



HARRISONBURG VA FRIENDLY BY NATURE



For Immediate Release – May 6, 2025

Contact: Michael Parks, Harrisonburg Director of Communications & Public Engagement
540.432.7701
Michael.Parks@harrisonburgva.gov

Harrisonburg Selected for National League of Cities' Grant Program to Boost Economic Growth and Resilience

HARRISONBURG, Va. – Harrisonburg Economic Development is one of only a few organizations in the nation selected for an effort that will help local entrepreneurs find success.

Mayor Deanna Reed announced this week that Harrisonburg has been selected to participate in the Southern Cities Economic Initiative (SCEI), a program led by National League of Cities in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. The City will receive a grant of \$15,000 from NLC through funding by SCEI's philanthropic partners and will join 19 other cities from across the southern United States to develop strategies to assist small businesses and drive long-term economic growth.

Through participation in this project Harrisonburg plans to expand the outreach and efforts of the Harrisonburg Entrepreneurship Development Initiative (HEDI), a pilot program launched in February. HEDI seeks to develop early-stage business owners by providing one-on-one consulting. Participants meet with a business coach to discuss the business, and to identify an area in which they'd like to enhance their skills. They then engage with a dedicated subject matter expert for the training. Once completed, participants are eligible for a mini-grant.

City leaders believe Harrisonburg's selection for the program is a testament to the City's dedication to economic development and financial empowerment for community members.

"We are committed to fostering economic opportunity for all residents, and we are excited to be part of this initiative with NLC and our fellow Southern cities," Mayor Deanna Reed said. "Harrisonburg is focused on being a city where residents can attain financial security and empowerment through effective small business and entrepreneurship support and strategies that build economic wellbeing and resiliency while eliminating long-standing inequities. And this program will go a long way in helping us support our strong and diverse entrepreneurial talent."



Harrisonburg Economic Development recently received a grant from the National League of Cities' Southern Cities Economic Initiative which will help support local entrepreneurs.

SCEI programming includes tailored technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, access to data and experts from the Federal Reserve Bank as well as connections to national funders and assistance to leverage longer-term funding, including an opportunity to apply for additional NLC grants of up to \$60,000 and deeper assistance with strategy implementation.

“Local governments play a critical role in driving economic growth and expanding opportunities for all residents,” NLC CEO and Executive Director Clarence E. Anthony said. “The South has significant potential to lead on economic resilience and serve as a model for the nation. We are thrilled to collaborate with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta on the Southern Cities Economic Initiative to provide the tools to build stronger, more resilient economies.”

SCEI’s initial planning phase will run through October 31, 2025. Upon completion of the initial planning phase, participating cities will have an opportunity to advance to a more intensive implementation phase, which extends through December 2027.

Other cities selected to participate in the initiative include Atlanta, Ga.; Canton, Ga.; Center Point, Ala.; Charlottesville, Va.; Fayetteville, Ark.; Greenville, Miss.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Jackson, Miss.; Jonesboro, Ga.; Lauderhill, Fla.; Little Rock, Ark.; Monroe, La.; Morrisville, N.C.; Nashville, Tenn.; Natchitoches, La.; New Orleans, La.; Pensacola, Fla.; Sunflower County, Miss.; and Thomasville, N.C.

This initiative is made possible through the support of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Learn more at www.nlc.org/initiative/southern-cities-economic-inclusion-scei-expanding-capacity-building-resilience.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 56,879 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.

###