

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Cities for Early Childhood Success:

Prenatal-to-Three Impact Lab

OVERVIEW

The National League of Cities (NLC) will select **up to 16 cities** to participate in a hybrid learning and action series designed to help city leaders and municipal teams integrate prenatal-to-three (PN-3) strategies into their city's priorities. Through expert-led content, peer learning cohorts, and tailored coaching, city teams will identify actionable commitments, build cross-sector partnerships, and drive meaningful local action. The series will focus on strategies to address key contributors to poor maternal and infant outcomes, including **climate & environmental factors, family economic insecurity, and housing instability**, with each city selecting one focus area to drive targeted impact.

This Impact Lab aims to catalyze cross-sector collaboration, encouraging cities to embed PN-3 priorities into planning, infrastructure, and policy efforts that advance broader community goals, health equity, and resilience.

If your city is ready to take action to improve outcomes for young children and families, this program is for you.

Informational Session [WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2025](#)

Proposal Due: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2025
by 11:59 PM ET

Selection Announcement: MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026

Project Dates: FEBRUARY – OCTOBER 2026

Submission Information: [Please submit completed applications online here via Submittable](#)

Questions? Contact Lara Burt, Senior Specialist, at BURT@NLC.org, 202-626-3148

BACKGROUND

The National League of Cities' Early Childhood Success (ECS) team collaborates with local leaders from over 80 cities, towns, and villages to build equitable systems that support young children and their families. The ECS Team's mission is to improve city leaders' capacity to reach across neighborhoods, align programs, and design policies that foster responsive, supportive communities of young children and their families. Guided by a vision where every city, town, and village have healthy babies and happy families, they strive for a future where all children are thriving by 3, ready at 5, and on their way by 8.

The first three years of life are the 'brick and mortar' of brain development, setting the foundation for all learning. During this time, the brain develops at a speed faster than at any other point later in life. Understanding the vital role Government leaders play a vital role in advancing outcomes for children and families during this period, NLC's ECS team works to build the capacity of municipal leaders and stakeholders to build awareness and infuse a prenatal-to-three agenda to improve outcomes for children, families, and those who care for them.

These efforts are made possible with generous support from the Pritzker Children's Initiative (PCI).

ABOUT THE IMPACT LAB

The Prenatal-to-Three Impact Lab offers a 9-month cohort experience designed to strengthen municipal leaders' capacity to drive meaningful policy and practice change for young children (0-8) and families.

Selected cities will receive support to:

- Integrate early childhood frameworks with climate and environmental initiatives that promote healthy air, green space, and sustainable neighborhoods.
- Embed early childhood and family-centered strategies in economic development efforts that enhance financial stability and workforce participation for parents and caregivers.
- Connect housing policies to the specific needs of expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers, ensuring access to stable, safe, and affordable homes.

Through this initiative, we aim to demonstrate how cities can lead the way in building systems that not only respond to the needs of their youngest residents, but also advance broader community goals, health equity, and resilience.

WHAT CITIES WILL GAIN

- ◆ **Strategic Insight:** A deeper understanding of the critical intersections between early childhood development and key municipal priorities
- ◆ **Practical Strategies:** Access to real-world examples and tangible strategies to integrate the prenatal-to-three population into municipal programs, policies, and practices.
- ◆ **Peer Collaboration:** Opportunities to engage with fellow city leaders in topic-based learning cohorts, sharing challenges, solutions, and progress.

- ◆ **Expert Guidance:** Direct support from NLC staff and national partners through coaching, cohort calls, and one-on-one consultations to refine and advance local action plans.

TEAM COMPOSITION/ TIME COMMITMENT

To successfully integrate the prenatal-to-three population into municipal programs, policies, and practices while driving meaningful local action, cross-sector collaboration is essential.

The Impact Lab requires cities to assemble a core team of individuals who will be engaged in the process throughout the 9-month cohort. Team members commit to attendance at all Impact Lab events and independent city work between sessions, totaling approximately six hours a month.

In developing the core team composition, cities are required to include:

- ◆ A team leader who will serve as the main point of contact with NLC, as well as convene the city team and coordinate work on deliverables.
- ◆ City staff who lead current community engagement work
- ◆ Individual(s) with decision-making ability who can drive policy and systems change.

In addition, teams are encouraged to include:

- ◆ Community members or community organizations deeply connected to the communities they serve (e.g., frontline service providers, community organizers, neighborhood groups)
- ◆ Funding and other strategic partners (E.g., United Way, community foundations)

Selection Criteria

We seek proposals from cities that recognize the foundational importance of early childhood development, particularly the first three years of life, as a lever for long-term community health, equity, and resilience.

The city teams selected to participate in this cohort will be evaluated based on their responses to the questions outlined in this RFP.

In their submitted applications, successful applicants will demonstrate:

1. Support of the mayor and/or city manager for participation in the Impact Lab.
2. Readiness and commitment to assemble an effective core team as detailed in 'Team Composition.'
3. Commitment to participation in the full Impact Lab programming including the in-person convening, 1-1 technical assistance sessions, learning cohort calls and independent preparation.
4. Dedication to improving outcomes for young children and families in their community.
5. A commitment to sustain meaningful engagement with the community beyond the period of the Impact Lab.

PROJECT TIMELINE

The technical assistance period will occur February 2026 – October 2026

Activity	Estimated Dates
Informational Session	August 20, 2025
Proposals Due	October 31, 2025
Cohort Announced	January 12, 2026
Team Lead Intro Calls	February 2026
Cohort Kick-off (In-Person)	March 2026
Individual City Calls	April 2026
Peer Virtual Learning Session	May 2026
Independent City Implementation	Jun-Sept 2026
Virtual Office Hours	July, August 2026
Close Out Convening (Virtual)	October 2026

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

To be considered for this initiative, the applicant must submit a fully completed online application.

REQUIRED PROPOSAL MATERIALS

- Cover Sheet
- Proposal
- Additional Documents

APPLICATION PROCESS

Up to sixteen cities will be selected for this project. Only one application per municipality will be considered and must be submitted with the full support of the mayor and/or city manager. Interested applicants are encouraged, but not required, to submit a letter of interest from their Mayor or City Manager with the application.

All proposals must be [submitted online](#) by 11:59 PM EST on Friday, October 31, 2025.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Lara Burt, Senior Program Specialist at burt@nlc.org. The narrative should respond to the following questions and prompts:

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CITY NAME, COUNTY, AND STATE

MAYOR:

TERM DATES:

TEAM LEAD/PRIMARY CONTACT (Name, Title, Office/Agency, Address, Phone, Email)

- ◆ Briefly describe the team leader's current role and ability to lead the city's work in connection with this initiative. (100-250 words)

SECONDARY CONTACT (Name, Title, Office/Agency, Phone, Email)

Other Team Members (Optional)

- ◆ Name additional core team members. Please note - while team leads must be a city staff member, teams may include non-city staff partners, such as local non-profit agencies, school districts, and local businesses, as well as representatives from key municipal departments, including Housing, Economic Development, and Sustainability.
- ◆ For each core team member, provide (Name, Title, Office/Agency, Email)

DEMOGRAPHICS

- ◆ Population:
- ◆ Percentage of population: Children under age 8:
- ◆ Racial Demographics:
____% White ____% African American ____% Asian ____% ____% Another ____% Hispanic
ethnicity
- ◆ Median Household Income:
- ◆ Percentage of Persons Living in Poverty:

(City and town specific data can be found on the [U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217) at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217>.)

Describe/list any kind of local data or measurements related to children and families that your city has access to.

Proposal

- ◆ **Topic Selection and Focus** – During the Impact Lab your team will be applying learnings to integrate early childhood policies and practices, with an emphasis on the prenatal-to-three developmental period, to one of three key city-wide priority issue areas. Please select the topic you are most interested in addressing. You will have the opportunity to refine or change your focus at the in-person convening should choose:
- ◆ **Climate & Environment** - Integrate early childhood frameworks with climate and environmental initiatives that promote healthy air, green space, and sustainable neighborhoods.
- ◆ **Family Economic Security** - Embed early childhood and family-centered strategies in economic development efforts that enhance financial stability and workforce participation for parents and caregivers.
- ◆ **Housing Stability** - Connect housing policies to the specific needs of expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers, ensuring access to stable, safe, and affordable homes.
- ◆ **Organization Narrative** – Please respond to the following questions to help NLC understand your current environment and readiness to act to better improve maternal and childhood well-being in your community. Be sure to frame your responses carefully and candidly.
- ◆ Briefly explain why your city is a strong candidate for the Impact Lab? (250-500 words)
- ◆ What existing policies or initiatives in your city support early childhood priorities? How might this Impact Lab strengthen or complement them? (250-500 words)
- ◆ What barriers do you anticipate in integrating early childhood strategies into your city's broader municipal agenda? (250-500 words)
- ◆ What does your city hope to get out of the Impact Lab? (250-500 words)

A. Commitment –

- ◆ Does your application have the support of your city's top executive (mayor or city manager)? Although direct involvement in the technical assistance activities is not expected of your city's top executive, their support and informed understanding of the city team's work are vital for the project's success. **Yes, ___**
No ___
- ◆ Does your city commit to participating in all activities of the Impact Lab? City teams agree to participate in all individual and cohort calls and the in-person convening in March 2026 (expenses paid for two team members). Teams will also complete all assignments and independent preparation work between formal sessions of the Impact Lab. **Yes, ___ No ___**

Additional Documents

Please submit the following documents with your application.

- **Letter of support from your city's Mayor or City Manager**

- **(Optional)** Include if available, documents, reports, press releases, testimonials, etc. that clearly provided evidence related to your responses above.

****Please do not create new documents****