Individual City Technical Assistance Begins	Late September 2020 occurring every six weeks
Full Cohort Technical Assistance Webinars and Peer Sharing Calls	Monthly beginning October 2020
In-Person Cross-City Convening (location TBD – NLC covers cost)	February 2021 **
National Briefing Convening in Washington, DC (Optional: NLC not covering costs)	July 2021***
Community of Practice Year 1 Monthly Engagement Ends	September 2021
Year 2 Follow-up Sustainability Calls with NLC	Quarterly Calls through 2022

*NLC understands the stress cities are facing during the COVID-19 crisis and that some interested cities may not be able to make the deadline. NLC will consider applications submitted after the August 14, 2020 deadline if slots remain. As NLC can only select 12 cities in this cohort, there is no guarantee that slots will be available.

**Assuming national, state, and local guidance permit city staff and NLC staff to travel and host meetings next year.

***The National Briefing will feature seven cities that NLC is working with in a parallel, more intensive, technical assistance cohort also focusing on the basic needs of postsecondary students. This initiative is funded by The Kresge Foundation and began in September 2019. NLC will feature the progress and leadership role of these seven cities to tackle these issues. NLC will invite the mayors of the following cities to present at the National Briefing to a national philanthropic and policy audience: Chula Vista, CA; Denver, CO; Oakland, CA; Philadelphia, PA; Richmond, VA; Rochester, NY; and San Diego, CA. Community of Practice cohort cities will be invited to attend at their own expense to gain in the learnings from the Kresge cohort and network with cities that are farther along in their efforts.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THIS INITIATIVE

This is a competitive application process. Up to 12 cities will be selected to participate in this Community of Practice. Cities interested in applying must **submit their application to NLC by August 14, 2020**. NLC aims to select a diverse set of cities from different regions of the country. Preference will be given to cities that are NLC members.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION INCLUDE:

- A high-level mayoral policy advisor or senior advisor from the city who will serve as the main point of contact/city team lead.
- The mayor's demonstrated interest to address issues of postsecondary equity and access connected to local workforce and economic development, and in particular, the basic needs of postsecondary students.
- The commitment from the president or a senior administrator of a local community college or other postsecondary institution to partner with the city on this Community of Practice and to jointly work on a plan to address at least one aspect of postsecondary basic needs.
- Willingness and ability for the city team lead to participate in monthly full-cohort CoP virtual convenings, individual city NLC technical assistance calls every six weeks, as well as one in-person cross-city meeting if travel and in-person meetings are deemed safe again. *(NLC will cover travel expenses for the city team lead. Up to two additional team members are welcome to participate in the cross city convening at the city's or partners' expense.)*
- Willingness of the mayor to convene key and relevant city/county agencies, state agencies and community partners to pursue policies and practices that can create or strengthen the ecosystems of support for college students.
- **Letter of support from the mayor or city manager** depending on the city's governance model.
- **Letter of support from the local college or university president or senior administrator.**

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Commitment from the mayor to play a leadership role throughout the duration of the Community of Practice and designate and support the city team lead to bring in multi-sector partners who will help drive this agenda and develop a set of action steps and outcomes.
- Commitment by city leaders and community partners to develop strategies to address food or housing insecurity, childcare, mental health, transportation, and digital access as well as other barriers that impede college students' success. (Note: No prior work in this area is required.)

APPLICATION FORM

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: AUGUST 14, 2020

City Information

City Name, State:

City Population Size:

Demographics (%): Caucasian African American Hispanic Asian Other

Percentage of population that is considered low-income:

Form of Government (check one): Strong Mayor Council/City Manager

Current mayoral term end date:

If the mayoral term ends in 2020 or 2021, does she/he/they plan to run for re-election? Yes: No:

City Representative – Team Lead

Name:

City:

Title:

Office/Agency:

Street Address:

City, State, and Zip Code:

Phone:() Email:

Postsecondary Institution Partner

Name:

Organization/Agency:

Title:

Street Address:

City, State, and Zip Code:

Phone:() Email:

Other Team Members (not required for application):

Name:

Organization/Agency:

Title:

Phone:() Email:

Other Team Members (not required for application):

Name:

Organization/Agency:

Title:

Phone:() Email:

TEAM APPLICATION QUESTIONS

CITY TEAM APPLYING TO BE PART OF THE INITIATIVE

Please complete the form above and provide responses to the questions below. Only one application is required per city. Multiple applications from the same city will not be accepted. Please limit the length of the application to two to three pages in narrative form.

LOCAL CONTEXT

1. Provide a brief description of why your city is applying for this opportunity to address postsecondary students' basic needs in a Community of Practice format.
2. How has the COVID-19 crisis impacted postsecondary students in your city?
3. Summarize available evidence regarding the needs of college students who are unable to complete their postsecondary credentials because of barriers such as the lack of adequate housing, food insecurity, childcare, transportation, mental health, etc. Cities are not required to have comprehensive data at the time of application.
4. In addition to your supporting postsecondary institutional partner, what other partner have you engaged or are willing to engage in addressing the ecosystems of support for college students (chamber of commerce, relevant city and or county agencies, community-based organizations, etc.)?
5. What do you believe are the major obstacles to addressing basic needs for city residents attending postsecondary institutions in your city?

STATE CONTEXT

1. Are you aware of key policy elements related to the city-state relationship around housing, social services, transportation, childcare and mental health?
2. Please list major funding streams, initiatives or barriers at the state or county levels that are likely to help or hinder your city's efforts to address postsecondary students' basic needs.
3. What specific state funding support is your city receiving to address postsecondary students' basic needs related to COVID-19?

FEDERAL CONTEXT

1. Please list any federal funding streams that you currently have or that you hope to pursue that could help or hinder local efforts to address postsecondary basic needs.
2. If you are aware (not required), how have your postsecondary institutions utilized CARES Act funding to support their students?

DESIRED GOALS/RESULTS

1. What specific outcomes do you hope to achieve as a result of participating in this initiative? What is the city's short term (1 year) and a long-term goal (5 years)?
2. What do you hope to learn from the initiative and how would you apply the information gained through the Community of Practice?
3. If selected, in which basic needs category do you think your city would seek to develop goals?
4. Is there a specific policy, program, or practice regarding postsecondary basic needs that you have in mind and hope to gain support for during the CoP? Or are you looking for ideas of where to start to help students better meet their basic needs?

CITY TEAM COMPOSITION

Please identify a team lead from the mayor's office to serve as the primary contact and resource for NLC and other participating cities. Please also include the names and title of a senior administrator from a local postsecondary institution who will serve as a critical partner to tackle and implement strategies to address one basic needs goal.

Not required at the time of application, but cities may choose to identify one to two additional team members from key city agencies and community partners who will attend virtual convenings and may attend the Cross-Cities convening. These community partners will play an important role to work in partnership with the City Lead to advance the goal identified. A strong team could include representative from the mayor's office, local community colleges, city agencies, nonprofits addressing hunger and housing issues, chambers of commerce leaders, etc.

NLC will cover travel expenses for the city team lead for in-person meetings. Up to two additional team members are welcome to participate at the city's or partner's expense.

APPLICATION ADMISSIONS CHECKLIST

Application form

Responses to the required questions (no more than 2-3 pages single sided)

Two Letters of Support (Mayor/City Manager & Postsecondary Institution President or senior Administrator)

Email your application to Gislene Tasayco at tasayco@nlc.org by close of business on August 14, 2020. Only applications that are submitted online will be accepted.