

FEDERAL ADVOCACY

2024 Action Agenda



MAKE GOVERNMENT WORK FOR ALL COMMUNITIES

About 76% of the approximately 19,500 incorporated places had fewer than 50,000 people, and about 63% of America's 328.2 million residents live inside these small communities. Small cities, towns, and mid-size communities are invested stakeholders in national challenges and continue to increase their capacity to create local opportunities with federal programs from the bipartisan infrastructure law and the COVID State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund grant program. Regardless of population size, all cities must continue to be eligible for federal grant assistance at scale so that the benefits of federal programs and policies reach all of America's communities.

Federal Actions:

- ◆ Support legislation that ensures communities of all population sizes can access and take advantage of grants authorized by federal legislation.
- ◆ Support bipartisan efforts to push for legislation that would ease the federal compliance burden related to federal grants management and compliance for cities, towns and villages.
- ◆ Support legislation that would build the capacity of small, mid-sized, and rural and disadvantaged communities such as through federal grant opportunities for planning, pre-development and technical assistance.



SUPPORT A LOCAL WORKFORCE PIPELINE

With the once-in-a-generation federal investments in infrastructure, clean energy and advanced manufacturing through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, Congress should support an at-scale investment in workforce development, training and apprenticeship programs to ensure America's communities have the skilled labor to complete these priority projects.

Federal Actions:

- ◆ Support funding for the RECOMPETE Pilot Program, which will provide funding to persistently distressed communities to develop and implement 10-year economic development strategies and create jobs.
- ◆ Support and invest in sector partnerships to connect local workers to careers in local industries that have significant hiring needs and expected growth, including municipal workforces and expand access to work visas.
- ◆ Support investments in direct workforce funding, including the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and National Apprenticeship Act.



BUILD SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

As local leaders continue to serve on the front lines addressing our nation's public health and safety, having a strong federal partner in this work is essential. From mental health and substance use services to community violence, the health and safety of our cities, towns and villages requires direct and flexible funding to ensure effective strategies are implemented.

Local leaders are also committed to making their communities more resilient in the face of extreme weather events and natural disasters by addressing climate change and supporting clean energy and strengthening infrastructure. NLC will continue to advocate for policies and programs that support local climate action and address mental health to build strong and healthy communities.

Federal Actions:

- ◆ Support programs that provide direct, flexible funding to cities for substance use, mental health and community violence strategies, including attracting and retaining a diverse public safety workforce.
- ◆ Support the long-term reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- ◆ Support local climate action and the reauthorization of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.



PREVENT FEDERAL OVERREACH OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Federal preemption of core local authorities and unfunded mandates threaten the ability of local leaders to balance budgets, maintain key services, manage growth, and ensure the safety and usability of public spaces. In recent years, limitations on the ability of local governments to negotiate fair communications franchises, govern the placement of telecommunications equipment on city streets and poles, and to own and operate broadband infrastructure and services have encroached on local efforts to close the digital divide. NLC will continue to protect local authority and avoid undue costs and burden on municipalities.

Federal Actions:

- ◆ Engage in the rulemaking process with federal agencies to ensure that a law that has imposed an unfunded mandate on cities, towns and villages has the best possible outcome for municipalities.
- ◆ Maintain stability of government operations by protecting existing levels of federal funding programs and opposing any legislative claw backs to minimize disruptions in local governance and advocate for federal funding for local programs.
- ◆ Protect local governments from unreasonable liability by advocating for liability protection for municipal drinking water, wastewater and stormwater utilities, landfills and solid waste facilities, airports and fire departments.
- ◆ Strengthen the intergovernmental partnership between the federal government and municipalities to ensure local authorities are protected and avoid undue costs and burdens.



INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY AND STABILITY

Housing stability is a prerequisite for economic mobility, job security, and health and well-being. However, elected officials at every level of government are hearing from constituents that housing is a major problem where they live. In many places, housing instability and homelessness are outpacing the capacity of all sectors, including local governments, housing developers and financial institutions, to provide equitable housing opportunities for all residents. The affordable housing crisis and its consequences is harming every community.

At the same time, local governments are pushing the boundaries of what's possible with limited authority and resources. Cities are using their tools including zoning and code reforms, or lacking other alternatives, some are building housing on their own. Annual federal funds for housing and homeless assistance programs are deeply appreciated but insufficient to meet the demand. Local governments are filling gaps by utilizing one-time funds through the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Job Act to finance the production and preservation of housing. NLC is urging Congress to help localities do more with their housing dollars and maintain efforts even after these one-time programs wind down.

Federal Actions:

- ◆ Support direct funding for local governments to accelerate housing development including CDBG, HOME, and the Housing Trust Fund.
- ◆ Support housing stability programs for residents in distress including Housing Choice Vouchers, Emergency Solutions Grants Program, Rural Housing Programs; and enact the Eviction Crisis Act.
- ◆ Make cities and towns of all sizes eligible for capacity building, technical assistance, and pre-development programs like the Thriving Communities Program and the "Yes In My Backyard" competitive grant program.
- ◆ Support grants and tax-credits for affordable and public housing improvements including cost-saving energy-efficiency improvements and expanded access to broadband.



SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY

Economic development is achieved by investment in the human and physical infrastructure in a region. It should improve the capacity of local governments to grow and improve their economies. NLC will continue to advocate for federal investments that catalyze local economic growth.

Federal Actions:

- ◆ Support local priorities for Federal Aviation reauthorization including: bolster compatible airport development programs, make airport improvement funding sustainable, embracing regional aviation innovation, and keep up essential airport connections.
- ◆ Support extension of the Affordable Connectivity Program to ensure residents can maintain access to affordable broadband services.
- ◆ Support local priorities in the Farm Bill reauthorization, including for rural development, local foods and nutrition, and conservation programs.
- ◆ Support reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration, including funds for pre-development grants.
- ◆ Support reauthorization of the Brownfields Program to help redevelop properties and make land in communities usable.
- ◆ Support communities that have been devastated or impacted by natural disasters by advocating for recovery funding to be more readily available and easier to access.