



## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 5/2/2025

### Grant Package & Benefits

- What does this grant cover?
  - The largest share of grant funding will be dedicated to salary for the EMO Special Assistant (EMO SA) across their tenure, which is anticipated to be 30 months. EMO SA salaries will vary between host communities and should be commensurate with local government's salary for senior level positions. The anticipated upper limit for this support is \$250,000 total over the course of a 30-month tenure in the host community. **Example:** *the base salary for a comparable-level position in your local government is \$85,000 annually (\$7,083.33 monthly); you could expect to receive a total of \$212,500 to cover 30 months of salary support through this grant.*
  - Additionally, the grant includes limited funding for wrap-around services such as relocation support; the EMO SA's travel to annual convenings; consulting and expenses for a community engagement/co-design process; hiring an intern; and implementation of local activities. ICMA will work with each host community to develop a custom scope and budget based on specific needs and priorities; we anticipate approximately \$100,000 total per host community over the entirety of the grant to support these expenses.
  - Beyond the grant funding, ICMA will support the EMO SAs and host communities with individual and group coaching and technical assistance.
- What benefits are the local governments expected to cover?
  - The host community will be required to provide the same benefits to the Special Assistant that is provided to a full-time employee, such as health, retirement, PTO, etc.
  - Depending on each local government's pay structure, the local government may also need to supplement the salary that this grant offers so that the pay is commensurate with a senior-level staff position.

- Is there a minimum salary range for the special assistant position?
  - The salaries of the EMO SAs must be commensurate with each community's salary range for senior level positions.
- How will the grant be disbursed?
  - The grant will be distributed in multiple payments; the first payment is anticipated to be disbursed within 1-2 months of selection to cover approximately six months of salary for the special assistant, as well as initial activities and travel. We anticipate subsequent payments to be disbursed annually.
- What are the necessary steps to apply for and receive the grant?
  - Applications are due by May 30<sup>th</sup>, 5pm PT. Program details as well as the application questions are available in the Request for Applications: <https://icma.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/ICMA-EMO-Special-Assistants-Program-Host-Community-RFA.pdf>.
  - If necessary, ICMA may conduct interviews with potential host communities, likely in early June.
  - Once selected, each host community will need to work quickly with ICMA on the contracting process, including providing required vendor documents to finalize a sub-agreement with ICMA, as well as attending any orientation meetings.
  - Soon thereafter, each host community will manage their own hiring process to hire their EMO SA. To ensure compliance with program expectations, ICMA will support local governments with sample language for position descriptions, participating in final candidate interviews, and other tasks as necessary.

### **Eligibility, Application Content, and Selection Criteria**

- Are there specific eligibility criteria for municipal applicants?
  - Applications must be submitted by U.S. local governments.
  - As an ICMA-sponsored program, applicants must identify at least one active, full ICMA member among the local government's executive leadership (i.e., chief administrative officer or deputy/assistant chief administrative officer).

- Local governments selected must be able to support their EMO SA with a typical full-time employee benefits package.
- The Request for Applications specifies that the special assistant has to report directly to executive leadership. What would satisfy this reporting requirement?
  - The EMO SA is expected to report to a member of the executive leadership team (e.g., chief administrative officer or deputy/assistant chief administrative officer). The intention of this expectation is to verify a level of seniority for these EMO SA positions, and to facilitate their authority to work across departments and lead EMO initiatives. If you are unsure whether what you envision meets our expectations, feel free to email [emo@icma.org](mailto:emo@icma.org) to discuss.
- What is a 'medium-sized' community in the context of this program?
  - A 'medium-sized' community in the context of this program does not have set population thresholds, but rather is imagined as a community that has the capacity to support a full-time EMO SA at the senior level, while also demonstrating that such a position would have a transformative impact on EMO initiatives in the community. We understand that the organizational capacity of each local government and individual local contexts vary; rather than being prescriptive, we encourage communities to apply who believe they will significantly benefit from this position and have the resources to support its success. If you are unsure of eligibility because you believe your community falls outside of the 'medium-sized' community threshold or has particular characteristics, but you are still interested in applying, feel free to email [emo@icma.org](mailto:emo@icma.org) to discuss.
- How do I find out if my community has an ICMA member in their executive leadership?
  - If you are unsure if your community has an ICMA member in a senior leadership position, you can ask your city/county administrator or you can email us at [emo@icma.org](mailto:emo@icma.org).
- What are the selection criteria for communities?
  - Host communities must demonstrate an understanding of their community's specific EMO needs; a commitment to improving economic mobility and opportunity for the community; the organizational capacity to

advance EMO strategies; a commitment to cross-sector partnerships; and commitment from executive leadership to support an EMO SA.

- Applicants are encouraged to be as specific and thoughtful as possible in response to questions. Please note that the Request for Applications includes all application questions to prepare in advance of submission: <https://icma.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/ICMA-EMO-Special-Assistants-Program-Host-Community-RFA.pdf>
- What does it mean for a community to show commitment to enhancing economic mobility and opportunity?
  - How a local government demonstrates a commitment to enhancing economic mobility and opportunity is context-dependent and can be demonstrated in the inclusion of EMO-related strategies and topics in a local government's comprehensive plans, strategic plans, the priorities of their governing body, etc. We recognize that some communities have already been working with an EMO framework, while for others this framework or approach may offer new terminology for longstanding efforts. For communities newer to economic mobility, we encourage you to look at the resources and tools from ICMA and our partners linked on [our website](#) (e.g., the [Upward Mobility Framework](#) and the [Economic Mobility Catalog](#)) for inspiration in making the case for how your existing programs or priorities support advancing economic mobility.
- Does the Special Assistant have to be a completely new position or can it be a position we already have?
  - Local governments are able to develop a completely new position or re-work an existing position that is focused on comprehensive economic mobility and opportunity strategies to meet the grant requirements. If you intend to adapt an existing position, you will need to verify that the role is fully dedicated to EMO work. The application will ask for specifics about how the position will engage with executive leadership; whether you anticipate creating a new role or adapting an existing role; and proposed compensation and benefits.
- What is the co-design process mentioned in the Request for Applications?
  - The co-design process is a participatory process that brings together individuals most impacted in the community to design and develop solutions. For this program, the intention is for a co-design process to

inform the EMO SA's strategic agenda and workplan. Therefore, it is imperative that this process occur as early as possible in each host community, i.e., within the first 6 months of when the EMO SA starts. We anticipate the EMO SAs will coordinate these co-design processes in their communities, with additional support from ICMA, consultants, and their local governments as needed and appropriate (including the use of grant funds for these purposes).

### **Programming**

- How will the current efforts of our community within economic mobility and opportunity be integrated with the EMO SA Program?
  - We expect and encourage communities to think about how their current projects advance economic mobility for their residents, drawing from the resources provided on our site that explain different aspects of economic mobility. When applying, we encourage you to draw from and mention your current priorities and projects, specifically detailing how these can be understood as part of a holistic strategy for economic mobility. Please also tell us about how you envision this opportunity helping you to overcome any capacity limitations, structural barriers, or other persistent challenges to your current efforts. Additionally, we would like to know about relevant existing local relationships, coalitions, or resource networks that the local government has developed with other partners in the community that would be supportive of this program.
- Will the local government be expected to hire the EMO SA full-time after the completion of the 2.5 years of ICMA funding?
  - While ICMA understands that communities cannot guarantee the EMO SA will be incorporated as a full-time position at the completion of the program, the ideal community for this program is one that has a vision of longer-term support and sustainability for EMO efforts. During the SAs' tenure, ICMA will work with each community to develop a sustainability strategy for maintaining the position and/or identifying additional/alternative approaches to continue the jurisdiction's EMO journey.

### **Special Assistants Position**

- What will the process be to apply for the Special Assistant positions?

- Special Assistants will be hired by each host community, so the process is likely to look different for each local government. Those interested in potentially becoming an EMO SA are encouraged to fill out the [EMO SA Interest Form](#), which will enable ICMA to send general updates and specific information about applying once host communities are selected. ICMA will also share your information directly with the selected host communities.
- Are there specific experience requirements for the EMO SA positions?
  - The EMO SA positions are expected to be senior level roles, reporting to executive leadership within the local government, which implies some typical prior experience in terms of responsibilities and tenure. However, this program is also interested in nurturing a diverse field of EMO leaders, and we recognize that relevant experience may be demonstrated in many forms. Therefore, we encourage anyone who is interested to [submit their contact information and resumes](#). Ultimately, while ICMA will support the hiring process and provide some parameters for hiring, the selection of the EMO SA will be up to each local government.
- Are there specific elements required to be in the job description for EMO SAs?
  - It is anticipated that host communities will take the lead on drafting their job descriptions, but coordinate with ICMA to ensure final language complies with program expectations with respect to senior level, full-time focus on EMO, key activities and deliverables, travel to/participation in program activities, etc. ICMA will offer specific language around these items as needed.
- How will ICMA use its network and channels to help create a deep pool of candidates for selected local governments?
  - ICMA will leverage our contacts and communication channels to assist host communities throughout the hiring process. Currently, ICMA is collecting resumes from interested candidates through the form linked above. We will communicate with prospective candidates once applications for positions are live, as well as share candidate profiles directly with host communities. Additionally, ICMA will utilize our vast network of partners to promote this program and the EMO SA positions within their respective networks. Limited support for relocation, if needed, is also anticipated as part of the total grant package.

- How does year one look for a special assistant?
  - In the first year, the EMO SA will be expected to gain familiarity with the locality and region in which they have been hired, attend onboarding meetings, and gain understanding of the ecosystem of stakeholders in the community. Within the first six months of their tenure, the EMO SA, with the support of the host community, will coordinate a co-design process to gain a better understanding of community priorities on economic mobility topics. Relatedly, the expectation is that during their tenure, the EMO SA will work to develop or strengthen existing relationships, coalitions, or resource networks of local partners to support and advance EMO priorities.
- Will this individual be on-site?
  - Yes, the EMO SA is expected to be based on-site and/or in the community a majority of time for the duration of their tenure.
- Can the EMO SA be hired as a consultant/contractor?
  - No, the EMO SA is expected to serve as a full-time employee within the local government.