



A CENTURY OF STRENGTHENING CITIES

Frameworks for Action: Policy Tools & Real-World Examples

May 28, 2026



NLC Health & Wellbeing Team



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OUR MISSION

To relentlessly advocate for, and protect the interests of, cities, towns, and villages by influencing federal policy, strengthening local leadership, and driving innovative solutions.

NLC

Meeting the Moment

- Cities are being asked to solve increasingly complex challenges
- Policy decisions often cut across departments and systems
- Local leaders need practical tools – not just ideas





A CENTURY OF STRENGTHENING CITIES

The Policy & Systems Change Compass



Why Policy *and* Systems Change?

- Policy is powerful; but does not always lead to intended results
- Outcomes are shaped by **systems, practices, and how work happens across departments**
- Cities need a way to connect **policy decisions to real, lasting impact**



Challenges Cities Are Navigating



- Cities are focused on urgent needs – leaving little time for **root causes**
- Work happens across departments, but they are often not **aligned**
- Policies don't always translate into **real-world results**
- Capacity is stretched in all directions – **it's hard to step back and plan**

What We've Learned Working Alongside Cities

- **Trusted, nonpartisan partner** to local leaders nationwide
- **Deep relationships** with mayors, councilmembers and city staff across communities of all sizes
- **Experience helping cities** translate ideas into practical action
- Tools and approaches shaped through **real-world application**



Developed Through Research Over Time

2022

The Compass is developed by NLC & The Urban Institute

2023

Inaugural cohort with 3 NLC member cities; Compass is refined based on learnings

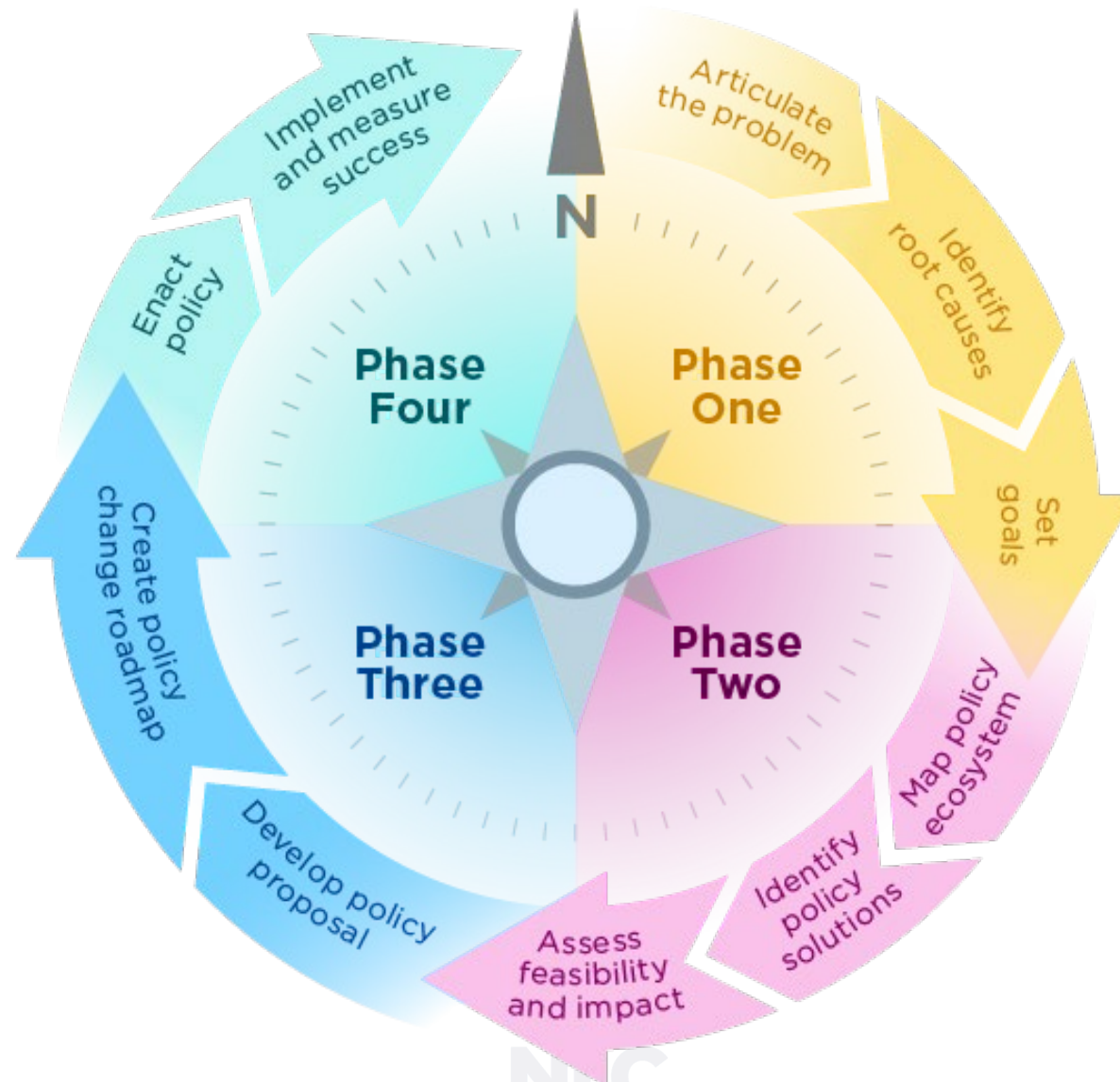
2024

Policy & Systems Change Compass Academy launches with 4 NLC member cities

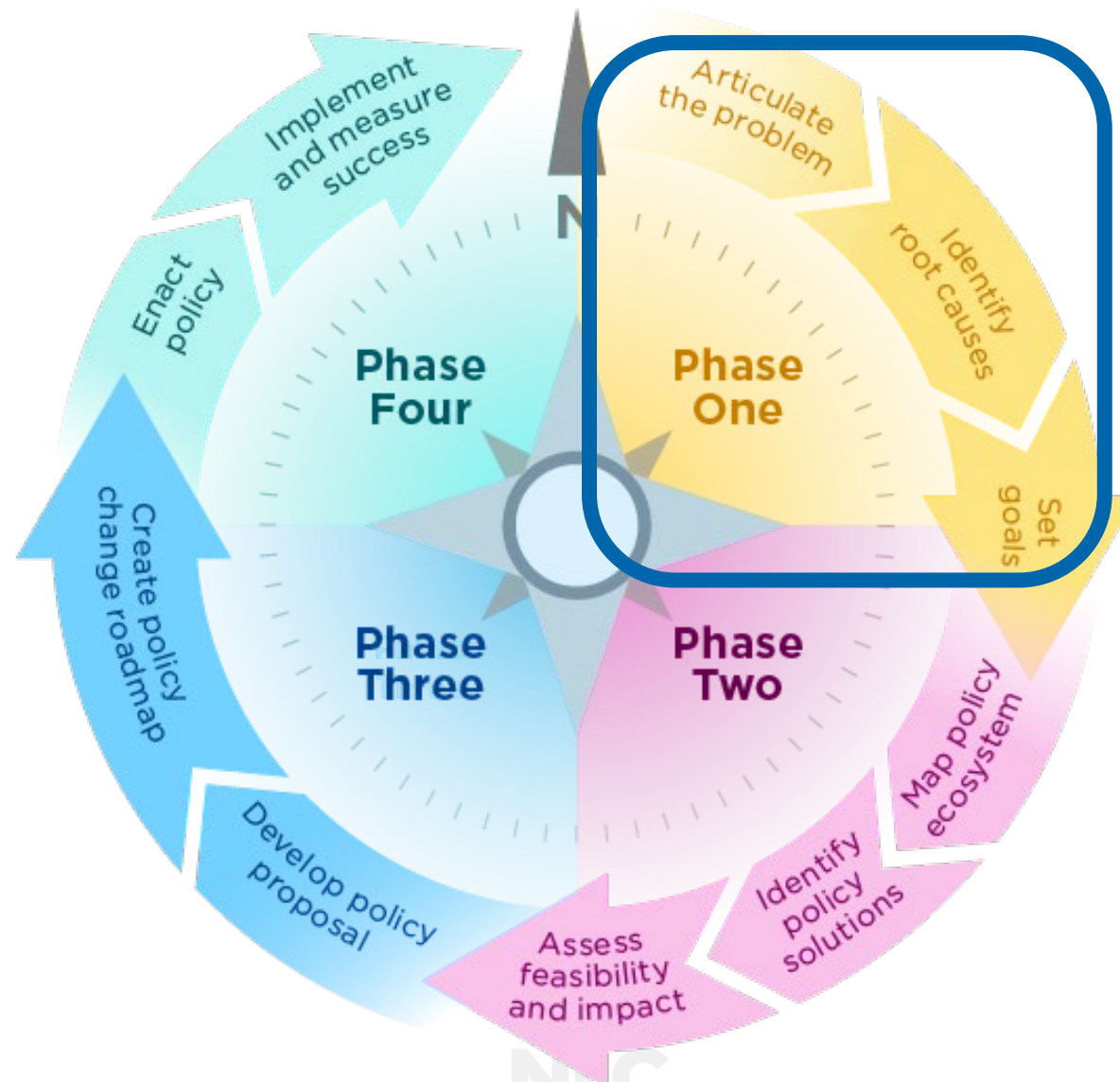
2025

Further revision and refinement of the Compass training program; short-term workshops hosted with over 40 local leaders; NLC's Consultative model launched

THE POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE COMPASS

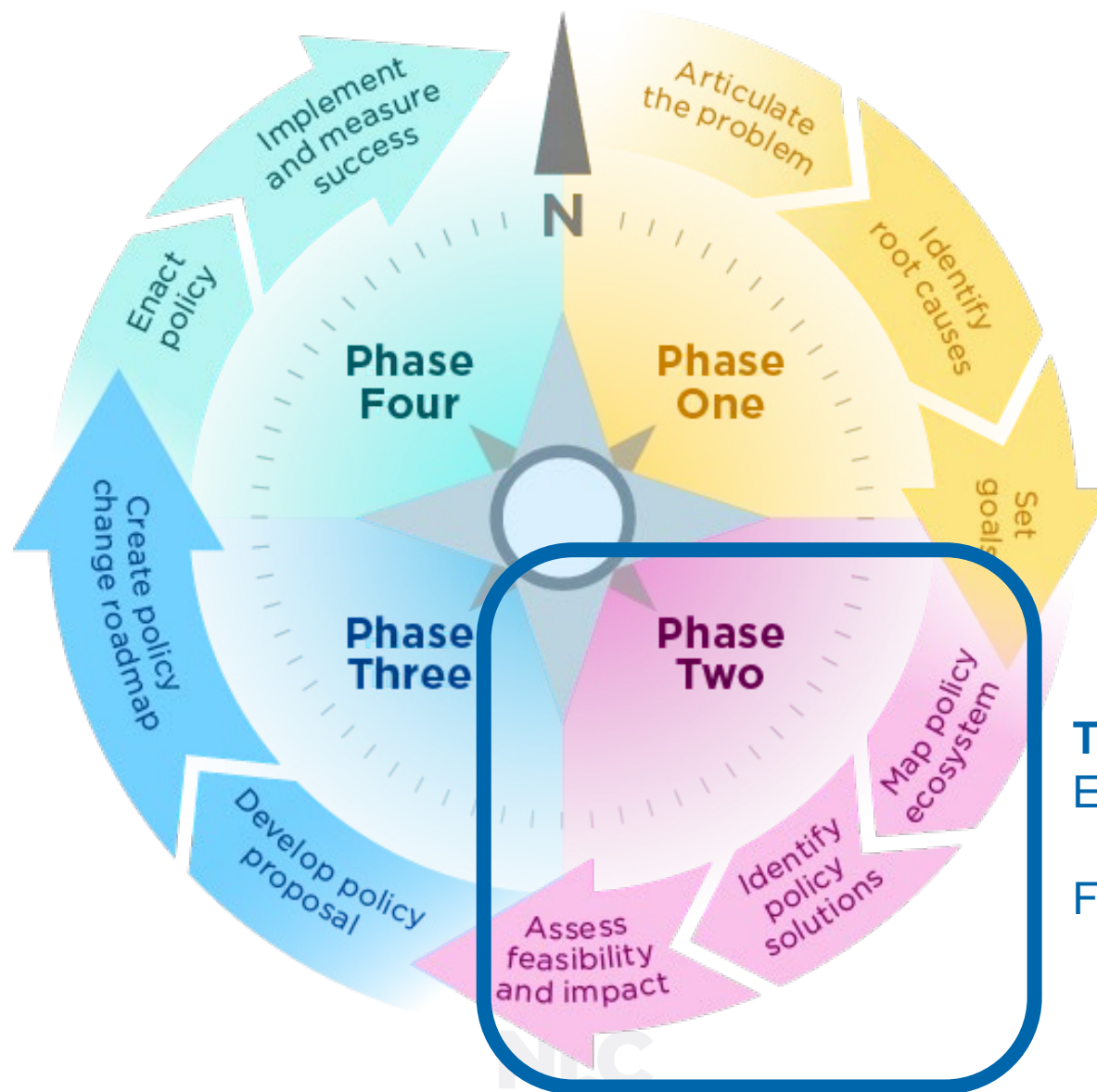


THE POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE COMPASS



Tool:
Root Cause Analysis

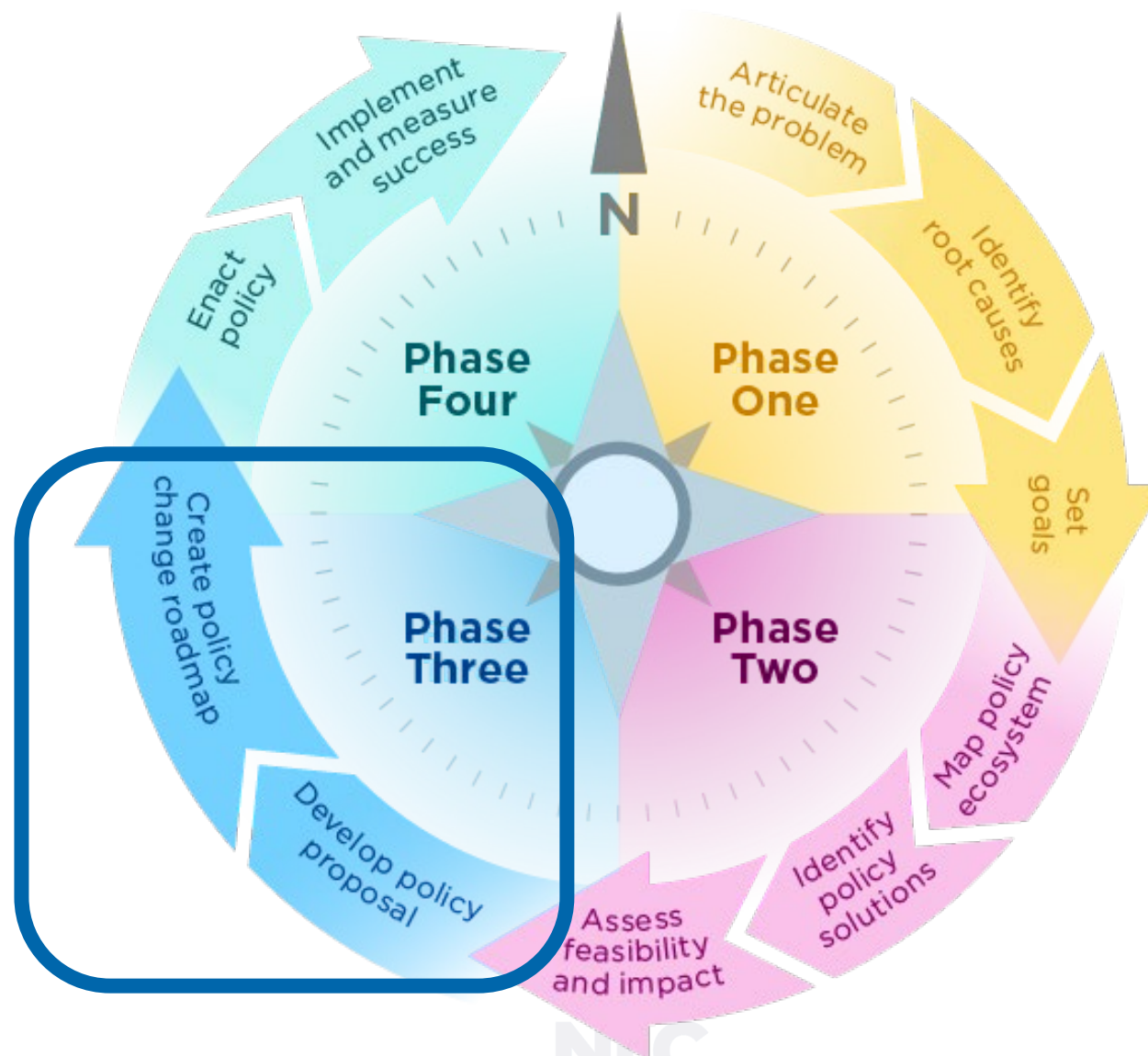
THE POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE COMPASS



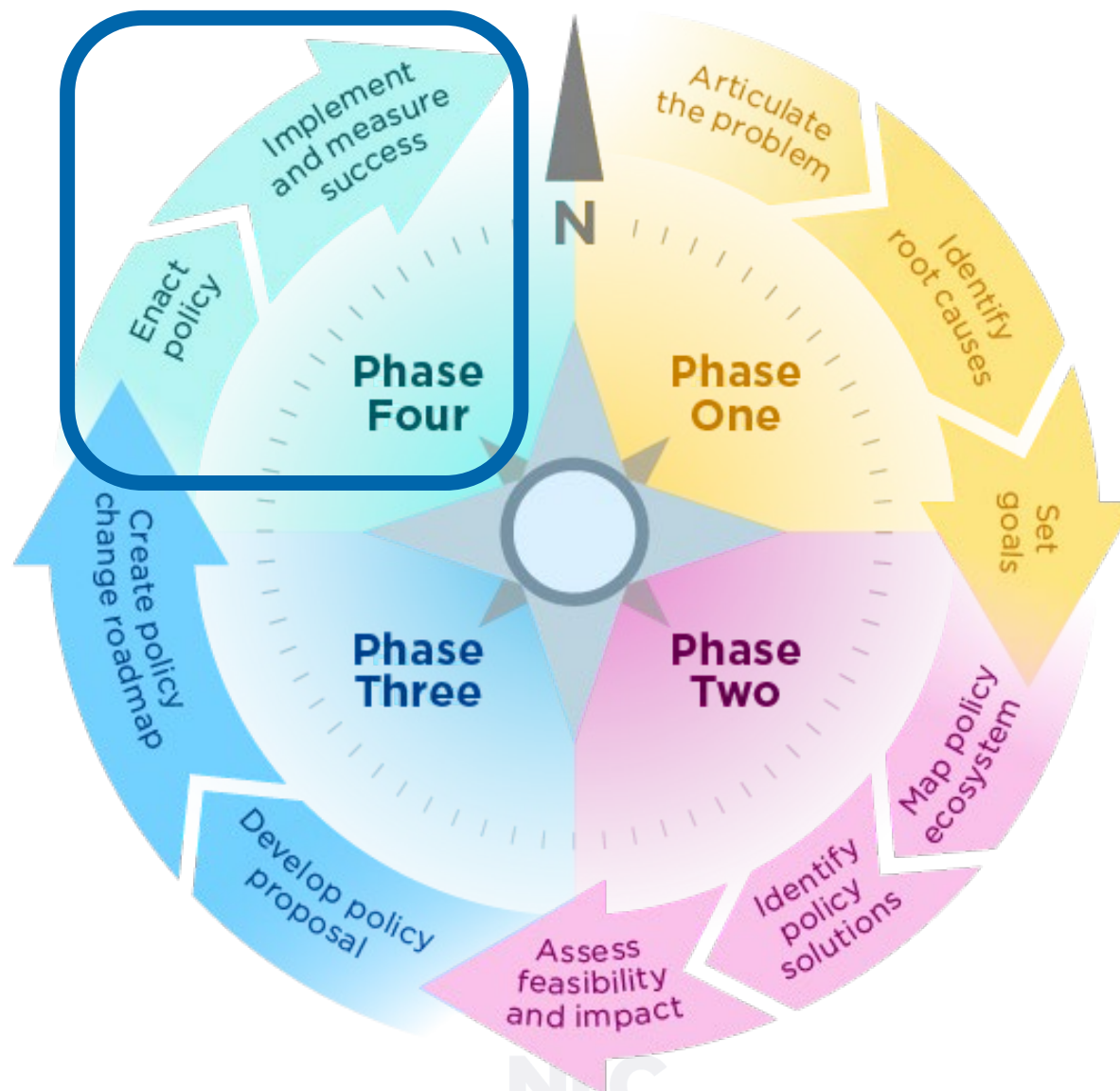
Tools:
Ecosystem Map

Feasibility & Impact Assessment

THE POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE COMPASS



THE POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE COMPASS



What can cities gain through the Compass?

- A **clear understanding** of the challenges facing your community
- Solutions that **address root causes**, not just surface issues
- **Policies and systems** that move the needle inside City Hall and in the community
- A city team equipped to **lead this work again and again**
- **Lasting, visible impact** for your residents

Built & Tested With Cities

- ◆ 2 deep-dive cohorts with a total of 7 cities
- ◆ Workshop sessions with 40+ elected leaders
- ◆ Applied to challenges in **workforce development, data governance, & climate resilience**



CITY OF
Tacoma



DEARBORN



CITY OF
GRAND
RAPIDS



Fireside Chat



Bucoda Warren
Chief Policy Analyst
City of Tacoma, WA



Lourdes Aceves, MPP
Director



A CENTURY OF STRENGTHENING CITIES

The Local Policy Hub





Local Policy Hub: Advancing Health through Improving Housing Policy



POLICY HUB HOME

HOME



JULY 30, 2025



Economic Opportunity & Workforce Development
Toolkit

Education and Early Childhood Success

Expanded Learning

Health & Wellbeing

Leadership

Everyone deserves a safe, stable, affordable, healthy place to call home.

[Healthy](#) housing is a key element in ensuring that people have a decent place to live and encompasses [a wide range of hazards and other conditions found in homes that can negatively impact resident health and safety](#), such as lead-based paint, mold, moisture, pests, and more.

Cities have [several tools](#) by which they can affect the structures and systems that address health concerns. The Healthy Housing module of the Local Policy Hub explores how communities can improve the health and wellbeing of residents by taking strong, sensible policy action.



Goals

- **Provide vetted, quality ordinances**
 - Streamlined format (fewest clicks possible)
 - Not writing policy templates
- **Uplift 2-3 examples per policy category**
 - Not a comprehensive repository
- **Amplify related tools and resources**
 - Not reinventing the wheel

Core Values

- **Fair/Equitable**
- **Evidence based**
- **Impactful**
- **Limiting unintended consequences**

Key Components

- **Definitions and Exemptions**
- **Severability Clause**
- **Clearly stated purpose**
- **Establishing the need for the policy**

The Local Policy Hub in Action

The screenshot displays the NLC National League of Cities website. The header includes the NLC logo and navigation links: About, America250, Membership, RISC, Mutual Insurance, and Logout. A search icon is located in the top right. Below the header, a horizontal menu lists: ADVOCACY CENTER, NEWS & INSIGHTS, RESOURCES & TRAINING, CONFERENCES & MEETINGS, and INITIATIVES. The main content area is titled 'Implementation Tools & Resources' and features a list of links: [Investing in the Vitality of Detroit's Neighborhoods Through Improved Rental Regulation \(PDF\)](#), [Center for Community Progress](#), [Detroit Ordinance Summary \(PDF\)](#), [Detroit Rental Compliance Map](#), [NLC Rental Registries blog](#), and [Local Housing Solutions Rental Registries brief](#). A green button labeled 'PRINT THIS PAGE' with a printer icon is positioned below the list. At the bottom of the main content area, two green buttons are visible: 'PREVIOUS: START HERE' and 'NEXT: RENTAL INSPECTION'. The footer is a purple banner with the text 'Need More Help?' and 'Feel free to contact us!', followed by an 'EMAIL US' button and an upward arrow icon.

NLC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
A CENTURY OF STRENGTHENING CITIES

About America250 Membership RISC Mutual Insurance Logout

ADVOCACY CENTER NEWS & INSIGHTS RESOURCES & TRAINING CONFERENCES & MEETINGS INITIATIVES

OVERVIEW

DUAL STRATEGIES AND SMART SCALING

TYING ENFORCEMENT TO REGISTRATION

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS & RESOURCES

PRINT THIS PAGE

Implementation Tools & Resources

- [Investing in the Vitality of Detroit's Neighborhoods Through Improved Rental Regulation \(PDF\)](#), Center for Community Progress
- [Detroit Ordinance Summary \(PDF\)](#)
- [Detroit Rental Compliance Map](#)
- [NLC Rental Registries blog](#)
- [Local Housing Solutions Rental Registries brief](#)

PREVIOUS: START HERE NEXT: RENTAL INSPECTION

Need More Help?
Feel free to contact us!

EMAIL US

The Solution 1.0

Policy & Systems Change Compass: This 10-step approach helps cities design and advance policy and systems changes through a cohesive and repeatable process that is rooted in equity and wellbeing for all.



Policy Hub: Repository where cities can access relevant policy resources, importantly sample ordinance language.

Complementary Tools

- **Multi-issue resources** tailored for city leaders
- **Learn from peers** to build mindset and muscle
- **Leverage the Compass and the Policy Hub** for a comprehensive approach to policy development.
- Moving from **analysis** -> **policy selection** -> **adoption** -> **implementation**

Two Pathways for Getting Started with the Compass

Option A: Compass Foundations *Training*

- Build shared understanding across staff and leadership
- Introduce systems thinking + Compass framework
- Equip teams with tools to begin applying internally

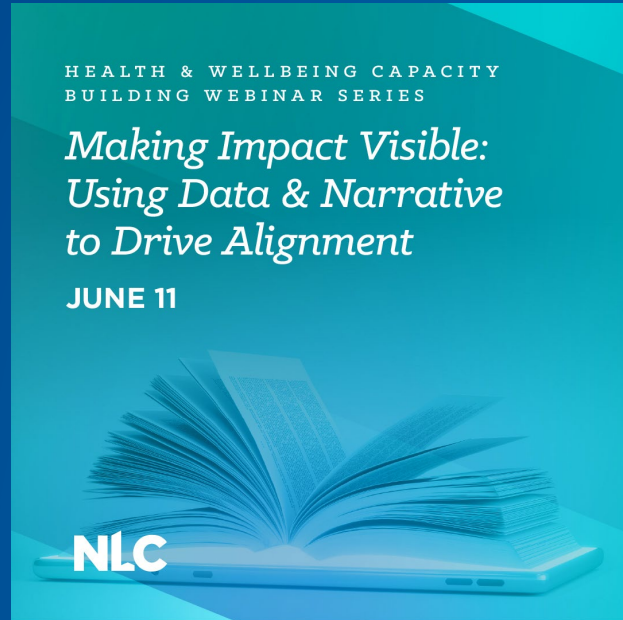
➤ *Best for: Cities seeking alignment + readiness*

Option B: Compass in Action *Deep Dive*

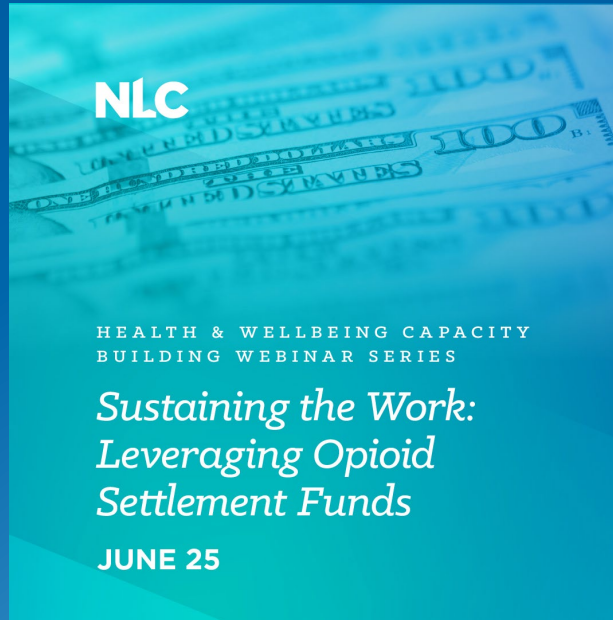
- Apply the Compass to a real policy challenge
- Receive facilitation, coaching, and technical assistance
- Develop policy proposals, roadmaps, and measurement plans

➤ *Best for: Cities ready to move from learning → doing*

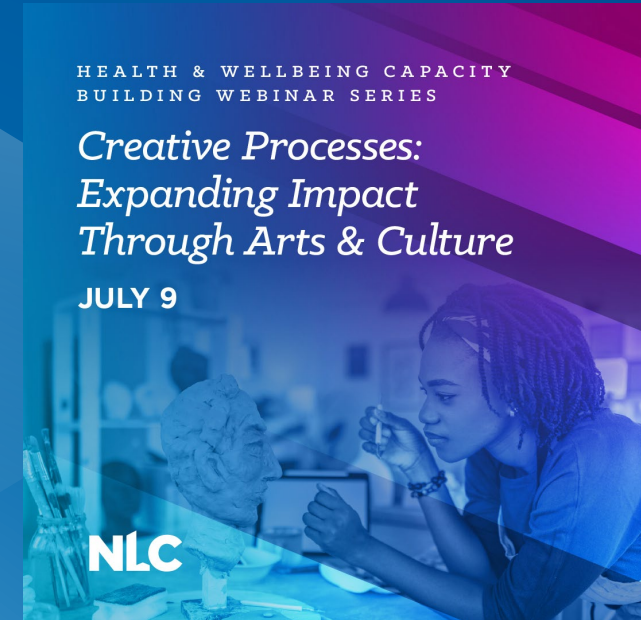
Upcoming Capacity Building Sessions



June 11th



June 25th



July 9th

Thank you!

