



Cities Bulletin e-newsletter

Jan. 6, 2025 | Issue 1

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Happy New — Data Practices — Year!

January 6, 2025

Get highlights from advisory opinions issued in 2024 related to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and Open Meeting Law.

The Minnesota Department of Administration with the Data Practices Office has the authority to issue nonbinding opinions related to the [Minnesota Government Data Practices Act \(MGDPA\)](#) and [Open Meeting Law \(OML\)](#). When government entities act in conformance with an advisory opinion, the entity is protected from damages, attorney's fees, or any other penalty if the matter is raised in court.

Summaries of 2024 advisory opinions

Here are key points from the 2024 advisory opinions relevant to cities:

- When the accuracy of data is challenged, the city's responsible authority must respond within 30 days by either correcting challenged data or notifying the individual that the city has determined the challenged data are correct. Cities do not have the authority to extend this deadline. [See Advisory Opinion 24-001](#)
- The city's responsible authority is required to prepare written data access policies for members of the public and data subjects about their rights to access data and the process for doing so. These policies must be updated by no later than Aug. 1 every year. They must also be accessible to the public without requiring a request, such as on a website or clearly posted in a lobby. [See Advisory Opinion 24-002](#)
- Emails and similar written correspondence regarding city business sent between elected officials are presumptively public data unless another section in the MGDPA, state statute, or federal law would classify the content of the emails as not public. [See Advisory Opinion 24-003](#)

[Learn more and access additional advisory opinions issued by the Minnesota Department of Administration.](#)

[Read more news articles.](#)

Your LMC Resource

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Free Webinar: 2025 Legislative Session Preview

What's in store for the 2025 legislative session?

The 2024 legislative session marked the end of a consequential biennium with more than 11,000 bills introduced and Gov. Tim Walz signing 126 chapters of law. Join the League of Minnesota Cities'

intergovernmental relations team on Thursday, Jan. 23,

for a preview of what's to come in the 2025 legislative session and receive the latest updates on key issues for cities.



By attending this session, you will:

- Receive a general outlook of the legislative landscape, including learning about the new incoming legislature
- Learn about the implications of a divided House and one-seat split in the Senate
- Learn more about the League's 2025 legislative priorities
- Receive emerging updates on issues affecting cities, such as bonding and housing
- Learn how to stay informed and engaged throughout the legislative session

Register for the legislative preview webinar

Date

Thursday, Jan. 23

12-1 p.m.

Participating Moderator

Anne Finn, intergovernmental relations director, League of Minnesota Cities

Presenters

[LMC intergovernmental relations representatives](#)

Audience

City administrators/managers, clerks, council members, finance staff, HR staff, mayors

Questions

Please submit questions for our presenters ahead of the live broadcast by email on or before 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 22. We will answer as many questions as we can during the live broadcast and will take questions during the webinar as well.

Background Material

[2025 City Policies](#)

[2025 Legislative Priorities](#)

Your LMC Resource

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LMC Sends Dues Notices for Second Half of 2025 Budget Year

January 6, 2025

To account for the League's fiscal year change, the 2025 budget is spread over 16 months instead of 12 months. Starting in 2026, members will receive one annual invoice each January.

The League recently emailed the second of two invoices for membership dues that will cover fiscal year 2025. For members who do not have a current dues email address on file with the League, the invoice and letter were sent via USPS mail.

Fiscal year change, dues schedule

In June 2024, League members voted to align the organization's fiscal year — previously Sept. 1 through Aug. 31 — with the calendar year starting on Jan. 1, 2026. To account for the adjustment, the League's fiscal year 2025 budget is being spread over 16 months instead of 12 months, from Sept. 1, 2024, through Dec. 31, 2025.

Due to the fiscal year change, members received a first invoice in September 2024 to pay for the additional four months of the expanded fiscal year. The second invoice covers Jan. 1, 2025, through Dec. 31, 2025. Starting in 2026, members will receive one annual invoice each January.

Member benefits

Access to affordable training opportunities, consulting services, legislative advocacy, risk management, and the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust's comprehensive city-specific coverages for workers' compensation and property/casualty are just a few of the benefits available to League members.

If you have not yet received your second League membership dues invoice or have any questions about dues, please contact us at billing@lmc.org or (651) 215-4024.

[Read more news articles.](#)

Current Grant Opportunities

State Competitiveness Fund: Matching Funds Program

The Minnesota Department of Commerce is accepting applications for the State Competitiveness Fund (SCF), which offers grants to eligible entities to assist with federal funding matching requirements.

Created by the Legislature, this program aims to improve Minnesota's competitiveness for federal funds under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) fostering economic growth through productivity, competition, and investments.

The SCF provides up to \$100 million in grants to enhance federal funding applications. Eligible entities, as defined in Minn. Stat. § 216C.391, include Minnesota-based cities, organizations, and tribal governments. Projects must support the state's clean energy and climate goals through renewable energy, energy efficiency, conservation, or greenhouse gas reduction.

Key program details:

- Funding limits: No single entity may receive more than \$15 million.
- Small grants: At least \$75 million is reserved for awards under \$1 million.
- Round 4 requirements: Only grants under \$1 million will be considered in this round.

The application deadline is **Jan. 17, 2025**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

[Learn more and apply for SCF matching funds.](#)

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. 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.](#)

2024 Active Transportation & Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grants

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT) is kicking off the 2024 Active Transportation (AT) and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Solicitations on Sept. 23, 2024. Both solicitations will run concurrently and provide up to \$16.252 million and \$8.5 million, respectively, for funding eligible bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Improvements funded by these grants will require a useful life of at least 10 years and must be ready for construction in 2025 or 2026.

Strong projects will:

- Mitigate safety hazards related to interacting with vehicular traffic.
- Create safe and comfortable environments for walking and biking.
- Connect communities and key destinations and boost public health.

The first month of the solicitation schedule will be a period of submittals for Letters of Intent. Applicant entities can, but are not required, to submit potential projects to allow state aid staff to provide feedback on application strength and readiness. The full application submittal period will begin on Nov. 4, 2024, and close on **Jan. 17, 2025**. Project selections will be announced on or before April 30, 2025.

- [Learn more and apply for the Active Transportation grant.](#)
- [Learn more and apply for the Safe Routes to School grant.](#)

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](#)

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

LMC Staff News

New employees

Sarah Sauer joined the League of Minnesota Cities on Jan. 6 as a law clerk. She graduated from Bethel College with bachelor's degrees in accounting and history, and from Luther Seminary with a master's degree in history. Sauer is in her second year of law school at St. Thomas School of Law. Prior to joining the League, she served as a volunteer clinic assistant at LegalCORPS, a tax preparer for CliftonLarsonAllen, and as a tax accountant for U.S. Bank.

Mitchell Walther joined the League of Minnesota Cities on Jan. 6 as a law clerk. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville with bachelor's degrees in criminal justice and political science and is a second-year law student at the University of Minnesota Law School. Prior to joining the League, Walther served as a law clerk for the City of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and as a certified student attorney with the Innocence Clinic at University of Minnesota Law School. He also gained valuable legal experience as a legal assistant for Johnson Law Firm in Appleton, Wisconsin.

SaraJo Metros joined the League of Minnesota Cities on Dec. 9 as a department coordinator for human resources, learning, and strategic initiatives. Metros graduated from Century College with an associate degree in arts. Prior to joining the League, she served as an executive assistant to the CEO of Athena Consulting where she provided comprehensive support to the CEO, C-suite executives, HR manager, and the board of advisers.

Rebecca Schwemmer joined the League of Minnesota Cities on Dec. 9 as a department coordinator for finance and general counsel. She graduated from Minneapolis Business College with an associate degree in graphic design. Prior to joining the League, Schwemmer worked as the deputy clerk for the City of Lake Elmo where she supported the administration, public works, engineering, utility billing, and building departments, as well as coordinated grants and elections.

Madison Mehlberg joined the League of Minnesota Insurance Trust on Dec. 2 as a property and casualty claims specialist. Mehlberg has a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science and a master's degree in public affairs from the University of Wisconsin. Prior to joining LMCIT, she worked with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development as a program and policy analyst in the Division of Employment and Training.

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