



## Request for Host Community Applications

ICMA's Economic Mobility and Opportunity Special Assistants (EMO SA) Program offers a rare, significant infusion of resources to bolster local leadership and align actions and stakeholders around factors that enable all residents to climb the economic ladder.

ICMA invites applications from local governments interested in hosting a full-time, senior level position to spearhead coordinated efforts to advance economic mobility and opportunity for residents.

Local governments selected for this opportunity will receive a grant from ICMA to support salary for and programming directed by their special assistant. Reporting to executive leadership in the local government, the EMO SA will work across departments and external partners to identify strategic priorities and develop a tailored implementation plan informed by a community-engaged co-design process during their 2+ year tenure. ICMA will also facilitate coaching, training, and customized technical assistance to support EMO SAs, individually and as a cohort. ICMA anticipates selecting 15 local governments to serve as host communities for EMO SAs.

*This opportunity is made possible with support from the Gates Foundation.*

### ELIGIBILITY

- Applications must be submitted by U.S. local governments.
- The application must identify at least one active, full ICMA member among the local government's executive leadership.
- Local governments selected for this opportunity must have capacity to support their special assistant with a typical full-time employee benefits package.

### IDEAL HOST COMMUNITIES

- A medium-sized city or county with existing awareness of and motivation to improve local workforce development opportunities, housing affordability, household financial security, and other community conditions that make it possible for residents to live full, prosperous lives.
- A local government with a supportive and collaborative organizational culture.

## PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS

- Local governments selected for this opportunity will receive a grant to pay for salary to support an EMO SA for 2+ years, as well as additional support for local programming, travel to program convenings, and other activities. We anticipate supporting these positions for 30 months, but the exact level and length of support is subject to final budget review. Host communities are also required to provide supplemental salary as necessary; health, and other benefits; contributions to retirement; and paid time off.
- The EMO SA supported by this grant is expected to be dedicated full-time to EMO work at a senior level, reporting directly to executive leadership in the local government. Local governments selected to host an EMO SA can either develop a completely new position or re-work an existing position that is focused on comprehensive economic mobility strategies to meet these requirements.
- Each local government will be able to tailor the job description for their EMO SA and will manage the hiring process with input and support from ICMA. ICMA will share basic expectations and requirements of the position, help advertise the opportunity, and coordinate with the local government on hiring and onboarding.
- Within six months of hiring, the EMO SA will launch a co-design process with internal and external partners to clarify local priorities. Additionally, over the course of their tenure, the EMO SA will be expected to develop a new or expand a current local resource network of stakeholders and partners committed to advancing economic mobility for all residents.
- EMO SAs, and other representatives of the local government as possible, are expected to attend annual convenings of the program and participate in virtual orientation and other meetings as needed. Local governments will also be required to support their EMO SA in submitting an annual report as well as periodic updates highlighting successes and challenges.
- The EMO SA and their community are expected to create a strategy for maintaining the position and/or identifying additional/alternative approaches to continue the jurisdiction's EMO journey beyond the funded time.

## HOW TO APPLY

Local governments interested in participating are encouraged to submit applications accessible via <http://www.icma.org/emo-sa> **no later than May 30, 2025, 5 pm PT**. Applications include questions on the types of economic mobility challenges faced by residents in your community, your local government's commitment to and any work undertaken to address these issues, including strategic plans, priorities, or partnerships you have established. The application also includes questions on how the position will be

supported by executive leadership and proposed compensation and benefits. *Application questions are provided for reference at the end of this document.*

Following the application review, ICMA will shortlist potential host communities and may conduct follow-up interviews. ICMA will then select 15 communities to serve as host communities. Each chosen community will work directly with ICMA to draft a job description for a special assistant that centers economic mobility while meeting the specific needs of the community. ICMA will help to promote the position and support each local government's internal hiring process, with the intention that the EMO SAs will be hired by fall 2025.

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

Local governments will be evaluated on:

- Understanding of local economic mobility and community needs
- Demonstrated commitment to improving economic mobility and opportunity for their residents
- Organizational capacity to advance community-wide economic mobility and opportunity strategies
- Demonstrated commitment to cross-sector partnerships
- An organizational culture and commitment from executive leadership to effectively support an EMO SA

In selecting host sites, ICMA will also aim to ensure geographic, demographic, and economic diversity across the participating local governments.

## **ANTICIPATED TIMELINE**

- April 16, 2025: Applications open for host communities
- April 30, 2025: Information and Q&A session via Zoom, register [here](#)
- May 30, 2025 (5 pm PT): Application closes
- Early June 2025: Shortlist of local governments developed and ICMA may conduct interviews
- Mid-June 2025: 15 selected local governments notified (subject to change)
- Fall 2025: Special Assistants to be hired by local governments
- Q4 2025: In-person convening of program participants (subject to change)

## **CONTACT**

If you have any questions regarding eligibility, participation, or project requirements, please contact us at [emo@icma.org](mailto:emo@icma.org).

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Applications should be submitted via the [online form](https://icma.org/emo-sa) (link also accessible via <https://icma.org/emo-sa>) no later than May 30, 2025, 5 pm PT. The information requested in the online application is previewed below for your planning purposes. Please note that questions marked with an asterisk (\*) require a response.

### Applicant Background Information\*

Name of Local Government

State

2020 Census Population

2020 Census Median Household Income

2025 General Fund Budget

Percentage of Population in Poverty

Percentage of Population at or below 200% Federal Poverty Line, if known (optional to answer)

### Primary Contact Information\*

Primary Contact Name [First, Last]

Position

Email

Phone Number

### ICMA Membership Requirement\*

Local governments applying to host an EMO SA must have at least one full ICMA member in an executive leadership role (e.g., chief administrative officer, deputy or assistant chief administrative officer). Please identify the individual that meets this requirement.

Name [First, Last]

Position

Email

Phone number

### Short Answers

1. What are the primary challenges to upward economic mobility faced by residents in your community? Explain both the known barriers and the populations most impacted by these issues.\* (max: 250 words)
2. Describe how your local government currently prioritizes upward mobility and opportunity for its residents. Please highlight any examples of existing programs and relevant priorities of your governing body.\* (max: 250 words)

- a) Please share links to or upload any documents such as existing plans (comprehensive, strategic, sustainability, economic mobility) or strategies that support these efforts. (max: 3 files; optional)
- 3. What organizational capacity challenges currently hinder your local government from planning or implementing holistic upward mobility and opportunity initiatives for your community? (max: 250 words)
- 4. In addition to coordination across the local government, EMO SAs are expected to facilitate deep engagement of the community and external partners to inform strategic priorities and implementation of activities during their tenure. Given these expectations, please describe any existing internal/external collaborations, coalitions, networks, or other relevant models that could support these efforts.\* (max: 250 words)
- 5. How does your local government's organizational culture support innovation, creativity, and working across silos? (max: 250 words)
- 6. The special assistant is expected to be dedicated full-time to EMO work at a senior level, reporting directly to executive leadership in the local government. Local governments selected to host an EMO SA can either develop a completely new position or re-work an existing position that is focused on comprehensive economic mobility strategies to meet these requirements, and can give the EMO SA a functional title that aligns with their existing staff structure. Please describe the following:
  - a) How will this position engage with executive leadership within your local government? (max: 100 words)
  - b) Do you anticipate creating an entirely new role or adapting an existing position? If you propose modifying an existing position, describe any adaptations necessary to meet the full-time focus on EMO and senior-level reporting requirements. Include a potential functional title for the EMO SA, if known. (max: 150 words)
  - c) What is the proposed compensation for this role, commensurate with your local government's compensation structure?
  - d) Describe the benefits your local government will provide to the EMO SA. (Note: while salary support will be provided through grant funding, host local governments are expected to cover benefits for the EMO SAs.)
- 7. If relevant, upload an existing job description that you plan to tailor for this program. (optional)
- 8. Is there any other information we should consider at this time? (optional)