Seattle Public Utilities

For Immediate Release
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Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle City Light Selected for 2026 National Workforce Initiative

City Among Three Nationwide Chosen for the National League of Cities Municipal Workforce Learning Lab

SEATTLE (March 10, 2026) – Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) and Seattle City Light (SCL) have been selected to participate in the **National League of Cities (NLC) Municipal Workforce Learning Lab**, a national initiative designed to help cities strengthen their municipal workforce and create pathways to public service careers.

Seattle is one of only three cities nationwide selected for the program, which runs from February through September 2026. Led by NLC in partnership with the **American Institutes for Research (AIR)**, the Learning Lab will provide Seattle with expert coaching, peer learning opportunities, and strategic support to address workforce challenges and develop innovative, scalable solutions.

"Seattle's utility workers power our city today and are building the green infrastructure we need for generations to come," said Mayor Katie Wilson. "We need to invest in our municipal workforce to deliver reliable services, achieve our climate goals, and ensure equitable access to great careers for everyone. Seattle is honored to join this national cohort that will support our work to build an inclusive, resilient local workforce."

Participation in the Learning Lab supports Seattle's commitment to building a resilient, inclusive workforce capable of delivering essential services while advancing the city's climate and equity goals. SPU and SCL workers play a critical role in powering Seattle's future, from clean energy and electrification to sustainable water management. Both utilities face growing challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled workers.

Through this initiative, Seattle aims to build on efforts to:

- Strengthen recruitment and retention for high-demand, skilled trade positions.
- Expand equitable pathways into municipal careers, particularly in green jobs and clean energy sectors.
- Improve the employee experience and engagement.
- Align workforce development strategies to meet evolving community needs.

The effort builds on Seattle's Citywide Workforce Development Strategy. Introduced in early 2025, the strategy aims to unify more than 60 programs across 14 departments into a coordinated system that connects residents to family-wage careers in high-demand sectors. The City is addressing persistent hiring challenges in utilities, skilled trades, and green jobs. These roles are essential for infrastructure modernization and climate goals that offer higher than average wages that do not require a four-year degree.

Seattle's 2026 priorities include expanding youth career exposure programs, aligning training systems with employer needs, integrating vocational English for Speakers of Other Languages and job-readiness supports, and partnering with regional organizations such as the Workforce Development Council and Seattle Colleges to expand apprenticeships and sector-based training. These efforts aim to invest in data infrastructure, strengthen training-to-placement pipelines and ensure local talent can access these careers while employers gain the skilled workforce needed to support critical infrastructure and climate initiatives.

The Municipal Workforce Learning Lab will culminate in a detailed city action plan and a national convening in Washington, D.C., where participating cities will share lessons learned and best practices.

The other municipalities selected for the 2026 program are Little Rock, Arkansas, and Mt. Vernon, Ohio.

For more information about the Municipal Workforce Learning Lab, **visit the National League of Cities website**.

What People Are Saying

“Our people are the backbone of the essential services our community depends on every day: from safe drinking water and reliable drainage to waste reduction and climate resilience. Seattle Public Utilities looks forward to this opportunity to participate in the Municipal Workforce Learning Lab, which will help us strengthen pathways into these critical careers, invest in our employees, and ensure we have the skilled workforce needed to build and maintain the sustainable infrastructure Seattle requires for the future.”
– Andrew Lee, General Manager of Seattle Public Utilities

“Seattle City Light is honored to be selected to participate in the National League of Cities Municipal Workforce Learning Lab. Our ability to deliver safe, reliable electricity while advancing Seattle’s clean energy future depends on a highly skilled workforce. This opportunity will help us strengthen pathways into utility careers, develop the next generation of energy workers, and ensure our workforce reflects the communities we serve. By investing in people and expanding access to careers in energy, we are building the workforce needed to support the City of Seattle’s climate goals and continue delivering essential energy services to our customers.”
– DaVonna Johnson, People and Culture Officer, Seattle City Light

"We're excited to be selected for the National League of Cities cohort for this year. Seattle and the region need more programs that offer hands-on skill development and career exploration, with clear, tangible steps toward high priority roles. Citywide aligned workforce programs are essential not only for sparking interest in diverse career possibilities, and we look forward to learning from NLC and the other participating cities."
– Alicia Teel, Interim Director for Seattle Office of Economic Development.

“Seattle is committed to creating clear and equitable pathways into public service careers that support our city’s infrastructure, climate goals, and economic opportunity for residents. Through initiatives like the Municipal Workforce Learning Lab, the City’s Priority Hire program, and our broader workforce strategy, we’re strengthening coordination across departments, expanding skills-based career pathways, and ensuring more Seattle residents can access stable, family-wage jobs.”
– Kiersten Grove, Director of the Department of Finance and Administrative Services, which manages the City’s Priority Hire program and prioritizes the hiring of residents living in economically distressed zip codes on City public works projects over $5 million.

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