

# RFA: NLC's Legacy Forward Technical Assistance Cohort Program

## Moving Second-Stage Businesses Forward

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Legacy Forward, a new technical assistance initiative from National League of Cities in partnership with the Nasdaq Foundation, is designed to help small and mid-size cities invest in the long-term success of established businesses.

Through a selective national cohort, city leaders will learn how to identify, strengthen, and sustain legacy and second-stage enterprises, especially those led by under-resourced entrepreneurs navigating workforce, supply chain or ownership transitions.

The program centers on practical training, peer learning, and tailored support to advance businesses that are ready for their next chapter. Legacy Forward will culminate with an in-person meeting during early 2027 to highlight and review lessons from the program. As well, NLC will develop a toolkit, empowering cities nationwide to support legacy businesses.

**Proposal Due:** 11:59 PM (ET) Sunday, April 19, 2026.

**Selection Announcement:** Applicants will be notified by Friday, May 8, 2026, of selection status.

NLC will make a public announcement the week of May 11, 2026.

**Project Dates:** June 1, 2026 to February 28, 2027.

**Submission Information:** [Submit completed applications online.](#)

**Questions?** Contact Entrepreneurship & Economic Development Program Manager Safaya Fawzi at [fawzi@nlc.org](mailto:fawzi@nlc.org).

## The Legacy Forward Cohort

While most municipal and philanthropic programs focus on launching new ventures (through incubators, accelerators and startup funds), existing businesses generate up to 80 percent of net new local jobs. Yet many established firms now face mounting challenges in scaling operations, innovating and maintaining stability amid uncertain economic backdrops.

Legacy Forward shifts the focus from creation to continuity. National League of Cities Institute (NLCI) will guide 8 to 10 cities through a structured, 12-month cohort, to build durable capacity for sustaining, growing and transitioning established businesses. NLC also produce a comprehensive Legacy Forward Toolkit, which will include policy frameworks, registry templates and case studies to help cities nationwide replicate these strategies.

By equipping cities to help under-resourced entrepreneurs grow, adapt, or transition their businesses, Legacy Forward advances Nasdaq Foundation's mission to broaden wealth creation, strengthen inclusive local economies and ensure communities share in the prosperity that thriving businesses generate.

## Preparing Your Application

NLCI welcomes proposals from all local governments (i.e., cities, towns, villages, etc.) willing to commit to taking action to support their local legacy/second-stage business community. Cities will be selected based on their responses to the application questions below, and their ability to demonstrate willingness and capacity to participate and innovate in legacy business support mechanisms throughout the nine-month cohort period.

Before you begin writing, gather leaders from city departments or functional areas you expect to involve, and ensure you have buy-in from your city's top executive, as well as have communicated participation in this program to a partner organization(s) that is connected to legacy businesses in your community.

## Project Timeline

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The technical assistance period will occur from June 2026 through February 2027.

ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED DATES
<b>INFORMATIONAL SESSION</b>	Thursday, March 26, 2026 ( <a href="#">View Here</a> )
<b>PROPOSALS DUE</b>	<b>11:59 PM (ET) Sunday, April 19, 2026</b>
<b>COHORT SELECTION ANNOUNCED</b>	Week of May 11, 2026
<b>COHORT PROGRAMMING</b>	June 1, 2026 through February 28, 2027
<b>COHORT CLOSING CONVENING</b>	February 2027
<b>CADENCE OF MEETINGS</b>	Attendance monthly at one expert-led workshop and one cohort check-in (1.5 hours total monthly).  Optional additional check-ins/cohort 1:1 connection calls throughout the program

## Selection Criteria

Cities are eligible to apply for the program based on providing the following details, with special consideration given to cities able to share about the following details:

1. Ideal candidates will be small and mid-size municipalities (pop. 50K to 500K).
  - a. Smaller cities with infrastructure in place to expand legacy business support efforts or with work underway in this space will be considered.
  - b. Larger cities with fledging efforts and strong local partnerships focused on legacy businesses will be considered.
2. City has two to three active staff, and one to two partner contacts to engage in monthly expert-led workshops and develop city action plan for legacy/second-stage business engagement.

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- a. An active economic development or related municipal office that will spearhead participation in the program is required. Other partners from ESOs are welcome to join, but the primary leader/contact should be a city leader.
3. City has collected – or is in the process of collecting – information about the needs of local business owners.
  - a. Additional consideration will be given to cities with a legacy business program in its nascent stages, or with particular plans/existing collaboration with legacy businesses.
4. City has some work underway with entrepreneurs generally and ideally has begun to inventory and/or initiate focus on legacy business needs.
5. Cities in areas where small businesses make up an outsize portion of overall state GDP will also receive additional consideration.
6. Your city’s top executive must provide a letter of support for program participation.

## Proposal Instructions

To be considered for this initiative, the applicant must submit a fully completed [online application](#).

### *REQUIRED PROPOSAL MATERIALS*

- A. Cover Sheet
- B. Proposal
- C. Supplemental Materials
  - a. Required: Letter from Mayoral/Top City Executive supporting program participation of your city.
  - b. Highly recommended: At least one letter of support from a collaborating organization, describing their commitment to participating in this cohort with your city designees.
  - c. Optional: Link to website or news article highlighting your city's work with small businesses, especially legacy businesses.

# Application Process

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There will be an information session recorded and available – the session will provide an overview of the program goals and answer questions about the application process, eligibility, and participation. NLC hosted an online information session about Legacy Forward that you can [view here](#).

**All proposals must be submitted online by 11:59 PM (ET) Sunday, April 19, 2026.**

If you have questions or would like more information, contact Entrepreneurship & Economic Development Program Manager Safaya Fawzi at [fawzi@nlc.org](mailto:fawzi@nlc.org).

## Proposal

### A. Cover Sheet

CITY:

MAYOR:

TERM DATES:

CITY STAFF LEAD FOR CITY TA COHORT  
(Name/Title):

TEAM LEAD PHONE:

TEAM LEAD EMAIL:

TEAM LEAD ADDRESS:

OTHER CONTACT  
(e.g., Assistant To Staff Lead; Name/Title):

CONTACT PHONE:

CONTACT EMAIL:

CONTACT ADDRESS

## B. Participation Requirements

- **Identify a core, city-led team** to participate in all project activities, with **at least one ESO or partner** to advance city-led second-stage entrepreneurship support locally.
- Participate at the outset of the project in an **orientation call** to identify assets, opportunities, and challenge areas, as well as establish key indicators of project success.
- Commit to the **development of a city action plan** that identifies strategies and expected outcomes to address targeted legacy business and employee transition/ownership support, with the goal of building a registry and/or support mechanism to connect with **at least 10 to 15** legacy businesses in the community.
- City team participation in **regular cohort calls** with NLC staff, as well as periodic expert-led workshops with partners.
- One or two lead city members attend a final **in-person convening** (February 2027) to share lessons learned and receive input on challenges from peers, NLC, and other national experts, with costs covered by NLC.

*Instructions:* Complete your proposal by answering the following questions:

1. Share a short overview of your city's focus on entrepreneurship support generally, including the impact of your city's size on these efforts.
2. Has your city initiated conversations and/or activity specifically focused on legacy and second-stage businesses? If so, what? If not, why not/what has prevented your city from a focus on these businesses in the past?
3. Why does your city wish to focus on legacy and second-stage businesses at this time?
4. What would you hope to learn from the other cities in this cohort, and from external organizations focused on supporting legacy businesses?
5. What would you hope to share about your own city's work if you were to be selected for this cohort?
6. Has your city supported businesses with transition of ownership to employees, or other/additional strategies to prioritize legacy business needs? If available, share an example.
7. How does your city gather information about local businesses right now? Would you be willing to enhance, update, or change the way you do this as part of your program participation in this cohort?
8. List the staff and their titles/department(s), and partner organization(s) in the community that will participate if you are selected for this cohort.

**C. Additional Materials**

- a) Required: Letter from Mayoral/Top City Executive supporting program participation of your city.
- b) Highly recommended: At least one letter of support from a collaborating organization, describing their commitment to participating in this cohort with your city designees.
- c) Optional: Link to website or news article highlighting your city's work with small businesses, especially legacy businesses.

**[ACCESS ONLINE APPLICATION](#)**