



## Cities Bulletin e-newsletter

Jan. 21, 2025 | Issue 2

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## Contact Us

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# 2025 Legislative Session Begins Under Unusual Circumstances

January 21, 2025

**The 94th biennial legislative session began on Jan. 14, 2025, with a partisan power-sharing agreement in the Senate and a feud over control of the House.**

The Minnesota Legislature convened as scheduled on Jan. 14 without the traditional power structure that puts the partisan majority in control of leadership and those in the minority without control over proceedings and committee gavels. Due to unexpected circumstances that occurred between the November election and the first day of session, caucus leaders in both the House and Senate are jockeying for control.

## Senate temporarily evenly split

The Senate was not up for election but has one new member due to a special election to fill the seat of former [Sen. Kelly Morrison](#) (DFL-Deephaven) who resigned to successfully run for U.S. Congress. She was replaced by [Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), who already served in the Minnesota Senate from 2020 to 2022 before she was paired with Sen. Morrison during redistricting.

The Senate DFL had been positioned to keep the one-seat majority they held in the 2023-2024 biennium, but due to the untimely passing of former Majority Leader [Sen. Kari Dziedzic](#) (DFL-Minneapolis) on Dec. 27, 2024, the chamber is now evenly split with 33 Republicans and 33 DFLers. A special election to fill Sen. Dziedzic's seat will be held Jan. 28, and the seat is expected to remain in DFL control.

The body is currently operating under a power-sharing agreement that has DFLers and Republicans sharing control of leadership, including presiding over sessions and committees.

Although the power-sharing agreement is set to expire when Sen. Dziedzic's seat is filled, also hanging over the body is the upcoming jury trial of [Sen. Nicole Mitchell](#) (DFL-Woodbury) who, as has been widely reported, is facing a trial on burglary charges stemming from an arrest in spring 2024.

On Jan. 17, a judge granted a continuance of her multiday trial, which was scheduled to begin Jan. 27. Although the trial will now occur after the May 19 constitutional deadline, there will likely be lengthy Senate Floor debates, like last session, over whether Sen. Mitchell should be voting on legislation.

## House in uncharted territory

All House seats were on the ballot in 2024, resulting in an initial 67-67 tie between Republicans and DFLers. This led to negotiations and an early agreement to share control of the body. However, a legal challenge over the residency of the DFL winner for District 40B (Roseville) led

to the elected candidate being deemed ineligible to serve. As a result, the session began with 67 Republicans and 66 DFLers.

A special election to fill the District 40B seat was initially scheduled for Jan. 28, the same day as the Senate special election. However, on Jan. 17, a judge ruled that Gov. Tim Walz (DFL) had called the special election prematurely, postponing it to a yet-to-be-determined date. Based on the November election results, the DFL candidate is expected to win, restoring the 67-67 tie.

In the meantime, the temporary imbalance has set off significant changes in the House. Republicans, now claiming a simple majority, terminated the power-sharing agreement. This has sparked disputes over how many members are needed to establish a quorum, an issue that has become central to upcoming legal arguments.

Democrats argue that the state constitution requires 68 members for a quorum to convene and pass legislation. Sworn in on Jan. 12, before the session officially began, they have since stayed away from the Capitol, maintaining their absence prevents a quorum. They aim to avoid participating in proceedings in which a quorum is present but they are without enough votes to withstand the election of Republican leaders who would potentially maintain control for the entire biennium.

Meanwhile, the Republican Caucus has been holding House Floor sessions and committee hearings and has elected Rep. Lisa Demuth (R-Cold Spring) Speaker of the House and Rep. Harry Niska (R-Ramsey) as Majority Leader. It's unclear what will happen if/when the partisan tie resumes. The situation became more complicated due to the delay in filling the Roseville seat.

There is an additional wrinkle in the House that stems from the reelection of Rep. Brad Tabke (DFL-Shakopee). Rep. Tabke won reelection by 14 votes as determined in a recount, but in the process of auditing the election, Scott County staff discovered that 20 absentee ballots cast in the City of Shakopee were missing. Although a judge determined Rep. Tabke won the race and can serve as his district's elected representative, Republicans have continued to call the election results into question and have been demanding a special election for the seat. Leaders of the Republican Caucus have publicly stated they will vote to refuse to seat Rep. Tabke. Legislators have authority to do this with a simple majority; however, they must have a quorum to legally convene.

## Litigation pending

In addition to judicial proceedings related to Sen. Mitchell's charges, the Roseville candidate's residency, and Rep. Tabke's close election in Shakopee, there are multiple additional legal actions pending over other disputes. These have been covered by multiple media outlets in recent days and weeks. The following are some examples of news articles related to legal challenges:

- [GOP Sues Over Timing of Special Election Crucial to Minnesota House Power Balance](#)
- [Minnesota Democrats Ask State Supreme Court to Resolve State House Power Struggle](#)
- [Minnesota House Democrats to File Lawsuit to Supreme Court Arguing GOP Speaker Election Unlawful](#)

# Gov. Walz's proposed budget

Gov. Walz is back to work in Minnesota after running on the presidential ticket in 2024. He is refining his legislative priorities, recently unveiled his proposed biennial budget, and will propose a capital investment package in the coming weeks. He has publicly refused to acknowledge that the House is constitutionally organized and has reportedly ordered state agency staff to not participate in hearings being chaired and attended by House Republicans.

## What does it all mean for cities?

Legislators on both sides of the aisle are busy meeting with constituents and advocates. City officials are encouraged to continue building relationships with their local legislators and sharing local legislative priorities. Given the partisan wrangling, there may be a delay in having bills heard in committees.

The Legislature is obligated to pass a two-year budget before the July 1, 2025, start of the next fiscal biennium. The League is hopeful there will not be delays in enacting the next budget. The League's Intergovernmental Relations team is at the Capitol every day and is meeting with legislators, monitoring developments and advocating for the interests of cities.

[Read more news articles.](#)

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# Office of Cannabis Management Issues Rulemaking Update

January 21, 2025

**The Office of Cannabis Management published rules in the Minnesota State Register, beginning the 30-day public comment period.**

On Jan. 13, the Minnesota Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) published a notice of intent to adopt expedited rules in the *Minnesota State Register*, officially launching the 30-day public comment period that runs through Feb. 12.

[View the proposed rules on the OCM's Rulemaking webpage.](#)

The public can submit comments through the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) website until 4:30 p.m. on Feb. 12. Detailed instructions on how to use the system are available on the OAH website.

## Leadership change at OCM

This month, Charlene Briner stepped down as OCM's interim director after serving since the agency's creation in 2023. Eric Taubel, formerly OCM's general counsel, has been appointed as the new interim director.

## Your next step

Minnesota's cannabis law includes a local retail registration, which is distinct from the state's licensing system managed by OCM. To align local retail registrations with the state license process, OCM is requesting local governments register and provide contact information through its licensing software system.

Local governments can complete this process using the following resources:

- [Access OCM's registration webpage.](#)
- [Access the Local Unit of Government Cannabis Licensing Contact and Delegation Form.](#)
- [Register for Accela for Zoning Compliance Certification \(pdf\).](#)

For more information, refer to the [OCM FAQ webpage](#), or email [cannabis.info@state.mn.us](mailto:cannabis.info@state.mn.us).

[Read more news articles.](#)

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# Gov. Walz Proposes Biennial Budget

January 21, 2025

**The budget proposal includes few program increases and cuts local cannabis aid.**

Gov. Tim Walz (DFL) released his proposed biennial budget on Jan. 16. The package prioritizes a reduction in the state sales tax, aid reductions, and select investment increases. This proposal marks the first step in a months-long budget negotiation process involving the Minnesota House, Senate, and executive branch.

## State budget outlook

The state's budget discussions will be shaped by the economic forecasts from Minnesota Management and Budget. The November 2024 budget forecast projects a \$616 million balance, \$1.1 billion lower than earlier estimates. Revenues are \$992 million less than May 2024 projections, while state spending is \$572 million more than had been forecasted.

## Key provisions affecting cities

The governor's budget proposal includes recommendations that would impact cities, such as:

- **Sales tax reduction and base expansion**

The proposal would lower the state sales tax rate from 6.5% to 6.425% while expanding the sales tax base to include additional services, generating an estimated \$205 million in the next biennium.

- **Repeal of the local government cannabis aid**

Under the 2023 cannabis law, a 10% tax on cannabis and low-potency edible cannabinoid retail sales was set to direct 20% of revenues to local governments — split evenly between cities and counties. However, because no licensed cannabis retailers are currently operating, no aid has been distributed. The proposed budget would repeal the Local Cannabis Aid Account, reallocating those funds to the general fund. Cities were projected to receive approximately \$6.5 million from this aid in fiscal year 2027.

## What's next

In the coming weeks, state agencies will present the governor's budget to the House and Senate committees, offering further details — including potential state fee increases that may impact cities.

Later this session, Walz is expected to release his capital budget (bonding bill) recommendations. The November budget forecast assumed a \$790 million capital budget in 2025, which is a reduction from the February 2024 budget projection.

By late February, Minnesota Management and Budget will release an updated economic forecast, which legislative leaders will use to shape their budget bill proposals.

[View detailed information about the Gov. Walz's budget recommendations.](#)

[Read more news articles.](#)

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# Lawmakers Hear Testimony on Impacts of Paid Leave Programs

January 21, 2025

**House Republicans held an informational hearing on the effects of earned sick and safe time and Minnesota Paid Leave laws.**

On Jan. 16, House Republican members of the Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee held an informational hearing to examine the effects of Minnesota's the earned sick and safe time (ESST) and paid leave programs on employers.

Representatives from the League of Minnesota Cities, the Association of Minnesota Counties, and the Minnesota Association of Townships testified on behalf of public employers, highlighting the challenges local governments face under these mandates. They noted that employers are struggling to align existing leave policies with the new ESST requirements while also navigating uncertainty around accessing the private plan under the Minnesota Paid Leave program.

To help address these challenges, city, county, and township representatives advocated for legislative changes. They proposed revisions to the ESST law to better accommodate more generous employer-provided leave policies and to respect previously bargained sick leave agreements. Additionally, they called for exempting elected officials from the Minnesota Paid Leave program similar to the exemption granted under ESST in 2024.

No legislation was under consideration during the hearing and no official action was taken.

## Your next step

City leaders are encouraged to stay informed about paid leave proposals and legislative developments by subscribing to the [Cities Bulletin](#) e-newsletter and reading [the latest news](#) on the League's website.

[Read more news articles.](#)

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Your LMC Resource

# LMC Awards

## The 2025 LMC Awards Program is now open for submissions!

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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# League of Minnesota Cities Announces 2025 Key Legislative Priorities

January 15, 2025

## *Infrastructure, housing, and public safety needs remain critical issues for cities*

Partisan division has been a theme of the weeks and months leading up to Minnesota's 2025 Legislative Session. Despite the uncertainty that is to come this session, the League of Minnesota Cities will continue to advocate for the needs of all Minnesota cities and remain focused on the need for vital state-local partnerships.

The League's Board of Directors adopted 14 legislative priorities for the 2025 session, which were determined during the League's policy committee process and through other member interactions and communications since the conclusion of the 2024 session. While the League plans to allocate ample time and resources to all 14 priorities — plus any other pressing issues that may arise — it has identified bonding/infrastructure, housing, and public safety needs as its key priorities heading into the legislative session.

## Providing Substantial Infrastructure Support

The League supports a substantial capital investment package that includes funding for municipal water and wastewater infrastructure, local roads and bridges, housing, the local road wetland replacement fund, flood mitigation, and dam repair and removal projects.

The legislature failed to bring a bonding bill up for a vote in either body in 2024. A last-minute effort to support a few infrastructure projects with a \$71 million general fund appropriation package also failed.

“Our cities cannot grow—or even keep up with current-day infrastructure demands—without more support from the state,” said LMC President and Lakeville City Administrator Justin Miller. “We urge the legislature to pass a bonding bill this session to ensure all Minnesotans have access to clean water, safe roads, and other critical infrastructure.”

## Promoting State-Local Housing Partnerships

The League continues to advocate for policies that balance state goals with local needs, ensuring that cities have the flexibility and support to address their unique housing challenges.

In anticipation that legislators may reintroduce similar bills from previous years that aim to preempt city zoning and land use authority, the League will continue to testify at committee

hearings and meet with lawmakers to inform the legislature of regional housing differences and promote state-local partnerships across Minnesota.

“Any housing framework developed by the legislature must support all levels of housing development and ensure affordability by providing necessary resources and policy guidance,” Miller said. “The state should encourage local innovation by supporting, rather than overriding, cities that have already made progress in housing initiatives and zoning reforms.”

## Addressing Public Safety Needs

In 2024, the legislature allocated \$24 million in rural emergency ambulance service aid and \$6 million to fund sprint medic pilot programs in Grant, St. Louis and Ottertail counties. But cities’ need for more EMS support remains.

The League supports the work of the EMS Delivery and Sustainability Task Force and will engage in the work of the newly established Minnesota Office of EMS. The League will continue to support funding and policies that recognize different EMS models tailored to individual cities’ needs.

In addition, the League calls for ongoing state funding to support mental and physical injury prevention, treatment for public safety personnel, and reimbursement for employers. The League opposes expanding the definition of eligible work-related conditions for workers’ compensation purposes.

“We are committed to working with local first responders and their employers to find solutions that best support Minnesota’s public safety professionals,” said Anne Finn, the League’s intergovernmental relations director. “Our communities depend on their services, and we must prioritize first responders’ health, well-being, and the future of the profession while being fiscally responsible with taxpayer dollars.”

## Representing All Minnesota Cities

The League’s key priorities do not reflect the broad scope of issues the organization anticipates addressing during the 2025 legislative session. Other priorities include employment relations, local government aid, local sales taxes, and transportation funding, among others. The League is a nonpartisan organization and will continue to work in good faith with all policymakers.

“We look forward to continuing to work with legislators on both sides of the aisle,” Finn said. “We will continue to put cities’ interests first and will remain focused on advancing public policy and funding provisions that benefit residents and businesses in cities statewide.”

Additional resources:

- [LMC 2025 Legislative Priorities](#)
  - [2025 City Policies](#)
  - [2024 Legislative Session Overview \(pdf\)](#)
-



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# Begin Your Local Government Journey at the League's Elected Leaders Institute

January 9, 2025

Congratulations to all our new and returning city leaders who were elected in November. Thank you for your interest in public service and commitment to serving your community!

Navigating the local government world can be rewarding and challenging—especially for newly elected city officials. As a new leader, understanding the complexities of your role, managing city resources effectively, and advocating for your community are vital skills that will set you on the path to success.



That's where the Elected Leaders Institute comes in. This comprehensive educational event helps elected city leaders build the knowledge and confidence necessary to thrive.

Whether you are just starting out or looking to enhance your leadership abilities, the Elected Leaders Institute offers two distinct programs tailored to your experience level: the **Foundational Program** and the **Advanced Program**. Both options are packed with opportunities to learn, network, and engage with experts and peers from across the state.

# For Newly Elected Officials: The Foundational Program

The Foundational Program is perfect for newly elected officials who are stepping into city government for the first time. It provides the core knowledge and skills essential for understanding the unique landscape of local government. This program will guide you through everything from the basic functions of city government to the vital aspects of fiscal management, public policy, and communication strategies.

Foundational Program participants will be assigned online, on-demand coursework that should be completed before attending the two-day, in-person program.

As a participant in the Foundational Program, you'll gain insights into:

- The structure and operations of local government
- The duties and responsibilities of elected officials
- Best practices for engaging with constituents and city staff
- Tools for managing public resources effectively
- The legislative process and how to advocate for your community

By the end of the program, you'll be equipped with a toolbox full of practical skills that will help you make informed decisions, tackle challenges head-on, and act as an effective steward for your city.

## Foundational Program Dates and Locations

*Attend one of the following Foundational Programs.*

**Mankato Cohort: Feb. 7-8 (Online learning begins Jan. 21).**

**Plymouth Cohort: Feb. 21-22 (Online learning begins Feb. 3).**

**Alexandria Cohort: Feb. 28-March 1 (Online learning begins Feb. 10).**

# Take Your Leadership Skills to the Next Level: The Advanced Program

If you are an experienced elected official, you already understand the importance of leadership in driving your community forward. Now, it's time to take your skills to new heights.

The Elected Leaders Institute Advanced Program offers an exclusive opportunity for seasoned elected leaders to deepen their expertise, build meaningful connections, and hone high-level leadership strategies that foster teamwork, effective communication, and community impact. With a curriculum that evolves each year to address pressing leadership challenges, this program is designed to elevate your leadership capabilities.

By attending this program, you will:

- Strengthen team-based decision-making processes.
- Learn to navigate employment law and labor negotiations.
- Build skills to bridge generational gaps in the workplace.

Don't miss the chance to enhance your leadership toolkit and make an even greater impact in your community. Join us for this unique opportunity to grow as a leader alongside fellow experienced officials.

## Advanced Program Dates and Locations

**Plymouth Cohort: Feb. 21-22**

**Alexandria Cohort: Feb. 28-March 1**

## Networking Opportunities

One of the most valuable aspects of the Elected Leaders Institute is the opportunity to connect with fellow elected officials, subject matter experts, and LMC staff. Throughout both the Foundational and Advanced Programs, you'll have access to networking events that allow you to share ideas, learn from others, and build relationships that can support you throughout your term in office.

The connections you make here will help you navigate your role with a broader perspective and provide a network of colleagues who are facing similar challenges. Whether you're looking for advice, solutions, or simply someone to discuss an issue with, the Elected Leaders Institute creates an environment where these connections can flourish.

## Register for the Elected Leaders Institute Today!

Don't miss out on these opportunities to learn, grow, and become a leader who can make a real difference in your community.

Sign up for the **Foundational Program** or the **Advanced Program** today and take the first step toward becoming a more effective city leader.

Additional Resources:

- [A Good Start to Good Governance](#)
  - [Roles and Responsibilities for Elected Officials](#) (MemberLearn online course)
  - [Minnesota Mayors Handbook](#)
- 

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# Current Grant Opportunities

## 2025 Local Housing Trust Fund Grants

The Local Housing Trust Fund Grants Program, established in 2021, aims to boost funding for Local Housing Trust Funds and support affordable housing initiatives across Minnesota. The program is supported by \$5.8 million in one-time funding for various eligible housing-related uses.

Local governments can apply for matching funds of up to \$225,000, provided they establish a Local Housing Trust Fund by the request for proposals (RFP) application deadline. Matching funds must come from new public revenue (excluding state or federal sources) committed on or after June 29, 2021.

Eligible uses for grant funds include:

- Development, rehabilitation, or financing of housing through grants, loans, or loan guarantees.
- Matching funds from other federal, state, or private resources for housing projects.
- Down payment assistance, rental assistance, and homebuyer counseling.
- Administrative expenses (up to 10% of the grant amount).

Matching fund structure:

- New Public Revenue up to \$150,000: Matched at 100%.
- New Public Revenue between \$150,000 and \$300,000: Matched at 50%.

Application timeline:

- Intent to Apply: Opens Jan. 24, 2025, and closes **Feb. 11, 2025** (required for eligibility).
- Request for Proposals (RFP): Opens Feb. 12, 2025. Applications are due by **March 19, 2025**.

Applicants must have an established Local Housing Trust Fund by the RFP deadline and attend a technical assistance session before submitting their application. For assistance in creating a Local Housing Trust Fund, Minnesota Housing Partnership provides free support. Contact them at [RFTA@mhponline.org](mailto:RFTA@mhponline.org) for more information.

[Learn more about the Local Housing Trust Fund Grants Program.](#)

# Veterans' Memorials and Commemorations

The Minnesota Department of Administration requests proposals for veterans' memorials and commemorations to be awarded for groups celebrating, recognizing, and honoring the sacrifices of those who served in the military, including memorials, commemorations, facilities, and park features.

A total of \$102,375 in Fiscal Year 2025 is dedicated for this competitive grant program. Grant applications are due **Jan. 24, 2025**.

Additionally, the Office of Grants Management is seeking veterans or individuals with experience in developing veterans memorials and commemorations to participate in our grantmaking process by serving as community reviewers who will read and evaluate grant proposals. A small stipend is available, and all work will be done remotely. Grant review is scheduled to begin in February 2025.

[Learn more and apply for veterans memorials and commemorations funding.](#)

## Greater Minnesota Housing Infrastructure Grant Program Guide Now Available

Minnesota Housing's board of directors approved the Greater Minnesota Housing Infrastructure Grant Program Guide on Dec. 19, 2024. You can find the program guide on the [Local Government Housing Programs team webpage](#). (Look under the Greater Minnesota Housing Infrastructure Grants dropdown menu.)

\$8 million is allocated to the Greater Minnesota Housing Infrastructure Grant program to support cities, counties and Tribal Nations 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.

Minnesota Housing plans to release a Request for Proposals in the first quarter of 2025.

[Review the program guide for additional details \(pdf\).](#)

# Geothermal Planning Grants

In 2024, the Minnesota Legislature established the Geothermal Planning Grant Program. The purpose of this program is to provide financial assistance to eligible applicants to examine the technical and economic feasibility of installing geothermal energy systems.

The Department of Commerce will administer \$1.08 million in grants to local governments across Minnesota. Eligible applicants for this grant program include counties, cities, townships or the Metropolitan Council. Grants will be awarded for up to \$150,000 for the planning of a geothermal energy system that heats and cools one or more buildings. Eligible systems include a bored geothermal heat exchanger, a groundwater thermal exchange device, and a submerged closed loop heat exchanger.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Geothermal Planning Grant program open on Dec. 16, 2024. Applications are due **March 10, 2025**.

For questions about the program and application process, email [Energy.Contracts@state.mn.us](mailto:Energy.Contracts@state.mn.us). Answers will be posted to the [Geothermal Planning Grant posting on the RFP page](#) through Feb. 28, 2025.

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

## 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.

Minnesota Housing will administer a competitive grant process in 2025, prioritizing projects based on selection criteria outlined in the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. \$4.5 million is available through the program for 2025, with a minimum award size of \$25,000. Funds can be used for a range of rental, homeownership and housing stability activities.

For additional details on the program, [read the program guide \(pdf\)](#).

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

## 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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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

# Pierre Willette Joins League of Minnesota Cities Intergovernmental Relations Team

January 17, 2025

The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) is pleased to announce that Pierre Willette will be joining its intergovernmental relations (IGR) team. He will officially begin his role as senior IGR representative on Jan. 23.

Willette brings more than 25 years of experience and expertise in public affairs and government relations to our organization. He comes to us from Goff Public, a Minnesota public relations and public affairs firm, where he served as director of government relations. Over the course of his career, Willette has established himself as a highly regarded public affairs professional with experience across a wide range of issues, as well connections with key Capitol stakeholders and strong bipartisan relationships with legislators.

Willette began his career with the City of Minneapolis, starting in the city council and mayor's offices and advancing to senior government relations representative. He later served as economic and community development manager with the University of Minnesota Foundation Real Estate Advisors before joining Goff. He holds a bachelor's degree in government from St. John's University and a master's degree in public administration and management from Hamline University.

"We are delighted to welcome Pierre to our team," said LMC Executive Director Luke Fischer. "His passion for public service and dedication to fostering relationships with legislators on both sides of the aisle will be instrumental in advancing priorities that benefit cities statewide. We look forward to the incredible contributions he will bring to our organization."

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