



*Invitation  
to apply*

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

# Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative

## Technical Assistance and Grant Opportunity

The National League of Cities' (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education and Families is launching a new initiative to help cities expand economic mobility for residents as they rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI), NLC will provide technical assistance and grant funding to eight cities over a 15-month period.

### GOALS

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- (1) To help cities gain a deeper understanding of the economic realities facing their residents and the root causes of economic inequities.
- (2) To help cities develop and implement plans to increase economic mobility for residents that are grounded in racial equity and are targeted to those most impacted by the pandemic's economic consequences.

### AWARD

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Selected cities will receive technical assistance (TA), opportunities for peer learning and engaging with field experts, and grants between \$80,000 to \$100,000 for planning and implementation of local efforts.

### ELIGIBILITY

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- Applicants must be city government entities.
- Cities of all sizes are encouraged to apply, including those with a population under 100,000.
- NLC member cities will be prioritized for selection.

### DEADLINE TO SUBMIT APPLICATION

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**Wednesday, May 26 at noon ET**

Submit narrative, proposed budget and supporting documents to Courtney Coffin via email at [eofo@nlc.org](mailto:eofo@nlc.org).

### SUBMISSION TIMELINE

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**Virtual Information Session:** Thursday May 6, 2021 at 3pm ET

NLC will host an informational call for interested cities to learn more about the EEM Initiative and to ask questions of NLC staff. [Please pre-register for this call by completing this form.](#)

**Follow-up Interviews:** June 7 – 11, 2021

**Notice of Selection:** June 23, 2021

### NLC CONTACT

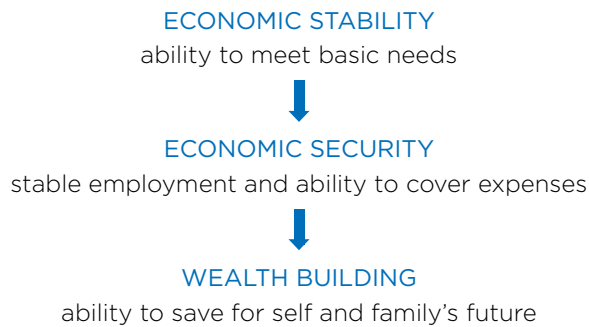
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**Courtney Coffin**

Senior Specialist, Economic Opportunity and Financial Empowerment, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families  
[eofo@nlc.org](mailto:eofo@nlc.org)

## KEY TERMS

**Economic Mobility:** The ability of a person or a family to improve their economic circumstances over a period of time. NLC defines economic mobility as a continuum with three steps: economic stability, economic security, and wealth building.



**Racial Equity:** “Closing the gaps” so that race does not predict one’s success, while also improving outcomes for all.

## BACKGROUND

For over twenty years, the National League of Cities’ Institute for Youth, Education & Families (YEF Institute) has transformed how municipal leaders envision their roles in improving outcomes for all children, youth, and families in their communities. The Institute helps cities understand the need for empowered local leaders who place the well-being of children, youth, and their families at the center of governance so residents can thrive. Through this lens, NLC’s *Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI)* intends to catalyze municipal action to expand economic mobility for residents while eliminating longstanding racial inequities. Made possible with generous support from the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, this 15-month opportunity will draw on learnings from a 2020 NLC assessment of cities’ needs and priorities related to the economic mobility of residents.

The EEM Initiative comes at a crucial time as both cities and families rebound and rebuild after the devastating and inequitable economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as new opportunities emerge from federal recovery packages such as the

American Rescue Plan Act (ARP). Far beyond past recessions, the pandemic has unraveled communities and destroyed financial stability for many families. An array of health and economic indicators point to the disproportionate [impact of the pandemic on people of color](#), exacerbating already existing inequities. [Analysis](#) by the Brookings Institute found that women, particularly women of color have lost more ground than men as struggles to care for and educate children during the pandemic have undone many gains made in the last several decades in employment equity. While the passage of the ARP provides cities with a unique opportunity to access funding to support new efforts, there is still [uncertainty](#) about how long the economic impacts of the pandemic will reverberate for families after record-high unemployment rates and businesses closures. NLC’s EEM Initiative will provide cities with an opportunity to leverage ARP funding in conjunction with NLC’s technical assistance and grants to help cities make innovative changes that have the potential to change the trajectory for many vulnerable families.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Participating city leaders and staff will have access to the information and resources they need to better understand and address the economic impacts of the pandemic and of racial inequities, past and present.
- City teams will gain deeper insights into the most promising city strategies and opportunities for promoting economic mobility for their residents.
- Cities will be positioned to implement policies and programs that expand economic mobility for underserved communities that are grounded in racial equity.
- By the end of the project, each of the selected cities will have completed action plans to expand economic mobility for residents and will implement those plans through changes to municipal policy, programs and/or budget allocations.
- Residents in participating cities will have access to opportunities that boost their economic mobility, regardless of their race, gender, or ethnicity.

## THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIES

**Financial support:** NLC will offer two grant opportunities to each selected city which will total between \$80,000 and \$100,000. The first grant of \$25,000 is designated for an initial planning phase and will be disbursed to each city upon acceptance of selection in June 2021. Planning grant funding can be used for:

- Core personnel costs
- Support for data collection and analysis from an external partner (to be determined in partnership with NLC)
- Stakeholder engagement with community organizations, residents and other partners
- Consultants for planning
- Incentives for resident engagement such as gift cards or food
- Costs associated with early implementation of action plan
- Other uses as approved by NLC

The second (implementation) grant process will take place in early 2022. Participating cities will be asked to apply for funding from a grant pool for strategies designed during the planning phase. More information about funding criteria and uses for the implementation grant will be provided later in the project.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### Phases of Technical Assistance

NLC's EEM Initiative will have four distinct technical assistance phases designed to best position cities to take strategic action.

#### Phase 1: Planning and Assessment

Cities will assess their priorities and select areas or strategies on which to focus for their action plans. Data partners and other key stakeholders will be engaged and a data baseline will be developed. NLC will help cities review available funding streams to support their EEMI efforts, including the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds. This phase will also include a communications roll out to increase local visibility about the city's participation in the project.

#### Phase 2: Refinements

Cities will refine their priorities and action plans based on the data collected and analyzed from the first phase.

The first all-city convening will give cities new ideas from their peers to incorporate into their strategies. NLC will launch a second round of grant funding to implement local plans.

#### Phase 3: Implementation

Ongoing support and guidance from NLC staff and field experts will help cities as they implement plans and strategies. A second all-city convening will provide opportunities for cities to learn from each other about implementation challenges and successes. NLC staff will conduct site visits to cities to provide on-the-ground support.

#### Phase 4: Sustainability

EEMI teams and their city leadership (mayor) will participate in a public program uplifting their success and lessons learned for NLC's membership. NLC will help cities identify opportunities for sustaining their EEMI efforts, including assessment of new and existing funding sources and key partnerships.

### Topics and City Strategies

NLC will support cities' economic mobility plans and strategies as they are developed locally with input from residents and local stakeholders. Technical assistance content will include topics that NLC and cities have identified to address both immediate and long-term economic instability challenges faced by residents with an emphasis on those most impacted by the pandemic, including Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC). Examples of categories of technical assistance topics include:

- **Jobs and Workforce Development:** access to high-wage jobs, training opportunities, worker benefits and local first source hiring agreements;
- **Financial Inclusion and Empowerment:** access to safe and affordable financial products and services, savings programs, debt reduction, equitable access to banking and supports for small businesses; and
- **Connecting Residents to Public Benefits:** federal, state, county and city supports including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), universal basic income, child care, public health insurance benefits, and housing supports.

### Technical Assistance Activities

NLC will provide each city with tailored technical assistance, including:

■ **Direct Support/Guidance**

- Monthly calls with each city team
- Site visits to cohort cities as needed (in-person, if possible)

■ **Peer Learning Opportunities**

- Monthly all-city calls to learn from other participating cities and field experts
- Virtual professional networking opportunities through NLC's Economic Mobility Peer Network
- Two all-city convenings

■ **Elevation of Local Efforts:** Throughout the initiative, city leaders will have the opportunity to share their mobility work through NLC's communications channels and contribute to the field.

■ **Data Strategy:** Each city will receive data support from NLC in combination with a local data partner (which will be approved by NLC) to inform the development and implementation of local efforts.

**EXPECTATIONS OF SELECTED CITIES**

City teams selected to participate in the EEMI are expected to fulfill the following expectations:

■ **Communication:** Remain in frequent communication and partnership with NLC, including updating NLC

staff as soon as possible of any staff changes within the core team or other programmatic changes that would impact the project.

■ **Value Racial Equity:** Demonstrate city's commitment to reducing racial inequities through data-driven decisions, proclamations and review of existing policies and programs for racial inequities.

■ **Action Orientation:** Enter into EEMI with the spirit and intent to implement change at the city level within the grant period.

■ **Maintain Support from Mayor and/or Other Elected Leaders:** Maintain engagement with local elected leaders and seek their support throughout the project.

■ **Partnerships:** Agree to pursue and connect with appropriate partners in the local community to fulfill grant deliverables.

■ **Data-driven Decision Making:** Contract with local partner(s) to help develop an initial baseline of resident economic mobility indicators and potential areas to focus city efforts in collaboration with NLC.

■ **Reporting:** Fulfill all reporting requests and assignments from NLC staff by stated deadlines.

**TIMELINE**

<a href="#">Virtual information session</a>	May 6, 2021 at 3 pm ET
Application submission deadline	May 26, 2021 at noon ET
Finalist interviews with NLC staff	June 7 - 11, 2021
Cities notified of selection	June 23, 2021
Public announcement of city selection	June 30, 2021 (subject to change)
Project Orientation Virtual Meeting (required)	July 21, 2021
Ongoing technical assistance	July 2021 - December 2022
First all-city monthly project call	September 15, 2021
Application process for second grant supporting implementation and sustainability	January - February 2022
Interim report due to NLC	March 31, 2022
Final All-City Call	November 2022
Final report due to NLC	December 30, 2022 (to be confirmed)

## SELECTION PROCESS

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Applications will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary team within NLC and cities will be selected based on their commitment to the goals of the EEM Initiative and demonstrated capacity to develop and implement a local economic mobility plan. Applications must also demonstrate the city team's ability to fully participate in all components of this 15-month technical assistance project (including two cross-site meetings). Additional selection criteria include:

- City's demonstrated commitment to racial equity and the economic mobility of its residents;
- Strength of the identified core city team (total of 3-4 individuals), including a team leader (with decision-making authority) to plan and execute project activities and goals;
- Engagement of the mayor or other elected city leader(s), including evidence that the elected leader prioritizes economic mobility of residents; and
- Strength of existing and intended partnerships, including for data collection and analysis.

## CONCLUSION

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Thank you for considering this opportunity to join NLC in working to expand economic mobility for families as cities rebuild and rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to reviewing your application and exploring how we may be able to work with your city to achieve its goals.

*For questions about this RFP or the EEM Initiative, please join the [virtual informational session](#) on May 6th or contact Courtney Coffin at [eofe@nlc.org](mailto:eofe@nlc.org).*

# National League of Cities' Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative

## CITY APPLICATION

To be considered for selection into NLC's EEM Initiative, city teams must submit responses to the following four parts of the application via email ([eofo@nlc.org](mailto:eofo@nlc.org)) **no later than noon ET on Wednesday, May 26, 2021:**

1. **City Team Summary**
2. **Project Narrative**
3. **Planning Grant Budget**
4. **Supporting documents**  
(Mayoral letter of support and letters from partner organizations)

### 1. City Team Summary

Please provide the names and contact information of three team members who will act as the city's "core" team for the project. Designate who will serve as the "team lead." The team lead must be a city employee who has a direct connection to the mayor. Other members of the team may be representatives from another city agency or department, community or nonprofit organization in partnership with the city, or another local stakeholder. (For example, a team could include a city staff member with authority over housing support policies and programs, a city agency responsible for neighborhood engagement, a partner organization that provides financial counseling or coaching, or data analysis; etc.). **Please provide the name, title, and city department/organization, of each team member.**

### 2. Narrative

*Responses to this section should not exceed more than 5-6 pages in length.*

**City Profile:** Submit a profile of the city with information on demographics, including race and ethnicity, age, income, major industries, impacts of COVID-19 on residents and any other information that will help the selection committee understand the city and the potential impact of participation in the EEMI.

**Economic Mobility Commitment:** Describe how your city leadership prioritizes expanding economic mobility for residents through programs, policies and investments. How does your city define economic mobility? How does the city measure the success of these efforts?

**Racial Equity:** Describe the city's commitment to racial equity as part of its overall goals. What is the city's definition of racial equity? What assessments has your city completed to identify racial economic inequities? Describe any initiatives the city has developed or implemented to address these inequities and how success of these initiatives is measured.

**Goals and Focus Areas:** What are your overall goals for this project? Identify one or more economic mobility strategies (or group of strategies) the city intends to focus on if selected to participate in the EEMI (for example, workforce development, financial inclusion and empowerment, or connecting residents to public benefits). Describe why this focus or set of strategies is seen as key to accomplishing the city economic mobility goals. Please share any populations you intend to target for the initiative and include any relevant data for this population.

**Proposed Planning Activities:** Please describe how you will approach the planning phase of this project. How will you assess need in your community? What strategies will you undertake to ensure you are engaging the right partners and stakeholders? Which city departments will you engage as part of the process?

**Use and Accessibility of Data:** Describe the capacity (including any legal concerns) of the core city team or an identified partner to collect and analyze data on the economic well-being of residents by race and geography. If this is not possible for the core team, how does the city intend to assess economic mobility needs across populations of residents? Please also share information about where these data will be stored, who will be able to access it and how often the data will be collected. What data will be collected and analyzed to evaluate the success of the proposed city initiative?

**Anticipated Challenges:** What challenges or barriers to success do you anticipate in meeting the economic

mobility goals you are proposing to achieve? How do you plan to overcome these challenges and how can NLC help you to overcome them?

**Impact:** What impact do you hope that your city's participation in the EEM Initiative will have on residents and on your city? How does the city define success for participation in EEMI?

### 3. BUDGET

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Please complete and submit the [EEMI Budget Template](#) demonstrating the anticipated use of funds for the \$25,000 planning grant to be disbursed if the city is selected for participation. (Note: cities will be asked to submit a budget later in the project to apply for a second implementation grant of up to \$75,000.)

**Budget Narrative:** Please include a brief budget narrative. If the city intends to set aside a portion of the planning grant for costs associated with early implementation, please specify amount in the template. If applicable, please list the position titles that will receive grant funding support. The word count for the budget commentary will not count against the overall narrative length restrictions.

### 4. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

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**Mayoral Support:** Submit a signed letter from the Mayor demonstrating his or her commitment to the economic mobility of residents and support of the city's participation in NLC's EEM Initiative. This letter should also include a quote by the Mayor in support of the city's economic mobility goals and/or support of the city's participation in the EEMI to potentially be used in NLC's communications materials about the project.

**Partner Organization Support:** Submit letters from up to two community organizations or other stakeholders outlining how they will support the city's EEMI effort. NLC recommends collaborating with proven partners - one that can support data collection and analysis and one that serves as a leader in providing services to, and advocating for the needs of residents. If a city wishes to include a private sector partner, please share how this partner would better serve the objectives of the project.

*For questions about this RFP or the EEMI Initiative, please join the [virtual informational session](#) on May 6th or contact Courtney Coffin at [eofe@nlc.org](mailto:eofe@nlc.org).*