

Request to Participate: The Lincoln Vibrant Communities Fellows Program

Overview

The [Lincoln Institute of Land Policy](#) and [Claremont Lincoln University](#) are seeking their newest cohort of fellows for the Lincoln Vibrant Communities Fellows Program. Over the next decade, the Lincoln Institute, a globally recognized nonprofit private operating foundation, and Claremont Lincoln University, an accredited private nonprofit university, will partner with municipalities across the US to address common, complex challenges facing counties and cities. The fellows program invests in leadership, policy, and advanced practical skills, with the goal of helping to build vibrant, engaged communities defined by trust, facilitated by resident agency, and focused on positive change.

If you are a leader who aspires to create critical change in your community—or who is already doing so—we invite you to apply to be one of the elite fellows selected from across the country to take part in this program.

Supported by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the Vibrant Communities Fellows Program is powered by the distinctive leadership framework of Claremont Lincoln University. It harnesses the Lincoln Institute's nearly 80 years of research, case studies, toolkits, and advanced practices, using land policy to help public and private sectors create thriving municipalities that benefit all residents.

The six-month program begins with immersive in-person education, which is then complemented by an online leadership curriculum, expert webinars, and peer networking on emerging practices that help cities and counties grapple with local challenges. Upon successful completion, fellows receive a nine-credit graduate certificate in advanced public sector leadership (the Executive CLU Core: Advanced Engagement for Exceptional Leaders—Lincoln Vibrant Communities certificate). Faculty includes experts who work in the field, with direct experience addressing issues such as planning for infrastructure, land use and zoning, water management, affordable housing, public health, climate preparedness and resilience, and more.

After the program, fellows will be invited to join a national network of catalysts for local change, leaders who engage others from the public and private sector to transform their communities. Fellows will also be invited to join a team-based phase of Lincoln Vibrant Communities, working directly on a critical challenge in their municipality.

The Executive CLU Core: Advanced Engagement for Exceptional Leaders—Lincoln Vibrant Communities certificate will allow fellows to apply nine credits toward a CLU graduate degree (more details under “Application Instructions”). Topics that will be covered in the certificate program include:

- Methods to drive municipal change:
 - Scenario planning
 - Data visualization and AI practice
 - Strategic communication
 - Conflict management and mediation
 - Building cases and models
 - Developing a workforce pipeline
 - Defining policies and systems for intentional and intended change
 - Storytelling to inspire, influence, and advocate

- New, urgently needed leadership for the public sector:
 - Situational awareness
 - Ethical leadership in a fractured world
 - Dialogue and collaboration
 - Change and conflict management
 - Resilient and culturally competent professionalism
 - Engagement of diverse perspectives for change

Cost

Through the generosity of the Lincoln Institute and Claremont Lincoln University, this Vibrant Communities Fellows Program is almost entirely underwritten. Fellows pay only \$2,500 plus travel for the launch event. Additional optional programming will be provided at cost. After the launch event, this program's cost becomes nonrefundable.

Timeline

The program will launch on January 28–30, 2026, in Chicago, IL. By submitting an application, applicants agree that they are willing and able to attend.

Upon acceptance, participants will have seven days to create a Claremont Lincoln University student profile to confirm participation. Participants will be sent the link to create said profile in an email notifying them of their acceptance. Fellows will then schedule a short call with a student success manager at Claremont Lincoln University, who can process any paperwork needed for the program and answer questions. After this call, fellows can expect to gain access to online program orientation modules, the Lincoln Vibrant Communities Network, and program faculty.

Online instruction is designed for asynchronous learning, which allows students to engage at any time, no matter where they are in the country.

Who Should Apply

- Current, emerging, and aspiring public sector leaders
- Community leaders working with the public sector
- Business and industry leaders working with the public sector
- Former Lincoln Vibrant Communities Teams Program participants seeking to build individual capacity or stack certificates for more academic credit

Return on Investment

- Deepened leadership capacity to address complex municipal challenges
- Knowledge and practical application of advanced policies, practices, and approaches to address these challenges
- Skill in strategic communication and effective engagement of diverse community perspectives
- A network and intentional community of content experts and colleagues
- A nine-credit advanced practice graduate certificate in leadership designed specifically for public and private sector leaders focused on municipal change (Fellows may request CLU baccalaureate credits in lieu of the certificate, and academic credit may be applied toward graduate and undergraduate degree programs; see “Application Instructions.”)
- Increased impact and agency as an ethical, engaged leader

Application Instructions

The application form will open on November 3. The application must be written in English

and submitted via the online form by January 6, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET. Please upload a copy of your current resume or CV brief. Your response to the open-ended questions should not exceed 500 words. Fellows will be notified of their acceptance no later than seven days after submitting an application OR, if the application is submitted within 48 hours of the deadline, by January 8, 2026.

Applicants must be living and working in the United States during the program. Current and past employees, board members, or family members of Claremont Lincoln University (CLU) or the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy are not eligible for the fellows program. Current CLU degree-seeking students are not eligible to apply unless they have the endorsement of the chief academic officer and are currently working directly with the public sector. Current CLU degree-seeking students should contact CLU staff by emailing LincolnVibrantCommunities@claremontlincoln.edu.

This 24-week program culminates in a nine-unit for-credit graduate certificate from Claremont Lincoln University, titled “Executive CLU Core: Advanced Engagement for Exceptional Leaders—Lincoln Vibrant Communities.” Fellows can:

- Regard this certificate as an achievement in itself;
- Apply the credits from the certificate to a CLU master’s degree; or
- Convert the certificate into 12 baccalaureate credits (only when applied to a CLU Bachelor of Organizational Leadership degree).

The transferability of graduate credits to other accredited institutions depends upon the receiving institution. Fellows applying without a conferred baccalaureate degree will not be eligible to receive graduate credit but are welcome to participate in the program for a non-credit certificate of completion.

Questions

For questions regarding this request for proposals, please contact us at LincolnVibrantCommunities@claremontlincoln.edu.

