



Housing Solutions Lab

Building and sharing knowledge to advance equitable local housing policy.

NYU
Furman
Center



Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation

2023 Housing Solutions Lab Peer Cities Network

Call for Applications

Click here to apply by March 29, 2023.

Overview

The Housing Solutions Lab at the NYU Furman Center invites applications for the **Housing Solutions Lab Peer Cities Network**, an eight-month long opportunity for leaders from small and midsize cities to engage with their peers, policy experts, and housing researchers to address pressing local housing policy challenges.

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Lab will bring together housing leaders from five to six small and midsize cities (with populations of 50,000 to 500,000 residents) for peer learning, networking, and planning activities to develop innovative, equitable local housing solutions. Network participants will focus on advancing specific projects or initiatives intended to address longstanding housing challenges and disparities in their communities relating to:

- Local land use and zoning reform (e.g., inclusionary housing, eliminating single-family zoning, etc.)
- Eviction prevention
- Rental and security deposit assistance
- Increasing access to homeownership
- Efforts to increase access to low-poverty, opportunity-rich neighborhoods, or
- Efforts to address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated housing

Through the Network, the Lab will support city leaders in building essential knowledge, skills, and capacity to advance their project while working collaboratively with other small and midsize cities throughout the country. Participants will have access to timely and practical data and policy resources, technical assistance, and information from housing experts to help them pursue equitable, evidence-based housing policies. They will also have access to an ongoing national community of support to share ideas and receive feedback from other practitioners. Participants can expect to exit the Network with tangible next steps for moving their proposed project forward.

Network Format

During the eight-month program, city teams will attend bi-monthly virtual sessions of 60 to 90 minutes. Sessions will typically include brief presentations from housing policy experts followed by facilitated discussions among Network participants to provide progress updates, reflect on challenges and ask questions, and share lessons learned from local innovations.

Sessions will provide guidance on creating effective community engagement and communication strategies, designing interventions that draw lessons from past policies, using data to target populations most in need, and measuring progress towards goals, among other potential topics. Participants will also have access to Lab data and policy resources and opportunities to work with technical assistance providers that will help with project development and implementation.

Participants must actively participate in monthly virtual discussions with the full group of Network participants and join periodic calls with Housing Solutions Lab staff and technical assistance providers over the course of the Network.

About the Housing Solutions Lab

The Housing Solutions Lab at the NYU Furman Center works with cities across the country to design, monitor, and evaluate promising local housing policies. With funding support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Lab seeks to help cities advance evidence-based local housing policies that promote racial equity; increase access to opportunity; and support resident health and well-being. The Lab serves cities of all sizes, with a focus on small and midsize cities (those with populations of 50,000 to 500,000).

[Learn more about the Housing Solutions Lab's focus on small and midsize cities here.](#)

Project Development

The goal of the Network is to support participating cities in making meaningful progress on a defined housing policy initiative. The ideal Network participant will be able to articulate the local housing challenges they seek to remedy and a policy question or set of options they are exploring to better understand or address those challenges.

Examples of initiatives that past Network participants have successfully pursued include:

- **San Marcos, TX** worked towards creating an equitable property disposition process for city-owned land.
- **Portland, ME** planned a day-long workshop to explore housing supply constraints facing affordable housing and market rate developers while undergoing comprehensive land use reforms.
- **Boulder, CO** worked with Lab staff to build a data collection and management system that links eviction prevention assistance recipients' demographic information with program outcomes.
- **Pasco, WA** pursued data analysis to understand the displacement risks facing residents and explored policy options to prevent displacement proactively.

Applicants can access a [full list of sample projects and past projects here](#).

Benefits of Participation

The Network will provide local leaders with timely information to support housing policy analysis and decisions. This includes:

- **Access to Housing Solutions Lab technical assistance and research support:** Participants will have access to technical assistance and research to help advance their local housing policy strategies and solutions.
- **Peer networking and support:** Network participants will join a national community of peers in small and midsize cities and an ongoing forum for shared learning, support, and policy innovation.
- **Timely policy resources:** Participants will receive timely, actionable policy updates and access to case studies, research, and other resources to inform small and midsize city leaders' housing-related efforts.
- **Local housing data:** Participants will have access to data describing local housing conditions, trends, and challenges.

City Eligibility and Team Composition

The Peer Cities Network is designed for teams of three to four housing decision-makers and stakeholders. Teams may include:

- City officials from relevant local government agencies (such as housing or planning departments, and housing authorities)
- Elected and appointed local officials or their senior staff
- Nonprofit service providers or organizations that work with local residents on housing and community development-related challenges
- Housing advocates

A sample team might include representatives from the local planning department, the local Public Housing Authority, the Mayor's Office, and a community-based organization working with residents on housing-related concerns.

Each team must identify one team leader to serve as the primary point of contact for the Network and for completing the application. All participants should be prepared to actively engage in monthly group discussions and have an enthusiasm for shared learning, problem-solving, and networking with colleagues from across the country.

Strength of application will be determined by:

- Feasibility of the proposed project and the team's capacity and commitment to advancing the project during the specified Network timeline
- Interest in leveraging data and evaluation to improve local housing policies and programs
- Enthusiasm for collaborating with peer cities to foster shared learning, resource sharing, and policy innovation

[View the Application](#)

Application Process and Timeline

March 8, 2023	Call for applications released
March 22, 2023	Deadline for questions
March 29, 2023	Application deadline
Week of April 3, 2023	Interviews with cities
April 14, 2023	Notification of selected cities
Week of May 22, 2023	Network virtual kick-off meeting

We welcome questions about the Network opportunity and ways to develop a successful application and project proposal. Please contact Jess Wunsch, Peer Cities Manager, at jess.wunsch@nyu.edu with questions.