

Policy Briefing Summary

City Council



Regarding:	Resolution to Appropriate National League of Cities Southern Cities Economic Initiative Program Funds - \$60,000 (2nd reading)
Staff Contact(s):	Steven King, Assistant to the City Manager, Ashley Marshall, Chief Prosperity Officer
Presenter:	Steven King, Assistant to the City Manager
Date of Proposed Action:	February 17, 2026

Issue

Appropriate funding from the National League of Cities (NLC) Southern Cities Economic Initiative (SCEI) Phase II program.

Background / Rule

In 2024, the City and its partner, United Way of Greater Charlottesville, were accepted into the first phase of the National League of Cities (NLC) Southern Cities Economic Initiative (SCEI) with 19 other localities, which focused on research and planning to create a proposed initiative to increase the economic mobility and opportunity of a locality. In 2026, after completing phase 1 through a submission of a Business Plan, the City and United Way of Greater Charlottesville have been accepted into the second two-year-long phase along with 13 other localities that will focus on implementing the proposed initiative: The Early Learning Center Career Launch Initiative, which focuses on strengthening economic inclusion by expanding and stabilizing the region's early childhood education workforce, thus supporting job seekers, center leaders, and families by expanding the opportunity for our littlest residents to access safe, quality early learning and child care programs.

Analysis

In 2024, the National League of Cities (NLC) competitively selected 20 cities to participate in the Southern Cities Economic Initiative (SCEI) program phase, including the City of Charlottesville (see <https://www.nlc.org/post/2025/04/24/national-league-of-cities-selects-20-southern-communities-to-participate-in-economic-resiliency-cohort/>). The City entered this planning phase in partnership with United Way of Greater Charlottesville, which leads our areas Ready Regions work as well as has a focus on the impact of accessible early learning opportunities and child care for our communities' families.

Throughout the planning phase, the 20 communities had the opportunity to draft a business plan in hopes of receiving additional grant funding to implement their proposed program. The City of Charlottesville is one of 14 cities selected for the next two-year phase of SCEI. The other cities selected to participate in the implementation phase are Atlanta, GA; Center Point, AL; Fayetteville, AR; Greenville, MS; Harrisonburg, VA; Jackson, MS; Jonesboro, GA; Lauderhill, FL; Little Rock, AR; Monroe, LA; Natchitoches, LA; New Orleans, LA; and Thomasville, NC. The implementation phase and corresponding funding for this grant is through NLC's partnerships with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

The City is being awarded \$60,000 for the implementation phase, which will run from January 2026 to December 2027. Funds will be spent on implementing "The Early Learning Career Launch (ELCL) initiative," a partnership between the City of Charlottesville and United Way of Greater Charlottesville

(UWGC) designed to strengthen economic inclusion by expanding and stabilizing the region's early childhood education workforce. Anchored within the City Manager's Community Prosperity Laboratory, under the leadership of the Chief Prosperity Officer, this initiative directly addresses two local barriers to economic mobility: the shortage of qualified early childhood educators, which constrains childcare availability and family workforce participation, and the lack of accessible, paid, and supported career pathways for residents seeking to enter or advance in the early learning field. The ELCL will focus primarily on its Program Level 2: New Entry-Level Educators, creating structured, paid pathways into the profession for adults seeking stable, meaningful employment. Through the Southern Cities Economic Inclusion (SCEI) grant, the program focuses on delivering short-term workforce training, hands-on mentorship, wraparound support, and financial incentives to prepare and retain new educators in partnership with local childcare centers.

Financial Impact

None; the grant funding will go to our partners, United Way of Greater Charlottesville, to fund the workforce program pilot project. No general fund dollars will be allocated for this project.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval and appropriation of the NLC SCEI grant funds to allow exploration of key programs that could increase access to Early Learning classrooms for parents, and provide employment opportunities for members of our community.

Recommended Motion (if Applicable)

I move to approve the resolution appropriating the \$60,000 from NLC to support the Implementation Phase of the Southern Cities Economic Initiative program.

Attachments

1. Resolution Appropriating NLC SCEI Implementation Grant for \$60,000