

2020 ECONOMIC MOBILITY REPORT | JANUARY 2020

Key Findings

City Programs to Promote Economic Mobility

All 53 cities surveyed are focused on helping business owners grow their business, with 94% of these programs self-rated as “moderate” to “very strong” in program effectiveness and ability to meet the need of their population.

Of the 53 cities surveyed, 43 have some form of a residential rental assistance program, with 86% of these cities rating their programs as “moderate” to “very strong” when it comes to program effectiveness.

Homeownership assistance is available in 93% of the surveyed cities, with 90% rated as either “moderate” to “very strong.”

As cities become increasingly diverse, 76% of those surveyed have implemented “Welcoming City” programs centered on immigrant inclusion. These programs perform well, with 81% of them being self-rated as either “moderate” to “very strong” in terms of program strength.

Many cities, 37 of those surveyed, offer free tax assistance programs. 94% of these programs were self-rated as either “moderate” to “very strong,” in terms of program effectiveness.

34 cities, or 64% of those surveyed, have implemented free/subsidized legal service programs. 79% of the cities rated their program strength as either “moderate” to “very strong.”

29 cities are also looking to increase their minimum wage. Efforts to increase the minimum wage received a 79% “moderate” to “very strong” effectiveness rate.

A variety of programs are in early stages of implementation and development, such as “ban the salary box” initiatives (26 cities); pre-trial services (25 cities); reduction or elimination of excessive towing (21 cities); and elimination of punitive revocation of driver’s licenses (18 cities).

Among youth programs, 98% of the cities surveyed have implemented summer youth employment/enrichment programs. 95% of cities reported having programs that are “moderate” to “very strong.”

Most cities, 50, have also created paid internship or youth job positions; 92% rated these programs as “moderate” to “very strong” in terms of program effectiveness.

To supplement their programs and promote community leadership among underserved youth, 77% of the cities have implemented programs dedicated to professional/leadership training for young people. In terms of program effectiveness 93% of these cities rated their programming as “moderate” to “very strong.”

Regarding younger children, 62% of cities provide free and/or subsidized Pre-Kindergarten, and free or subsidized child care. The Pre-K programs are rated 85% effective; child care is rated 75% effective “moderate,” to “very strong.”

Local Barriers to Economic Mobility

Cities identified a broad set of barriers to economic mobility, with over forty-five named. Below is a list of the barriers most frequently identified:

- Lack of available affordable housing (11)
- Funding/budget constraints to support & scale economic mobility programming (7)
- Lack of public transportation for low-income residents (6)
- Low wages (5)
- Pre-emption laws that prohibit the city from addressing economic mobility (4)
- Lack of access to effective jobs/skills training (3)
- Historic redlining/zoning issues (3)

Federal Policy Recommendations

Cities cited the following priorities for Federal action to promote economic mobility:

- Expanded workforce training/funding (29 cities)
- Subsidized/universal child care (19 cities)
- Subsidized/universal Pre-K (14 cities)
- Support for small business development and entrepreneurship (13 cities)
- Expanded Federal EITC and Child Tax Credits (9 cities)
- Increase the Federal Minimum Wage (9 cities)

State Policy Recommendations:

The most commonly cited policy recommendations to states included:

- Criminal record sealing or expungement for non-violent crimes (10 cities)
- Elimination of state pre-emption laws (10 cities)
- Creation or expansion of State EITC and/or Child Tax Credits (9 cities)
- Establishment of statewide child/college savings accounts (6 cities)
- Establishment of statewide free or subsidized Pre-K (6 cities)

Cities Surveyed

The average poverty rate of 51 of 53 cities surveyed was 16.73%.
The average median income of all cities surveyed was \$59,432.00.