



## Cities Bulletin e-newsletter

April 21, 2025 | Issue 15

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With four weeks left in the session, lawmakers will focus on finalizing funding and policy omnibus bills.

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# Legislature Returns From Recess as Work on Omnibus Bills Ramps Up

April 21, 2025

**With four weeks left in the session, lawmakers will focus on finalizing funding and policy omnibus bills.**

The Legislature returned from its one-week recess for Easter and Passover holidays with significant work left to do before the constitutionally required adjournment on May 19.

With the third committee deadline now passed, the [Senate Finance Committee](#) and [House Ways and Means Committee](#) will begin processing omnibus bills to prepare them for extended floor debates. Once each chamber passes its version, conference committees comprised of House and Senate members will begin negotiating differences in spending and policy. Meanwhile, legislative leaders are expected to continue meeting to set joint budget targets that will help guide decisions on spending levels.

- [Read more about the Senate budget and omnibus bills.](#)
- [Read more about the House omnibus bills.](#)

The League continues to track individual finance and policy omnibus bills. At this stage, many budget bills remain incomplete and may require further negotiations — or leadership intervention — to resolve outstanding issues.

[Read more news articles.](#)

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# LMC Awards

## DEADLINE EXTENSION: The 2025 LMC Awards Program is now open for submissions until Wednesday, April 30!

The League each year honors the special achievements of cities and city leaders with the City of Excellence Awards, C.C. Ludwig Award, James F. Miller Leadership Award, and Sustainable City Award.

### About City of Excellence Awards

The City of Excellence Awards recognize cities for outstanding work. Awards are given in three population categories and in one special topical category, which is different each year. The 2025 Topical Category is Successful Collaboration Among Local Governments.

[Read more about the City of Excellence Awards](#)

### About the Individual Awards

The C.C. Ludwig Award recognizes elected officials who have made significant contributions to Minnesota city government. Similarly, the James F. Miller Leadership Award honors appointed city officials who have gone above and beyond the call of duty for their city and all Minnesota cities. Finally, the Emerging Leader Award is presented in recognition and encouragement of elected and appointed officials who are early in their service to municipal government.

[Learn more about the individual awards](#)

### About the Sustainable City Award

Cities currently participating in the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program are eligible for the League of Minnesota Cities Sustainable City Award.

[Learn more about the Sustainable City Award](#)

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# Making Websites More Accessible: How Cities Are Enhancing Digital Inclusion and Why It Matters

*By Andrew Tellijohn*

Cities across the country are working to make their websites more accessible, ensuring all residents can easily find information and access services online. With new federal regulations requiring local governments to meet updated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II accessibility standards by 2026 or 2027, many cities are taking proactive steps to improve digital inclusion.

Lynn Wehrman, founder and CEO of Digital Accessibility by WeCo, has been working with several municipalities to help them meet these requirements. Her firm specializes in digital accessibility and is staffed by technologists who live with disabilities to assess and improve websites.

“There are a lot of unique challenges that city governments have, particularly smaller city governments, in that they don’t have a team of coders to help make their websites accessible,” Wehrman said. “They’re usually purchasing their website from a service and then have a communications person managing the content.”

One city that completed accessibility upgrades early is Columbia Heights. Will Rottler, the city’s communications and engagement coordinator, said Columbia Heights partnered with WeCo in early 2024 to conduct an accessibility audit.

“It was honestly fantastic,” he said. “It was eye-opening to learn what your website is lacking and in what ways it might not be meeting ADA guidelines.”

Following the audit, city staff spent six months addressing accessibility issues, focusing on high-traffic pages and ensuring compliance. They cleaned up PDFs, added alternative text to images, corrected mislabeled headers, and adjusted color contrast for readability.

“You have 20,000 people that live in your city; you want to do the best you can to make sure the website is accessible for everybody,” Rottler said. “It should be a focus for your entity, whether there are federal guidelines or not.”

## Proactive change in Fridley

The City of Fridley also took a proactive approach, recognizing the need for website improvements even before the Department of Justice published the ADA Title II Web and Mobile Applications Accessibility Rule for city governments in April 2024.

While accessibility complaints were minimal, city staff had received feedback that the old site was difficult to navigate, information was hard to find, and the search function was ineffective.

“We are always looking for ways to improve how we provide service and program information,” said Brooke Hall, Fridley’s communications coordinator. A biannual resident survey helped city leaders identify areas for improvement.

In 2023, Fridley secured funding for a new website and spent 2024 gathering resident input. They partnered with a company specializing in government websites and sought public feedback on proposed structures. The new website, launched in November 2024, significantly streamlines navigation, reduces content clutter by 50%, and meets accessibility standards.

## Accessibility at the forefront

Accessibility was a key focus of Fridley’s redesign. The new platform adheres to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 at the midlevel standard, ensuring usability for individuals with visual, hearing, cognitive, motor, and speech disabilities.

Simple but impactful changes included replacing vague “click here” links with descriptive text, consolidating related information onto single pages, using structured headings, and adding alternative text for images.

These changes are especially meaningful for residents like Kelly Harrison. Harrison, who is blind and relies on a screen reader, previously faced challenges registering for the city’s Citizen’s Academy — a program that educates the community on the Fridley Police Department — because the PDF form was not accessible.

“I needed to get some assistance with getting registered for the class,” she said. “Everybody was willing to help out and do what they could.”

While she ultimately completed the process, the experience highlighted areas for improvement. With the city’s updated website, future interactions should be much smoother.

“It seems pretty good,” said Harrison, who hasn’t had a specific reason to use the new site yet but has reviewed it for some of the features she looks for and found it much improved. “They’re obviously following accessibility guidelines.”

As cities work to meet the upcoming federal deadlines, these efforts ensure that all residents, regardless of ability, can fully access the digital services their communities provide. By prioritizing accessibility now, cities like Columbia Heights and Fridley are setting a standard for inclusivity in local government.

“Accessibility,” Harrison said, “is good for everyone.”

*Andrew Tellijohn is a freelance writer.*

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Your LMC Resource

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*For editorial questions:*

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**Check out more information and resources** to help your city comply with new ADA accessibility requirements at [ada.gov/resources/web-rule-first-steps](https://ada.gov/resources/web-rule-first-steps).

**Learn more** about digital accessibility at  
*LMCIT's 2025 Safety and Loss Control Workshops.*

[lmc.org/LCW2025](https://lmc.org/LCW2025)

## Ask LMC

# What Are Key Considerations for Recruiting Seasonal Help?

### Hiring

**Q:** What are key considerations for recruiting seasonal help this summer?

**LMC:** Here are five things to do or be aware of as you begin recruiting seasonal workers:

1. Cities should dust off prior seasonal job postings and make required 2025 updates. Beginning this year, Minnesota employers must disclose starting salary ranges or fixed pay rates — as well as benefits and other compensation — in each new job posting.
2. Keep in mind that the state's minimum wage increased to \$11.13 per hour for all cities in 2025.
3. Consider benefits that will impact seasonal workers like leave, retirement, and collective bargaining. These are provided through the new earned sick and safe time (ESST) law, Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) pension plan, and the Minnesota Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA). Seasonal employees who are anticipated to work at least 80 hours will earn ESST. Cities should be alert to Minnesota PELRA definitions of public employees and PERA enrollment thresholds. The public employee definition under Minnesota PELRA is important because it determines who can belong to a bargaining unit under law. Many cities actively monitor their seasonal employees' schedules to ensure workers fall under one of PELRA's public employee exclusions, such as the 67 days threshold, or 100 days for full-time students under age 22. For more information about seasonal employee retirement considerations, see PERA's FAQs at [bit.ly/PERA-FAQ-seasonalworkers](https://bit.ly/PERA-FAQ-seasonalworkers).
4. Since many city seasonal workers are high school students, be mindful of the age, hours, and work restriction laws impacting child labor. For more information about child labor laws, see the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry's website at [dli.mn.gov/child-labor](https://dli.mn.gov/child-labor).
5. Cities often conduct preemployment screens and background checks pursuant to city policies.

To learn more about recruiting and hiring seasonal workers and access a model job posting, see the League's HR Reference Manual, Chapter 2 at [lmc.org/hiring](https://lmc.org/hiring). The time it takes to perform these processes can range from a day to several weeks, so it's important to factor these timeframes into your recruitment process.

*Answered by LMC Assistant HR Director Joyce Hottinger: [jhottinger@lmc.org](mailto:jhottinger@lmc.org).*

# Billing

**Q:** Does Minnesota's new "junk fee" law apply to cities?

**LMC:** It depends on the fees a city is charging and how, or if, they are advertised. The Minnesota Deceptive Trade Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 325D.44 et seq.) prohibits advertisement of "a price for goods or services that does not include all mandatory fees or surcharges." Mandatory fees and surcharges that must be included in the total price advertised, displayed, or offered include any fee or surcharge that:

- Must be paid in order to purchase the good or service.
- Is not reasonably avoidable by the consumer.
- A reasonable person would expect to be included in the purchase of the goods or services being advertised. Taxes are not considered mandatory fees and thus do not need to be included in the advertised price.

A best practice for cities is to ensure any additional "mandatory" fees are outlined in the fee schedule or in utility documents. Cities have authority to charge "convenience fees" or "service charges" under Minnesota Statutes, section 471.381, subdivision 2, so long as they're disclosed. Credit card surcharges, while optional if alternative payment methods are available, are capped at 5% of the purchase price under Minnesota Statutes, section 325G.051 (enacted in 2023), which also imposes additional notification requirements for credit card use.

Answered by Intergovernmental Relations Representative and Attorney Tori Kee:  
[tkee@lmc.org](mailto:tkee@lmc.org).

# Safety

**Q:** Can the city be fined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for hazards created by contractors?

**LMC:** Yes, absolutely, this falls under OSHA's multiemployer citation policy.

When the city hires contractors such as excavators, snow removal contractors, construction firms, and so on, your city could be liable for OSHA violations created by those contractors. OSHA's multiemployer citation policy (CPL 02-00-124) recognizes four employer categories, although an employer may fall into more than one category. The categories include:

- Creating employer — the employer that creates the hazard.
- Exposing employer — the employer that allows its workers to participate.
- Correcting employer — the employer that is responsible for monitoring and correcting hazards.
- Controlling employer — the employer that is seen to have supervisory authority over safety.

Essentially, if an OSHA inspector finds a violation at a multiemployer worksite, the inspector will determine which category (if any) the city falls under, then decide if the city can be cited for failing to meet its obligations. For more information on this topic, see the National Safety Council website at [bit.ly/OSHA-multiemployer-citation](https://bit.ly/OSHA-multiemployer-citation).

Answered by LMCIT Loss Control Representative Marc Dunker: [mdunker@lmc.org](mailto:mdunker@lmc.org).

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# Books and Badges Builds Connection One Story at a Time

April 16, 2025

What if the key to building trust between first responders and the communities they serve was as simple as reading a book together? In Plymouth, a public safety team is doing just that—connecting with kids and families through weekly story times, heartfelt conversations, and a growing library of shared moments.



For much of her career, Sara Cwayna, a community engagement officer of the Plymouth Police Department, worked on the fire side of community education—bike helmet checks, smoke alarm battery changes, and safety workshops for families. But in 2017, that began to shift.

Former Public Safety Director Mike Goldstein encouraged Cwayna to extend her role into the police side, with a focus on authentic community connection. He had a vision: more engagement outside the squad car—unscripted, uniform-free, and agenda-free. Cwayna joined a small police department team dedicated to finding new ways to build relationships. While traditional efforts like D.A.R.E. and safety classes continued, they wanted something deeper.

## A New Chapter Begins

Their goal was simple but powerful: create “out-of-the-car” experiences that allowed officers to show up as people, not just professionals. They wanted to meet residents where they lived, worked, and learned—through real conversations that built trust.

An early opportunity came from the Wayzata School District's Community Education program. Julie Menk led the Literacy Volunteer Program, matching reading buddies with students who needed a little extra encouragement.

"You don't always know why you're paired with a child," Cwayna said. "Some were strong readers. Some just needed another consistent adult in their lives."

In 2018, Cwayna and three colleagues—including office support staff—joined the program, each paired with students in different schools. Each weekly visit planted seeds of connection—with students, teachers, and staff.

When the pandemic hit, in-person reading stopped. But the team got creative. With Menk's help, they launched a virtual reading program through the district's media system. Police officers, firefighters, and public works staff read stories via Zoom, and families who registered were entered in drawings for department tours or even fire truck rides to school. "It created a little bit of magic," Cwayna said.

With community support, another idea took off: a pen pal program between officers and students. Four officers exchanged handwritten letters with kids, building real relationships through the mail, and Cwayna corresponded with a student who had just moved from South Korea—they shared stories about travel, food, and life, all while helping the child learn English.

Though Zoom reading sessions between individual staff and students weren't always successful—understandably, with busy home environments—the effort showed the team's commitment to staying connected to the community in new ways.

As schools returned to in-person learning, a hallway reading tradition emerged. Cwayna had a break between safety classes and was invited by a second-grade teacher to read one-on-one with students. Each child got 10 minutes in the hallway to read their book. By year's end, Cwayna had read with the entire class.

Later in the year, at a safety workshop, one of those students recognized Cwayna, ran up to her, and said, "I know you! We read together!"

"That moment reminded me why this matters," Cwayna said. "It's about being someone they recognize and trust."

## **Impact Beyond the School Walls**

The department's work caught the attention of a Chicago sportscaster, whose nephew had joined a reading session in Plymouth. He connected Cwayna with the Starfish Assignment, a nonprofit supporting police literacy programs. They donated 600 books to launch Books and Badges—a program where officers read to classrooms and give each child their own copy.

The story times soon expanded to “The KUBE” (Kids Ultimate Backyard Experience) at the Plymouth Community Center. Attendance was modest at first, but families returned, brought friends, and posted photos with officers. A ripple effect had begun. The Sheriff’s Office joined in, hosting their own weekday readings and sometimes partnering with Plymouth, creating more ways for kids to connect with officers.

The message they shared was clear: reading is a superpower. Officers would tell kids, “You can learn anything—how to fly a plane, how to build a bridge—just by reading. That’s your superpower.” And with that knowledge came confidence.

Beyond the books, these efforts built familiarity and trust. “During Books and Badges events, police officers and firefighters talk about their jobs in a way that’s easy for kids to understand,” Menk said. “They show that they’re here to help.”

And the support grew. A local grandmother left a voicemail about a children’s book authored by her daughter-in-law about police officers. The department bought it, read it aloud during a session, and the grandmother livestreamed it to the author in New Mexico. That book is now part of their permanent library.

The collection has become a community project—parents suggest titles, local churches donate books, and topics now range from snowplows to heavy equipment, all tailored to kids’ interests.

According to Menk, Wayzata School District Community Education Department has held seven Books and Badges events, with about 55 families joining each time. Events are also recorded for families to watch on their own time.

The program isn’t rigid; it’s built on passion and flexibility. Cwayna reads once a week for 30 minutes, while others join monthly Books and Badges sessions, giving an hour of their time. “We don’t make anyone read if it’s not their thing,” Cwayna said. “But for those who love it—it’s a gift.”

## **‘This Isn’t Complicated’**

Cwayna encourages other departments to start with existing partnerships and resources—there’s no need to reinvent the wheel.

“Start small,” Cwayna advised. “Look at the relationships you already have—with schools, libraries, or community ed. This isn’t complicated. And the community will welcome you.”

Connecting with a student from South Korea. A livestreamed book reading for an author’s proud family. Dozens of hugs from second graders. These ripples add up.

“It’s not about a script,” Cwayna said. “It’s about being there, listening, and letting them see us for who we really are.”

In Plymouth, Wayzata, West Hennepin, and beyond, a new model of community engagement is taking root—one book, one child, and one connection at a time.



# Policy Committee FAQs

## Shape the League's 2026 Legislative Platform: Sign Up for 2025 Policy Committees

The League welcomes members to join in discussing issues impacting their city and cities in general, and to help shape the League's legislative policies and get involved with legislative issues. Hearing from cities around the state will be critical as the League shapes its legislative policies and priorities for the 2025 session.

### Meetings will be hybrid format

As always, the League is happy to host legislative policy committee meetings both in person at the League building in St. Paul as well as online via Zoom. Members are encouraged to participate in whatever format is most comfortable and convenient.

#### Meeting 1

During the first meeting in July, each city official shares what issues are affecting their cities and what they would like the committee to address over the span of that year's meetings. Officials are encouraged to look at specific policies and offer suggestions to change existing policies, create new ones, and delete obsolete ones.

League intergovernmental relations (IGR) staff will also provide a legislative update on the regular legislative session and any special sessions. League staff will also go through each legislative policy and explain whether it was addressed during the previous legislative session or special sessions. Staff and committee members will then discuss potential speakers for meeting 2.

#### Meeting 2

At the second meeting in August, committee members will hear from guest speakers, including representatives from state agencies and interest groups, legislators, and other local officials, to learn more about the issues that the committee has decided to focus on. The committee will also further offer and review draft changes to legislative policies.

#### Meeting 3

During the third and final meeting in September, committee members will continue to discuss and make policy changes, and vote to approve draft legislative policies.

## After the meetings

In October, the draft legislative policies will be circulated to League members for their comments. In November, the League Board of Directors will consider member comments and vote on final adoption of the League policies. The approved policies will then be published on the League's website in a document called the *2025 City Policies*. To get an idea of what to expect, you can view the *2025 Cities Policies*.

[View the 2025 City Policies \(pdf\).](#)

## Sign up!

Last year, more than 150 city officials from all around the state participated in the four committees that set the legislative policies for the League's lobbying efforts. City officials that have served before and those that have never served are encouraged to sign up. Interested in signing up? Email Ted Bengtson at [tbengtson@lmc.org](mailto:tbengtson@lmc.org).

**Important note for members who served last year:** If you have not already done so, please sign up to confirm your participation again this year, even if you served last year.

PDF versions of packets will be emailed to members in advance of each meeting.

[Sign up for a legislative policy committee.](#)

## Frequently asked questions

Here are answers to some common questions for those considering participating in policy committees:

### Who can be on a policy committee?

Current city officials and staff are eligible. City council members, mayors, city administrators, assistant city administrators, clerks, human resources staff, municipal elections officials, public safety staff, engineers, finance directors, economic development staff, and others have been members of the committees. Committee members can be new to their city position, have many years of experience, or be somewhere in between.

### When and where are the meetings?

Here is the 2025 schedule:

#### [Improving Service Delivery Committee](#)

Monday mornings: *July 21, Aug. 18, Sept. 15* | 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

#### [Improving Local Economies Committee](#)

Tuesday mornings: *July 22, Aug. 19, Sept. 16* | 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

#### [Human Resources & Data Practices Committee](#)

Tuesday afternoons: *July 22, Aug. 19, Sept. 16* | 1:30-4 p.m.

#### [Improving Fiscal Futures Committee](#)

Wednesday mornings: *July 23, Aug. 20, Sept. 17* | 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

# What topics does each committee address?

The topics include, but are not limited to, the following subtopics:

- Improving Service Delivery: Unfunded mandates, environmental mandates, elections, charter law, data privacy, government innovation and cooperation, and public safety.
- Improving Local Economies: Growth management, land use, boundary adjustments, housing, transportation, economic development, and telecommunications.
- Human Resources & Data Practices: Employment law, labor relations, data practices, Open Meeting Law, personnel, and pensions.
- Improving Fiscal Futures: Municipal financial management, property and other taxes, state aid programs, and financial reporting requirements.

## For more information

Still have questions? Interested but not quite sure if you should sign up? Please contact League IGR Administrative Coordinator Ted Bengtson at [tbengtson@lmc.org](mailto:tbengtson@lmc.org) or (651) 281-1242.

We look forward to you joining us!

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[tbengtson@lmc.org](mailto:tbengtson@lmc.org)

# Current Grant Opportunities

## Outdoor Heritage Fund Grants

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council is accepting applications for Outdoor Heritage Fund Grants, and estimates that more than \$150 million is available to support habitat work.

Eligibility for these grants includes local units of government, nonprofit organizations, watershed districts, etc. The key is that the monies are dedicated for use in projects that “protect, restore, and enhance habitat for fish, game, and wildlife.”

Applications are due **May 23**.

[Learn more and apply for Outdoor Heritage funds.](#)

## Fiscal Year 2026 Cultural Expression Grants

Application materials are now available for the Cultural Expression grant program. [Cultural Expression](#) provides project grants to support activities that share, explore, pass on, express, or celebrate culture through the arts. Culture may be defined by a common ethnicity, tribal affiliation, geographic or regional identity, or language. Traditional and contemporary forms of cultural expression may be funded in this program. Funds could be used to support practicing a cultural art form; presenting cultural festivals, community celebrations, performances, media or exhibitions; offering demonstrations, etc. Funds could also be used to deepen or pass on cultural traditions through apprenticeships or documentation.

Applicants may request between \$5,000 – \$35,000. Details, including full program guidelines, eligibility, and resources for applicants can be found on the [Cultural Expression program page](#). The application deadline is **June 6**.

## Greater Minnesota Small Cities (Tier II Cities) Housing Aid Grant Program

The Greater Minnesota Small Cities (Tier II Cities) Housing Aid Grant Program is a new program funded by the 2023 legislative session as part of the Statewide Affordable Housing Aid program. The program was established to aid smaller Greater Minnesota cities outside the seven-county metro area with fewer than 10,000 people to develop and preserve affordable housing within their jurisdictions.

The [Greater Minnesota Small Cities \(Tier II Cities\) Housing Aid Grant Program RFP application](#) and supplemental documents are available on the [Local Government Housing Programs webpage](#). The application must be completed via the [Cvent survey tool](#) and will close on **April 24, 2025**. For additional details on the program, [read the program guide \(pdf\)](#).

[Learn more about the other local government housing programs.](#)

## Greater Minnesota Housing Infrastructure Grants

There is \$8 million available for the Greater Minnesota Housing Infrastructure Grants to support cities, counties, and tribal nations in creating sites for workforce and affordable housing in Greater Minnesota.

Grant funds can be used to cover up to 50% of capital costs of physical public infrastructure necessary to support a qualifying housing development. This may include sewers, water supply systems, utility extensions, streets and more, necessary to support single-family, multifamily, homeownership and rental housing development.

Grants are generally limited to:

- \$40,000 per lot for one to four units.
- \$180,000 per lot for multifamily housing (five or more units/building).
- \$60,000 per manufactured housing lot.
- No more than \$500,000 to any grantee or project over a two-year period.

Applicants' matching funds may include in-kind contributions, such as donation of land.

For additional details on the program, [please review the program guide.](#)

[Learn more and apply for Greater Minnesota Housing Infrastructure Grants.](#)

## Arts Experiences Grant Program

[Arts Experiences](#) through the Minnesota State Arts Board provides project grants that individuals and organizations, including local governments, can use to offer arts activities that are meaningful for Minnesota residents and communities. Funds may be used for a variety of arts projects such as creating and/or presenting concerts, plays, tours, exhibitions, arts festivals, public art, or other kinds of arts programming that engages Minnesota audiences and participants.

Applicants may request between \$5,000-\$35,000. The deadline to apply is **May 2**.

Potential applicants are encouraged to review all application materials and resources on the program page before beginning an application.

[Learn more and apply for an Arts Experiences grant.](#)

## Minnesota SolarAPP+ Solar Permitting Software Incentive

The Minnesota Department of Commerce Division of Energy Resources requests applications for the SolarAPP+ Solar Permitting Software Incentive Program. The purpose of this program is to provide technical assistance and financial incentives to local units of government that issue permits for residential solar projects and solar plus energy storage systems by incentivizing a

permitting authority to adopt the SolarAPP+ software to standardize, automate, and streamline the review and permitting process.

The Department of Commerce will administer \$2 million in incentives to eligible jurisdictions across Minnesota, with incentives ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000. Eligible applicants include local units of governments with authority to issue permits for residential solar projects and solar plus energy storage system projects.

Applications must be submitted through the grant interface website, Minnesota Department of Commerce's online grant interface website. The Request for Proposals (RFP) will have detailed information and application questions as well as required forms and reference materials. It will be available for download on the Department's RFP website beginning Feb. 28 and remain available until **June 30, 2028**, or until fully expended. Instructions for submitting applications are detailed in the RFP.

[Learn more and apply for the SolarAPP+ Solar Permitting Incentive Program.](#)

## Community Innovation grants

The Bush Foundation's Community Innovation (CI) grant program is a flexible program that invests in great ideas and the people who power them across our region. The program aims to:

- Develop, test, and spread great ideas.
- Inspire, equip, and connect leaders.

[Learn more and apply for a CI grant.](#)

## Establish a Local Housing Trust Fund With Help From the Minnesota Housing Partnership

The Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP) is offering free assistance to rural communities to establish Local Housing Trust Funds (LHTF). Funds can be used for education on Local Housing Trust Funds, as well as implementation of LHTF programs and community engagement activities.

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$4.8 million to a [Local Housing Trust Fund \(LHTF\) State Match Program](#); with \$1 million appropriated in a prior year, available funds for the state match program total \$5.8 million. An application for state match funds is likely to be released in late summer or early fall.

[Learn more and apply for free technical assistance from MHP to establish or implement your LHTF.](#)

## MNOSHA WSC: Safety Grant Program

The Safety Grant Program awards funds up to \$10,000 to qualifying employers for projects designed to reduce the risk of injury and illness to their workers.

To qualify, an employer must meet several conditions, including but not limited to:

- Having been in business for at least two years.

- Having at least one employee to create the employer/employee relationship.
- Having workers' compensation insurance.
- Having had an on-site hazard survey conducted by a qualified safety professional and a written report of the findings and recommendations to reduce the risk of injury or illness to employees.
- Having the knowledge and experience to complete the project and is committed to its implementation.
- Being able to complete the project within 120 days of a fully executed contract.

To qualify, the project must be supported by all public entities involved and comply with federal, state, and local regulations where applicable.

Businesses that are the current focus of the [Minnesota OSHA Workplace Safety Consultation strategic plan](#) will be given added priority. If your grant is approved, you will be notified in writing of the specific approval. Whether we approve your grant application or not, in no way diminishes, delays, or absolves you of any obligation to abate safety and health hazards. When a project is complete, the applicant must submit a certificate of completion form, with invoices and proof of payment, to the grants administrator, to initiate issuance of the grant. An employer that has received a grant for a particular worksite will not be eligible to receive another grant for that worksite during the two years after the date of their award.

[Learn more and apply to the MNOSHA WSC: Safety Grant Program.](#)

## Solar on Public Buildings Grant Program

The Solar on Public Buildings Grant Program will equip cities, towns, counties, and other local governments and Tribal Nations to lower utilities costs, increase energy independence, expand the clean energy workforce, and take essential action to address climate change.

\$4.3 million in state funding will be distributed to local governments to build solar arrays (system size up to 40 kilowatts) across Xcel Energy territory in Minnesota. These grants can be paired with federal clean energy tax credits now available to local governments.

[Learn more and apply for Solar on Public Buildings Grant Program funding.](#)

## Green and Resilient Retrofit Program (GRRP)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Green and Resilient Retrofit Program (GRRP) provides loan and grant funding to deliver energy efficiency and electrification improvements to HUD-assisted housing, which can fund retrofitting properties up to \$40,000-\$80,000 per unit. HUD is accepting applications on a rolling basis, two will be occurring in 2024. Funded under the Inflation Reduction Act, the GRRP is the first HUD program to invest simultaneously in energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, energy generation, and climate resilience strategies specifically in HUD-assisted multifamily housing.

[Learn more and apply for GRRP funding.](#)

# Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Technical Assistance Grants

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) IIJA Technical Assistance Grant Program is now open. \$2 Million in state funds is available to qualifying local units of government and tribal governments that seek to submit an application for a federal discretionary grant for a transportation purposes.

State technical assistance funds can be used to hire a consultant for identification of available grants, grant writing, analysis, data collection, technical review, legal interpretations, planning, pre-engineering, application finalization, and similar activities. Learn more and apply for an IIJA Technical Assistance Grant.

[Learn more and apply for a IIJA Technical Assistance grant.](#)

## Cybersecurity Grant Program Now Available Statewide

The state's IT agency, Minnesota IT Services (MNIT), in partnership with the [Minnesota Cybersecurity Task Force](#) recently released the [Whole-of-State Cybersecurity Plan](#) that will be used to implement \$23.5 million of funding from the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program and the Minnesota Legislature.

### Eligibility

All state and local government entities are eligible to participate in the SLCGP, including:

- A county, municipality, city, town, township, local public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments, regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government.
- Authorized Tribal governments and organizations.
- A rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity.

### How to get involved

- Visit MNIT's website for more information [about the plan](#), [how to participate](#), and who to contact if you have questions or need help.
- You can also [sign up to receive news and updates](#) about the Whole-of-Security Plan and the SLCGP.
- If your organization is ready to get started, complete the [Minnesota Whole-of-State survey for SLCGP participants](#).

## Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Program

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is accepting requests for technical assistance for the Thriving Communities technical assistance program. This funding will help local governments ensure housing needs are considered as part of their infrastructure plans. To be eligible, jurisdictions must be a unit of general local government that is receiving federal transportation



funding to support a project that coordinates transportation and housing plans, programs, or investments to benefit residents and businesses located in a disadvantaged community. Priority will be given to jurisdictions with populations of less than 250,000 people, as well as to those receiving certain Department of Transportation competitive funds. Requests will be reviewed as they are received, on a rolling basis, beginning on March 15.

[Learn more about the interagency Thriving Communities technical assistance program](#)

## Residential Retrofits for Energy Equity: Energy Upgrades for Affordable Housing

Residential Retrofits for Energy Equity (R2E2) will provide deep technical assistance to state, local, and tribal governments as well as community-based organizations to jumpstart energy upgrades for single family and multifamily affordable housing, especially in frontline communities. These retrofits will lower utility bills, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve residents' health, create good-paying local jobs, and help mitigate racial inequity. R2E2 will kick off with training sessions in January for state, local, and community teams on scaling up building energy retrofits and leveraging the unprecedented federal funding available from COVID-19 relief programs, the bipartisan infrastructure law, the Inflation Reduction Act, and other sources. R2E2 is a partnership of the American Council for Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), Elevate, Emerald Cities Collaborative, and HR&A Advisors, with People's Climate Innovation Center advising on centering equity in the project and its outcomes and on facilitating community-driven planning processes.

[Learn more about Residential Retrofits for Energy Equity](#)

## Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program for Rural Areas

Low-interest direct loans, grants, or a combination of the two are available to develop essential community facilities (not including private, commercial, or business undertakings) in rural areas through the Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant program. The program is offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development. Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and/or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment, and pay related project expenses. Rural areas, including cities, villages, townships, and federally recognized tribal lands, with no more than 20,000 residents according to the latest [U.S. Census data](#), are eligible for this program. Applications for this program are accepted year-round.

[Learn more about the Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant program](#)

## Community Heart & Soul Seed Grant Program

The Community Heart & Soul Seed Grant Program provides \$10,000 in startup funding for resident-driven groups in small cities and towns to implement the Community Heart & Soul model. Community Heart & Soul engages a motivated and dedicated group of individuals to help your town identify what matters most. The grant program is specifically designed for small cities and towns with populations of 2,500 to 30,000. Grant funding requires a \$10,000 cash match from the participating municipality or a partnering organization.

[Learn more and apply for a Community Heart & Soul Grant](#)

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Your LMC Resource

Research & Information Service staff members are ready to help you apply their broad knowledge to the issues you're dealing with today.

**[Access online form to submit a question](#)**, or call us: (651) 281-1200 or (800) 925-1122