



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 11, 2011

Contacts:

Cleve Mesidor, U.S. Department of Commerce

(202) 390-6917, cmesidor@eda.doc.gov

Maureen Harper, Office of Cleveland Mayor Jackson

(216) 664-4011, MHarper@city.cleveland.oh.us

Obama Administration Launches *Strong Cities, Strong Communities* to Support Development in Cleveland, Ohio

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Obama Administration launched *Strong Cities, Strong Communities* (SC2), a new and customized pilot initiative to strengthen local capacity and spark economic growth in local communities, while ensuring taxpayer dollars are used wisely and efficiently. To accomplish this, federal agencies will provide experienced staff to work directly with six cities: Cleveland, Ohio; Chester, Pa.; Detroit, Mich.; Fresno, Calif.; Memphis, Tenn.; and New Orleans, La. These teams will work with local governments, the private sector, and other institutions to leverage federal dollars and support the work being done at the local level to encourage economic growth and community development.

Additionally, communities nationwide will be eligible to compete for comprehensive economic planning assistance through a grant competition designed to spark local innovation. By integrating government investments and partnering with local communities, SC2 channels the resources of the federal government to help empower cities as they develop and implement their vision for economic growth.

“Over the past two and a half years, the Obama Administration received feedback from leaders all across the country who described the kind of partnership that would be most useful to them for economic growth,” **said Domestic Policy Director Melody Barnes.** “The result is *Strong Cities, Strong Communities*, an innovative new pilot that will help strengthen local communities while also delivering federal resources and assistance more effectively.”

Added Senior Advisor to the President Valerie Jarrett, “This is exactly the kind of federal initiative that President Obama pledged to create – one that respects the wisdom of local leadership and helps mayors and other local officials utilize federal resources more effectively. President Obama has consistently demonstrated his commitment to a robust partnership with America’s cities and counties – *Strong Cities, Strong Communities* is yet another example of this important partnership.”

“Cleveland is building its future by leveraging its assets, strengthening education, working to connect residents with jobs, creating opportunities for local businesses and becoming a leader for sustainable development,” said **Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson**. “I thank President Obama and his Administration for recognizing the value of these efforts and the need to support urban centers, like Cleveland, through this program. *Strong Cities, Strong Communities* will provide another strong partnership for Cleveland and another tool for us to be successful.”

Through this pilot, the Obama Administration will focus on three key goals:

- ❖ **Improving the way federal government does business:** Cutting through red tape and rationalizing the federal bureaucracy to help deal with the overlapping maze of agencies, regulations and program requirements that are sometimes confusing to local governments;
- ❖ **Providing assistance and support – working with local communities to find ground up, not top down, solutions:** Providing on the ground technical assistance and planning resources tailored to local governments’ needs and helping them use the federal funds they already receive more efficiently and effectively, and;
- ❖ **Partnering for growth:** Developing critical partnerships with key local and regional stakeholders that encompass not only municipal and state governments but also new partnerships with the business community, non-profits, anchor institutions, faith-based institutions, and other public, private and philanthropic leaders.

“Today’s announcement underscores the commitment from this Administration to ensure America’s cities continue as thriving environments for capital investment and job growth,” said **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Deputy Secretary Ron Sims**. “We must reduce federal barriers to development, build additional coalitions, and create more opportunity for growth or watch as cities that helped build America slowly become extinct. This *Strong Cities, Strong Communities* initiative is the tool to the future and the instrument that can help lift cities and the people that reside within them.”

In addition to building the capacity of local governments, SC2 aims to encourage partnerships among local community organizations, anchor institutions, businesses, foundations and government agencies, helping to leverage federal investments and increase impact. The four components of SC2 include:

- ❖ **SC2 Community Solutions Teams:** Community Solutions Teams comprised of federal employees from several different agencies will work directly with cities to support mayors in Cleveland, Ohio; Chester, Pa.; Detroit, Mich.; Fresno, Calif.; Memphis, Tenn.; and New Orleans, La. Community Solutions Teams will assist cities with issues mayors have identified as vital to their economic strategies, including efforts to build on local assets, strengthen regional economies, develop transportation infrastructure, improve job-training programs and support community revitalization. In Cleveland, the Community Solutions Team will be

made up of representatives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of the Chief Information Officer.

- ❖ **SC2 Fellowship Program:** A complement to the Community Solutions Teams, a new fellowship program will select, train and place early- to mid-career professionals to serve multi-year terms in local government positions to give cities additional capacity. An intermediary will be selected to run the fellowship program, and fellows will be selected through a competitive national process. The Program will be funded primarily by philanthropic partners; the Rockefeller Foundation is providing \$2.5 million in initial funding.
- ❖ **SC2 Economic Planning Challenge:** In addition to the six pilot locations, SC2 includes an Economic Planning Challenge designed to help additional cities develop economic blueprints. This national grant competition will enable cities to adopt and implement innovative economic development strategies to support comprehensive city and regional planning efforts. Six cities will be competitively selected to receive a grant of approximately \$1 million that they will use to administer an "X-prize style" competition, whereby they will challenge multi-disciplinary teams of experts to develop comprehensive economic and land use proposals for their city. The Challenge will be administered by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), and EDA will assist cities in the administration of the competition.
- ❖ **National Resource Network:** Pending authorization of funding, the National Resource Network (NRN) will aggregate public and private resources to provide a broader set of cities, towns and regions with access to a one-stop portal of national experts to provide holistic policy and implementation support. Once funds are secured, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will host a competition to select an intermediary to run the NRN. Cities, towns and regions will apply to get access to the NRN, and outside experts will apply to be able to provide consulting services through the NRN. A menu of customized and comprehensive technical assistance in a variety of policy areas will be available to communities, delivered through on-site training and staff development. The NRN will also foster peer-to-peer learning to strengthen the network of urban practitioners and thinkers.

SC2 pilot cities were selected on the basis of economic need, strong local leadership and collaboration, potential for economic growth, geographic diversity, and the ability to test the SC2 model across a range of environments. Federal assessment teams spent time on the ground working directly with mayors and other local officials to determine needs, opportunities and gather input for the pilot initiative.

###