



2025 EMO Peer Learning Cohort & Mini Grant Program REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

ICMA's Economic Mobility and Opportunity (EMO) Peer Learning Cohort and Mini Grant Program is a unique and rare opportunity for ICMA members to receive professional development and funding to inform policies and effect conditions that promote overall well-being and increased opportunities for their residents. This program from ICMA is made possible with support from the Gates Foundation.

The goals of this opportunity are to 1) increase local decision-makers' understanding of drivers of and barriers to economic mobility and opportunity and 2) support local leaders in identifying and implementing actions to advance upward economic mobility and opportunity for residents of their communities.

ICMA plans to select teams from up to 15 local governments to make up the 2025 EMO Cohort. The selected local governments will each receive a grant of \$20,000 plus travel funds for the implementation of an economic mobility and opportunity assessment, planning or engagement process, or other local activity as part of their participation in the cohort. To support these activities, between May 2025 and December 2025, teams will participate in regular virtual and in-person learning opportunities and access guidance from ICMA staff and subject matter experts about practical tools and resources to apply within their community.

ELIGIBILITY

- Applications must be submitted by U.S. local government entities and identify a team of two participating representatives.
- One of the team members must be the local government's chief administrative officer (CAO) or assistant chief administrative officer (ACAO). The second project team member may include additional staff, elected official, chamber member, representative of other community partners, etc.
- Teams must include at least one ICMA member.

IDEAL TEAM MEMBERS

- Local decision-makers who are committed to improving economic outcomes for residents.
- Interested in exploring a wide range of themes related to economic mobility and opportunity such as addressing intergenerational poverty, post-secondary education/workforce development, housing, etc.
- Willing and enthusiastic participants in discussion and learning opportunities.

PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS

- **Attendance is expected of both participants** at two in-person events, with travel costs for two participants per local government covered by ICMA.
 - **The first event is scheduled for May 21-23 at the [Economic Mobility and Opportunity Conference](#) in Baltimore, MD.**
 - The second event is tentatively scheduled for December 10-12, location TBD.
- Team participation in monthly virtual cohort calls of up to 90 minutes each.
- Submission of a Work Plan and Project Budget for use of grant funds after selection, with funding awarded following an executed agreement and approval from ICMA.
- Fulfillment of reporting and evaluation requests from ICMA staff and funder by stated deadlines.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply for the cohort, submit an application via the online form (accessible via icma.org/emo) by the deadline, **11:59 pm ET on March 28, 2025**. Application questions are provided for reference in this document beginning on the following page.

Once an application has been created and submitted, you may continue to update your submission until the application closes at 11:59 pm ET on Friday, March 28, 2025. Instructions on how to access and update your initial submission will be emailed to the primary contact identified in your application.

SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed to create a well-rounded cohort representing geographic, demographic, and economic diversity across the participating local governments. Additional evaluation criteria include:

- Strength of participation team/staff capacity
- Projected impact of participation
- Demonstrated commitment to improving economic mobility and opportunity for their residents

Upon selection, local governments will be required to submit various pre-contractual documents, all of which will be provided by ICMA staff. Funding for the proposed project and travel to in-person cohort meetings will not be disbursed until this paperwork has been received and approved.

ANTICIPATED TIMELINE

- February 24, 2025: Application opens
- March 12, 2025: Information and Q&A session via Zoom, [register here](#).
- March 28, 2025 (11:59 pm ET): Application closes
- Mid-April 2025: Selected local governments notified (subject to change)
- May 2025: Virtual one-on-one orientations
- May 21-23, 2025: Cohort meeting/attendance at National Economic Mobility and Opportunity Conference in Baltimore, Maryland
- June 2025 – November 2025: Ongoing coaching and learning opportunities; monthly virtual calls
- December 10-12, 2025: Second in-person cohort meeting (subject to change)

CONTACT

If you have any questions regarding eligibility, participation, or project requirements, please contact us at emo@icma.org.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Applications should be submitted via the online form (accessible via icma.org/emo). If you cannot submit via the form, contact emo@icma.org prior to the March 28, 2025, deadline to coordinate and confirm submission via email.

The information requested in the online application is previewed below for your planning purposes.

1. Local Government Information

Name of local government

State

2020 Census population

2020 Census median household income

Percentage of households at or below the Federal Poverty Level

Percentage of households below 200% Federal Poverty Level (if known)

Most recent annual general fund budget

- a. Please select your ICMA region. ([link to region map](#))

2. Local Government Representatives / Cohort Participants

Please provide the requested information for each proposed participant from your community. In addition to your CAO or ACAO, project team members may include additional staff, elected officials, chamber members, representatives of other community partners, etc. **Attendance at the two in-person meetings is required and travel expenses will be covered for the two participants.** The expectation of the full team is to participate in all monthly calls.

Participant 1 Information: This must be the chief administrative officer or assistant chief administrative officer of your local government. This individual will be the primary contact for your application for all correspondence via the email address you provide. You may designate a second email address to receive copies of these communications.

Participant 1 (CAO or ACAO)	Participant 2
Name	Name
Title	Title
Email address	Email address
CC correspondence to address	ICMA membership status
Phone number	Brief bio
ICMA membership status	
Brief bio	

3. **How does your local government currently prioritize upward mobility and opportunity for residents? Please describe and/or link to any existing strategic goals, plans, staffing, programs, etc. addressing economic mobility and opportunity.** *While extensive prior experience is not required, we are looking for indications of willingness to grow and apply learnings from this cohort even if you are currently still building capacity.* (2,000-character limit)

2025 ICMA ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY COHORT

- a. If applicable, please describe any prior training and/or technical assistance that your local government or members of your team have received relating to economic mobility and opportunity. (1,000 character limit)
4. **What current challenges does your community face that create barriers between your residents and upward economic mobility and access to opportunity? Describe any specific needs of and/or segment(s) of your population that you anticipate focusing on through participation in this program.** (2,000-character limit)
5. **From the list below (borrowed from Results for America's [Economic Mobility Catalog](#)), which do you envision as highest priority issue area(s) for your proposed work through this program?** *While many areas may be impacted and of interest, please select up to three of these broad themes that best align with your proposed work.*
 - a. Early childhood
 - b. Post-secondary education and workforce development
 - c. Health and well-being
 - d. Justice and public safety
 - e. Housing and community development
 - f. Financial security
6. While funding provided through this opportunity is flexible, the implementation timeline for local activities is relatively short. Typical projects include an assessment, planning, or engagement process related to one or more economic mobility and opportunity themes. Focus areas can be comprehensive and/or targeted to issues such as childcare access, community health, neighborhood cleanup, workforce housing, broadband access, or other priorities. Eligible costs typically include core personnel, consultants for facilitation, planning, data collection and analysis, stakeholder engagement with community organizations, residents and other partners, or costs associated with early implementation of action plan.

We strongly encourage all applicants to review the [2023 Cohort](#) and [2024 Cohort](#) webpages to see what previous participants have completed within similar parameters. Please note that, if selected, award of funding is subject to ICMA approval of a work plan and project budget.

What are your preliminary thoughts on how your local government would utilize the \$20,000 in grant funding to address economic mobility and opportunity within your community? (2,000-character limit)

7. **What do your team members hope to gain from participating in this cohort? Given your roles, how would this experience best enhance your capacity to serve your community?** (2,000-character limit)