

## **MetroLab Guidance for NSF Smart and Connected Communities (S&CC) Program**

---

***For proposals that include one or more MetroLab universities and their MetroLab local government partners:***

**Q: Is it acceptable to cite involvement with MetroLab Network in proposal?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Will MetroLab Network provide a Letter of Collaboration for proposal?**

A: Yes.

**Q: What role can MetroLab Network play in the proposal?**

A: We can serve as an entity that disseminates research findings through email communication, calls, workshops, conferences, etc. Please clear language with our team prior to submission.

**Q: Should MetroLab Network be included in the budget?**

A: Based on the proposed role, our team will determine whether a budget allocation is necessary.

### ***Stock MetroLab Language***

Feel free to use pieces of this, as necessary. If you would like to modify language, please send it to our team for approval.

### **Overview**

MetroLab Network is a network of 38 cities, 4 counties, and 51 universities, organized in more than 35 regional “city (or county) – university partnerships” focused on “research, development, and deployment” (RD&D) projects that offer technologically- and analytically-based solutions for challenges facing urban areas: inequality in income, health, mobility, security and opportunity; aging infrastructure; and environmental sustainability and resiliency.

City-university partnerships are mutually-beneficial relationships in which the university builds *research and development* knowledge while the city is the test-bed for *deployment*. Faculty and students receive access to real-life laboratories to test evidence-based approaches (information technology, data analytics, sensing, etc.) that are aimed at addressing city priorities and challenges. Cities, and their residents, benefit from the universities’ technical expertise and rigorous as well as creative analysis to help solve those challenges.

Individually, city-university RD&D partnerships are beneficial and help drive innovative approaches in government while building knowledge and practices that can be shared across

sectors. When networked together, they present an opportunity to scale effective solutions, accelerate best practices, and advance the understanding of urban science. In particular, MetroLab Network is:

- 1) encouraging formal, institutionalized city-university partnerships focused on RD&D;
- 2) developing tools, best practices, and resources for cities and universities;
- 3) organizing *Labs* that consist of similar but previously-uncoordinated efforts in different communities;
- 4) facilitating the scaling of successful RD&D approaches; and
- 5) creating a platform for multi-city, multi-university teams to address complex, long-term challenges and opportunities.

Ultimately, these activities will open up a new frontier in data-driven policy that will take advantage of new ways of gathering data (sensors, smartphones, better open data portals) to deliver services and address city priorities in more targeted, effective, and measurable ways.

### **Impact of the proposed work**

City-university RD&D partnerships introduce a new path for technology transfer in which universities introduce data-focused analysis, products, and policies to the public sector. This tech and knowledge transfer is critically important at this time. On one hand, cities face immense challenges around inequality, aging infrastructure, and environmental sustainability; on the other hand, digital and information technology presents new opportunities for cities to provide real-time targeted city services, and to better manage their built and natural environment.

MetroLab Network's approach introduces three elements that will accelerate the academic community's ability to more swiftly and effectively deliver public benefits. First, by signing a memorandum of understanding and assigning a lead point-of-contact, MetroLab Network's city-university pairs have established a "front door" in their cities and universities, augmenting a system of one-off projects with a persistent multi-disciplinary and multi-agency arrangement. This will increase the quality, quantity, and longevity of city-university efforts. Second, MetroLab Network will build a national community of "front doors" that will enhance multi-city and multi-university activity, which will result in accelerated project scaling and development of best practices. Third, formal city-university relationships between member cities' mayors and member universities' presidents/provosts will ensure that RD&D efforts are informed by the real-world priorities of mayors and other key policymakers, while also satisfying the intellectual interest of academics. This "sweet spot" will yield projects that are rooted in necessity and curiosity.