

White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Fact Sheet

What is SC2?

The Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative (SC2) supports President Obama's agenda to make historic investments to build ladders of opportunity for those working hard to make it to the middle class and to partner with communities that were hardest-hit by the recent recession.

In July 2011, the Obama Administration launched the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative, an innovative and flexible pilot initiative designed to strengthen local capacity and spark economic growth in economically distressed communities. SC2 developed out of conversations with mayors, Members of Congress, foundations, nonprofits and other partners working in economically distressed communities who consistently highlighted challenges of local governments, the inadequacy of disjointed programs, and the need for a strong, clear and more coordinated relationship with the federal government. SC2 primarily operates in 10 locations that were chosen during the pilot phase of the initiative:

- Seven locations receive intensive technical assistance from federal inter-agency teams (Community Solutions Teams) that work alongside the mayor in City Hall to support the community's vision for economic development: **Chester, PA; Detroit, MI; Fresno, CA; Memphis, TN; New Orleans, LA; Cleveland and Youngstown, OH.**
- Three other locations have been named as recipients of the Economic Development Administration's SC2 Economic Visioning Challenge: **Greensboro, NC; Hartford, CT; and Las Vegas, NV.**

Through this work the Administration seeks to not only assist these ten communities, but to help many more through identifying policy lessons and barriers and disseminate best practices.

SC2 Accomplishments:

- At a time when communities must accomplish more with every dollar of investment, SC2's work has enabled communities to more effectively utilize more than \$345 million in existing federal funds.
- SC2 Teams have met the goal of redefining and strengthening the relationship between the federal government and local partners by facilitating at least 160 new cross-sector partnerships – involving philanthropic and non-profit partners, businesses and other local anchor institutions working with municipal and federal staff.
- More than 700 small businesses and other organizations have received technical assistance from SC2 to support local economic development goals.

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SC2 Accomplishments (continued):

- At the start of SC2, the potential impact of the initiative was uncertain. One year later, a bipartisan group of 10 mayors sponsored and passed a [resolution](#) at the U.S. Conference of Mayors calling on the Administration to expand SC2.
- SC2 has placed 17 philanthropically funded fellows with strong subject matter expertise in SC2 pilot cities to work on a range of strategic projects and bolster local government capacity.

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To oversee the SC2 initiative, President Obama signed an Executive Order on March 15, 2012 [establishing a White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities](#) (SC2 Council). The Council coordinates federal efforts to ensure communities have access to comprehensive technical assistance, and provides policy recommendations on ways to strengthen local economies, streamline federal resources and regulations, and disseminate best practices. In addition to overseeing the work of the Community Solutions Teams and coordinating with Commerce Department/EDA on the SC2 Visioning Challenge, the Council oversees other core components of the SC2 initiative:

- **SC2 National Resource Network (SC2 Network).** The SC2 Network will offer a single portal through which communities can connect to national and local experts with wide-ranging expertise and skills for short-term engagements. Funded at \$10 million, the SC2 Network was developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and will launch this year.
- **SC2 Fellowship Program.** Operating in the SC2 pilot locations since September 2012, the fellowship program has selected, trained, and placed early- to mid-career professionals in local government positions to serve two-year terms and build additional local capacity.

The President is proposing to align a number of his signature revitalization initiatives to ensure that federal programs and resources are focused intensely on 20 communities that are suffering from the effects of the recession. The Administration will designate each of these areas as [Promise Zones](#) through a transparent, competitive process that will bring a number of programs to bear, including targeted investments to transform high poverty communities into places of opportunity, tax incentives to stimulate growth, and increased partnerships with local leadership. As these Promise Zones are designated, SC2 will contribute to this effort, especially by helping local leaders navigate federal programs, cut red tape, and use federal resources more effectively.