



NACo's ECONOMIC MOBILITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK:

2019–2020



Background

The American dream has been central to our national identity since our founding documents proclaimed the tenets of equality and the pursuit of happiness for all its citizens. The United States is believed to be a land of opportunity where, if you work hard, you can control your own destiny regardless of to whom or where you were born. While aspirational as a national ethos, compounding poverty and barriers to building intergenerational wealth make the dream unattainable for many.

Lack of opportunity is curbing the financial success of Americans across communities. Today, only half of children grow up to earn more than their parents, and intergenerational mobility in our country has been stagnant for decades. Directly following the end of the Great Recession, the United States began a ten-year period of recovery and expansion — the longest on record — which included historically low unemployment and slow but steady wage growth nationwide. Individual wealth did not keep pace, however, and in May 2020 almost one in five Americans reported having no emergency savings. As recession recovery transitioned to pandemic recovery, the health and economic impacts of the novel coronavirus pandemic have highlighted the economic inequalities within and between local communities. Geography and demography dictate the experiences of many Americans and are increasingly seen as determinants of economic outcomes.

America's counties are invested in local residents' economic security and play an important role in the health and welfare of their populations. Counties invest over \$200 billion annually in economic development and provide the primary social safety net, outspending cities at a rate of 3 to 1 on health services or public welfare. In collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Association of Counties (NACo) is empowering counties to improve economic mobility.

Overview of the Program

In 2019, NACo established the **Economic Mobility Leadership Network** of county leaders to engage on these issues, assess the current barriers to mobility and share scalable and transferable programs across the country. Network members attended interactive convenings in Multnomah County, Ore., Hennepin County, Minn. and Garrett County, Md. to learn about the economic barriers faced in each community and how they are being addressed.

Convening throughout 2019, the Network established leader engagement and procedures for exchange that will continue to inform and structure future research and programming on economic mobility. This report highlights the Network membership and the convenings, peer learning opportunities and key data analysis they explored in 2019 and what is to come in the next phase of the project.

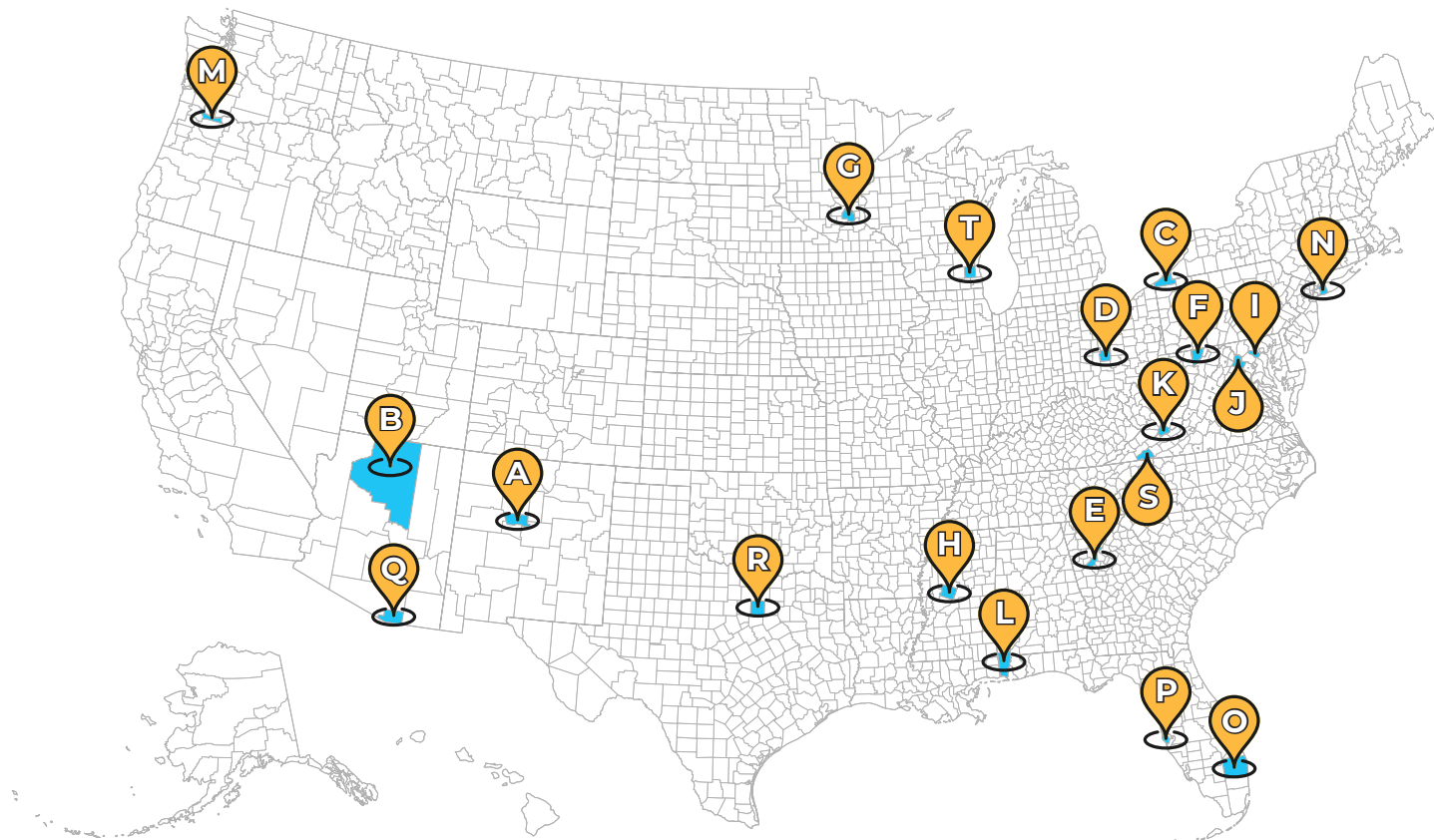
**92% of
Americans born
in 1940**
earned more than
their parents.



For those born
in 1984,
**only 50% made
more than their
parents.**



Participating Counties



2019 ECONOMIC MOBILITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK PARTICIPANTS:

- A. Commissioner Maggie Hart Stebbins**, Bernalillo County, N.M.
- B. Supervisor Lena Fowler**, Coconino County, Ariz.
- C. County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper**, Erie County, Pa.
- D. Commissioner Kevin Boyce**, Franklin County, Ohio
- E. Commissioner Natalie Hall**, Fulton County, Ga.
- F. Commissioner Jim Hinebaugh**, Garrett County, Md.
- G. Commissioner Marion Greene**, Hennepin County, Minn.
- H. John Greer Jr.**, Holmes County, Miss.
- I. County Executive Calvin Ball**, Howard County, Md.
- J. Chair Phyllis Randall**, Loudoun County, Va.
- K. Commissioner Greg Puckett**, Mercer County, W.Va.
- L. Commissioner Merceria Ludgood**, Mobile County, Ala.
- M. Commissioner Lori Stegmann**, Multnomah County, Ore.
- N. County Executive Laura Curran**, Nassau County, N.Y.
- O. Commissioner Mack Bernard**, Palm Beach County, Fla.
- P. Commissioner Kathleen Peters**, Pinellas County, Fla.
- Q. Supervisor Manuel Ruiz**, Santa Cruz County, Ariz.
- R. Commissioner Roy Charles Brooks**, Tarrant County, Texas
- S. Supervisor Allison Mays**, Washington County, Va.
- T. Supervisor Larry Nelson**, Waukesha County, Wis.

20 county officials from across the country traveled to three counties (two urban and one rural) which have made concerted efforts and demonstrated success in addressing economic mobility locally. The trips were immersive and allowed county officials an authentic view of the communities they visited, as well as opportunities to share experience and best practices among the cohort. County leaders learned about how counties can use data and mapping technologies, workforce programs and rural poverty issues, among other topics, during the curated convenings.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPATING COUNTIES:

Scope of Network:

The Network is comprised of 20 bipartisan elected county leaders from a cross-section of urban (50%), suburban (20%) and rural (30%) communities. Together, these counties represent:



\$19.5B in community
investments



13.08M
residents



6.77M
residents in the civilian
labor force



5.4M
housing units,
occupied & vacant

Participating counties fall within the following ranges for key economic indicators:

Median Household income:
\$20,000 to \$125,672

Unemployment rate:
2.9% to 9.5%

Poverty rate:
3% to 41%

“This Network, and specifically the community-focused aspects (i.e., site visits and local business supports), should be the model for NACo programming.”

— Mercer County
Commissioner
Greg Puckett



Showcasing Data-Driven Approaches: Multnomah County, Ore.

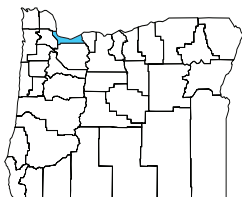
Multnomah County, Ore.

2019 Population: 812,855

2018 Median Household Income:

\$64,337

2018 Education Attainment*: 45%



Keynote Speaker:

Liz Hipple, Senior Policy Advisor at the [Washington Center for Equitable Growth](#)

Convening Highlights:

- [Po'shines Restaurant: Teach Me to Fish](#), a comprehensive culinary education initiative
- [Portland Mercado](#), a local incubator and economic development initiative
- Tailored, hands-on GIS training session led by [Esri](#)

“Your zip code doesn’t determine your path in life, but it can have a lot to do with the challenges and opportunities you face along that path.”

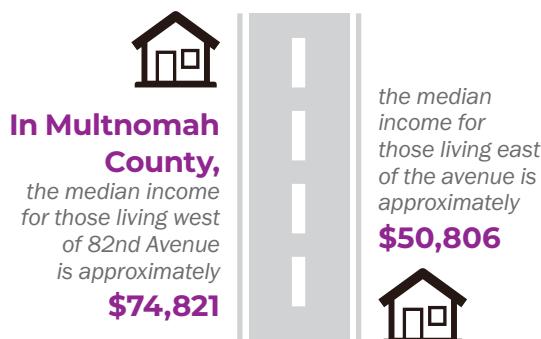
— Multnomah County Commissioner Lori Stegmann



NACo kicked off the EMLN’s convening series in Multnomah County to focus on their data-driven approach to economic mobility. The county’s [Marginalization Index](#), a tool that amalgamates various risk factors for marginalization, was used by county officials and local organizations to guide resource allocation, apply for additional funding for economic programs and ensure vulnerable populations are prioritized in the development and delivery of services. This robust tool used 22 indicators and GIS mapping software to assess health, justice, human services and other outcomes to identify particular needs of specific com-

munities. The tool also allowed county leaders to garner resident input. County officials created large poster maps at community events to get input from residents on the greatest areas of need and solicit feedback on indicators (such as median household income, unemployment rate and density of populations of color) of most interest to the community.

In addition to hearing from the county and the mobile tour, the cohort participated in an in-depth [overview of economic mobility](#), emphasizing the relationships between how race and geography impact poverty and economic inequality.



Source: <https://multco.us/commissioner-stegmann/economic-mobility>

Geographic disparities in median income in Multnomah County highlight which parts of the county may be experiencing economic marginalization. The Marginalization Index allows county leaders to identify specific policy needs to address these concerns.

*Share of the county’s over-25 population that have received a Bachelor’s degree or more

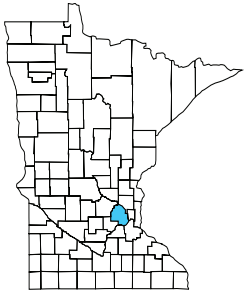
Addressing the Skills Gap: Hennepin County, Minn.

Hennepin County, Minn.

2019 Population: 1,265,843

2018 Median Household Income:
\$74,113

2018 Education Attainment*: 49%



Keynote Speakers:

Dante Chinni, [Director of American Communities Project](#), and Rudy Espinoza, Executive Director of [Inclusive Action for the City](#)

Convening Highlights:

- West Hennepin Affordable Housing Land Trust
- Salon Talks with Local Leaders
- County implementation plan development session facilitated by the [Bipartisan Policy Center](#)

\$1
Trillion



Without addressing the racial wealth gap, the country could **lose an estimated \$1 trillion in economic activity in the next 10 years.**

**Share of the county's over-25 population that have received a Bachelor's degree or more*

Hennepin County's success in creating a Workforce Council to address the skills gap and engage local leaders across sectors in a comprehensive, community-wide, evaluated program, was the focus of the second convening. The county has faced hiring challenges and has strived to target underserved populations, particularly new refugees from East African communities for services.

In addition to a mobile tour and deep dive into the county's Work-

force Council, the cohort explored the relationships between race, geography and economic mobility in a vibrant keynote discussion. Diving into the historical context and data-driven research on the persistent and growing racial wealth gap, leaders called for alternative finance tools that specifically help Black and Latinx entrepreneurs and families, rent stabilization policies and strong public institutions during this session.



"Inequality is built into our economic system... Any financial progress that Black people made was regarded as an affront to white supremacy. After a decade of Black gains under Reconstruction, a much longer period of racial violence would wipe nearly all of it away."

— Rudy Espinoza
Executive Director of Inclusive Action for the City

Tackling Multigenerational Poverty: Garrett County, Md.

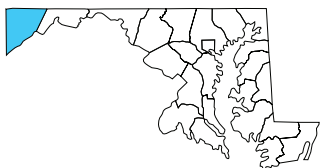


Garrett County, Md.

2019 Population: 29,014

2018 Median Household Income:
\$49,619

2018 Education Attainment*: 20%



Keynote Speaker:

Sarah Haight, [Associate Director for ASCEND Network and Outreach, The Aspen Institute](#)

Convening Highlights:

- [Garrett College Career Technology Training Center](#)
- Networking with “2-Generation” practitioners at the [Garrett County Community Action](#)
- Communications and media training led by [Throughline Group](#)

The Network visited Garrett County for its third convening — a county that is aggressively and creatively addressing generational poverty across sectors of its rural community. This convening largely focused on rural poverty issues and the county highlighted their [2-Generation approach to poverty](#), in partnership with The Aspen Institute’s Ascend Initiative, which emphasizes creating opportunities for and addressing needs of both children and the adults in their lives to-

gether. The key to the county’s success is collaboration with community-based organizations, schools and business owners. Through the program, the county and its partners reorganized county programs to create systems that are more human-centered and implemented data sharing across agencies and service providers to better meet the needs of their residents. The Board also established a scholarship program to make college more accessible for all its youth.



Supporting children and their caregivers together has an outside impact for generations.

A college degree doubles a parent’s income.

A \$3,000 increase in family income during early childhood yields a 17% increase in adult earnings.

*Share of the county’s over-25 population that have received a Bachelor’s degree or more

Overview of Impact and Data Measures



Highlights from the 2019 Advancing Economic Mobility and Opportunity Project Survey

To better understand the county needs and interests and assess the perceived value of the pilot Network, NACo surveyed participating county officials with the following objectives:

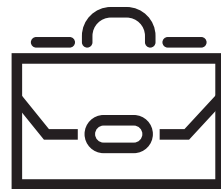
- To assess participants' baseline knowledge of economic mobility.
- To learn about the work counties were already doing to address economic mobility within their communities.
- To document and track implementation and tangible goals for county leaders to take back to their communities.
- To monitor language shifts in how county leaders are describing economic mobility in their communities.
- To measure the impact of convenings and NACo programming.

All participants completed the survey.

Key Target Areas

County leaders indicate their top three targets for improving economic mobility (in order of importance) are:

1



**WORKFORCE
OPPORTUNITIES**

2



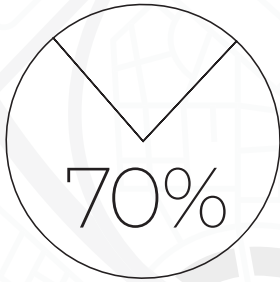
**AFFORDABLE
HOUSING**

3



**EDUCATIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES
AND ATTAINMENT**

Outcomes of the Network's Work in 2019



70% of Network members noted using GIS mapping and implementing marginalization indexes in their home counties after being introduced to it during the convening; specifically:

One county included the addition of a role for a GIS expert in their next budget

[Howard County, Md.](#) has since launched a data dashboard of their own



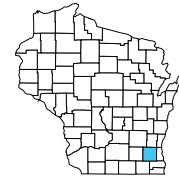
Members took other solutions back to their home counties, including:



Maker spaces,
census campaigns,
racial equity trainings
and county employment
training services

Members are increasingly including economic mobility or related issues in their budgets and their strategic planning goals; specifically:

6 Six members have created line items in their budgets for mobility-related issues

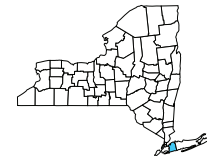


Waukesha County, Wis., in its [2020-2024 consolidated plan](#), set a goal for using Community Development Block Grant funding to “support programs that promote economic mobility for low and moderate-income individuals and families”

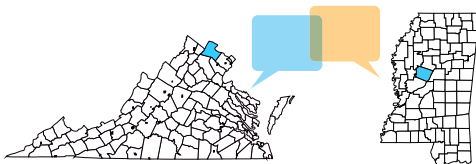
Members have announced specific plans to tackle mobility-related subtopics:



Franklin County, Ohio launched the initiative Rise Together Blueprint for Reducing Poverty, including a list of more than 120 goals, action steps and recommendations, including a specific \$17 million for affordable housing



Nassau County, N.Y. is also working to specifically target affordable housing with County Executive Curran calling it the “most critical issue for Nassau in 2019”



Loudoun County, Va. (the wealthiest county in the U.S.) and **Holmes County, Miss.** (the poorest county in the U.S.) developed a mentorship relationship to share solutions and create peer learning opportunities around economic mobility

What Comes Next



NACo is working on a COVID-19 Solutions Tracker to document and share how counties are how other counties are stimulating economic recovery from COVID-19.



NACo is continuing to provide a space for constant communication and facilitating information sharing on economic mobility between our member counties.



NACo and partners will work with member counties on equitable economic recovery technical assistance in 2021.



The Network will resume in-person convenings in 2021.

Key Contacts

We would be happy to hear from you about the Economic Mobility Leadership Network or any of NACo's Resilient Economies & Communities work.

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BILL & MELINDA
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