



ACC-OC STAFF REPORT: 2024 Federal Legislative Advocacy Trip to Washington, D.C.

Overview: The Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC) successfully completed its 2024 Federal Legislative Advocacy trip to Washington, D.C., from September 16-19, 2024. The trip provided an invaluable opportunity for Orange County’s delegation to directly engage with key federal agencies, lawmakers, and private sector leaders on pressing issues affecting our communities. This year’s discussions centered on key topics such as small business support, environmental policy, infrastructure, energy management, homelessness, and economic development. The trip allowed us to advocate for ACC-OC members' priorities and build lasting relationships with federal stakeholders.

Meetings Summary: During our time in Washington, D.C., the delegation held meetings with several federal agencies, representatives, and organizations, including:

- **U.S. Senators:**

Senator Alex Padilla
The Office of Senator Laphonza Butler

- **U.S. Representatives:**

Rep. Linda Sanchez
Rep. Young Kim
Rep. Sam Graves (Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair)
Rep. Mike Levin
Rep. Lou Correa
Rep. Michelle Steel

- **Federal Agencies & Other Organizations:**

- Government Accountability Office (GAO)
 - Frank Rusco – Director of Natural Resources and Environment
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
 - Michael Chirico – Executive Director of Government Affairs
Jack Howard – SVP of Strategic Advocacy
- White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
 - Tom Perez – Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.
Daniel Arrigg Koh – Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.



- U.S. Department of Energy
 - Robert Siefert – Director of Environmental Management
 - Christian Bato – Senior Regional Advisor, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs
- U.S. Department of Commerce & National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO)
 - Bryan Borlik – Director, Performance and National Programs, Trade Adjustment Assistance
 - Alex Lasry – Deputy Assistant Secretary, National Travel and Tourism Office
 - Brian Beall – Director, National Travel and Tourism Office
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
 - Eduardo Cisneros – Principal Deputy Director, Intergovernmental and External Affairs

Key Takeaways & Opportunities:

1. Small Business & Economic Recovery:

- **U.S. Chamber of Commerce Briefing:** We explored federal programs supporting small businesses, workforce development, and economic resilience, especially around supply chain disruptions. The Chamber shared a legislative outlook emphasizing growth opportunities for California's small businesses.
- **Economic Development Administration (EDA):** The EDA offers several grant programs aimed at revitalizing distressed communities, supporting infrastructure projects, and promoting business development. Key programs include:
 - **Public Works Program:** Focuses on revitalizing infrastructure to attract new industries and create jobs.
 - **Economic Adjustment Assistance Program:** Supports economic development in regions undergoing adverse changes, including downtown revitalization and business incubators.
 - **Build to Scale Program:** Strengthens local economies by supporting innovation and startups. The application deadline for this grant is October 28, 2024.

2. Energy & Environmental Policy:

- **Department of Energy:** Federal energy infrastructure modernization efforts and renewable energy projects were discussed. The delegation emphasized the need for federal support for California's renewable energy and water conservation initiatives.



- **Government Accountability Office (GAO):** We discussed sustainability, energy efficiency, and grid security. These insights will help shape advocacy for federal assistance in managing environmental challenges faced by Orange County communities.

3. **Infrastructure & Transportation:**

- **Meetings with Senator Padilla, Rep. Graves, and others:** Infrastructure funding was a primary focus, particularly advocating for additional federal resources to address Orange County's transportation needs and allocation of resources to meet regional needs.

4. **Healthcare & Human Services:**

- **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):** The delegation discussed homelessness, mental health resources and aid for Orange County veterans and its aging population. HHS highlighted several resources for addressing behavioral health services, including grants for mental health awareness training, and SAMHSA's CCBHC expansion program, which focuses on community-based mental health care models.

5. **Homelessness & Behavioral Health Resources:**

- **U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH):** The delegation received resources on addressing the behavioral health needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. California's Medi-Cal program offers key support through a range of housing services, and the SAMHSA toolkits provide comprehensive guidelines for community leaders.
- **988 Partner Toolkit & Overdose Prevention:** The White House initiative and SAMHSA's toolkit were shared to support local efforts to combat the overdose crisis and strengthen behavioral health response systems.

6. **Tourism & International Trade:**

- **International Trade Administration (ITA):** ITA briefed the delegation on how trade and tourism contribute to local economies. Resources were provided to support members in enhancing tourism-related economic development through partnerships like Brand USA, which promotes U.S. tourism globally.



Grant and Funding Opportunities: The following resources and grant programs were highlighted during the trip for ACC-OC members to explore:

- **Energy Efficiency:**

- **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program:** The [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant \(EECBG\) Program](#) is a \$550 million grant program funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. It is designed to assist states, local governments, and Tribes in implementing strategies to reduce energy use, to reduce fossil fuel emissions, and to improve energy efficiency. *The deadline for local governments to apply is October 31, 2024.*

- **Economic Development Administration**

- **Public Works Program:** The [Public Works program](#) helps distressed communities revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure. This program enables communities to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, generate local investment, and create or retain long-term jobs through land acquisition, development, and infrastructure improvement projects that establish or expand industrial or commercial enterprises. *Applications for this program are accepted on a rolling basis*
- **Economic Adjustment Assistance Program:** The [Economic Adjustment Assistance program](#) is EDA's most flexible program. It provides a wide range of technical, planning, and public works and infrastructure assistance in regions experiencing adverse economic changes that may occur suddenly or over time. Specific project examples include downtown revitalization, fixing roads that lead to shopping districts, refurbishing buildings, creating business incubators and workforce training centers, etc. This program also houses a Revolving Loan Fund that provides local small businesses the capital they need to grow. *Applications for this program are accepted on a rolling basis.*
- **Build to Scale Program:** The [Build to Scale program](#) strengthens regional economies by enabling startups to start and grow. Grants will fund programs that support innovators, entrepreneurs, and startups who are working in critical and/or emerging tech spaces. *Application deadline is October 28, 2024.*
 - Orange County falls under the jurisdiction of the Seattle Regional Office, and the specific Economic Development Representative for Southern California is Will Marshall, wmarshall@eda.gov. Regional Offices and Economic Development Representatives are helpful resources to find funding opportunities, put together competitive applications, and receive pre-and-post award management technical assistance.



- **Brand USA Travel and Tourism Promotion Initiatives: International Trade Administration (ITA)**
 - The ITA's mission is to create prosperity by strengthening the international competitiveness of U.S. industry, promoting trade and investment, and ensuring fair trade and compliance with trade laws and agreements. ITA promotes the travel and tourism industry through the [National Travel and Tourism Office \(NTTO\)](#).
 - National Travel and Tourism Office point of contacts: Deputy Assistant Secretary Alex Lasry, Alex.Lasry@trade.gov, and Director Brian Beall, Brian.Beall@trade.gov.
 - The [U.S. Commercial Service](#) offers companies a full range of expertise in international trade. Your members can find their nearest U.S. Export Assistance Centers by zip code using this [link](#).
 - Brand USA is a public-private partnership to spearhead a globally coordinated marketing effort to promote the U.S. as a premier travel destination and communicate U.S. visa and entry policies. You can learn more here: <https://www.thebrandusa.com/>

- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
 - Local Support Points of Contact:
 - Dr. Jeffery Reynoso, HHS Regional Director for Region 9
 - (415) 645-8070
 - Jeffrey.reynoso@hhs.gov
 - Bonnie Preston, Executive Officer for Region 9
 - (415) 437-8501
 - bonnie.preston@hhs.gov

 - **U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)**
 - [Federal Resource and Program Information](#)
 - [USICH Ending Homelessness Before It Starts: A Federal Homelessness Prevention Framework](#)
 - [All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#)

 - **SAMHSA Behavioral Health Services and Mental Health Awareness Training Grants**
 - [Excel Sheet of SAMHSA's Orange County list of active grants for behavioral health services](#)

 - **Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) grants** prepare and train individuals to appropriately and safely respond to youth and adults who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, mental health challenges and disorders, particularly those with serious mental illness (SMI) and serious emotional disturbances (SED).
 - MHAT grantees train a wide variety of individuals in the community to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and how to safely de-escalate crisis situations. Community members include teachers and school personnel; law



enforcement and emergency services personnel; families and caregivers; service providers; armed services personnel; veterans; community leaders; and faith-based leaders.

- The Biden-Harris administration has made significant investments in the CCBHC model through the American Rescue Plan and through annual appropriations. Since 2021, the Administration has invested more than \$1.75 billion in SAMHSA’s CCBHC expansion grant program.
- In some cases – such as when an individual is profoundly impaired by experiencing SMI, or SMI combined with a co-occurring substance use disorder – this approach might be bolstered through Assertive Community Treatment (ACT).
- This involves a multi-disciplinary team, working together and available around the clock, to deliver a wide range of recovery services in order to help people living with serious mental illness successfully integrate into the community.
 - ACT was developed to deliver comprehensive and effective services to those who live with the most serious psychiatric symptoms, the most significant social functioning challenges, and whose needs have not been well met by traditional approaches.
- **Aging and Services for Older Adults**
 - To end homelessness and address the needs of populations who are at increased risk, California is working to leverage the state Medicaid program, Medi-Cal, to provide its Medicaid members with a range of housing services and supports. The team is led by California’s Medicaid office and includes representatives from state and community housing and homelessness, health, aging and disability organizations. You can reach out to Glenn Tsang, the CA state lead on this effort (Glenn.Tsang@dhcs.ca.gov), if you have not already made this connection.
 - Through the National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment grant from ACL, the [National Council on Aging](#) supports a network of [Benefit Enrollment Centers](#), in the greater Orange County area.
 - The Benefit Enrollment Centers focus on helping low-income people with Medicare access programs that pay for healthcare, food, and more. Grantees use web-based tools and person-centered approaches to help older adults and persons with disabilities find and enroll in all the benefits programs for which they are eligible, and create coordinated, community-wide systems of benefits



access. The five Benefit Enrollment Center grantees in the Orange County area are:

- Community Health Initiative of Orange County: <https://www.chioc.org/>
- LTSC Community Development Corporation: <https://www.ltsc.org/>
- Mexican American Opportunity Foundation: <https://maof.org/>
- Partners in Care Foundation: <https://www.picf.org/>
- United Cambodian Community: <https://ucclb.org/>

*Non-Federal Resources that Might Be of Interest

- *While ACL does not have any discretionary grant opportunities available at this time, you may desire to review opportunities shared by non-federal organizations such as Grantmakers in Aging, a community of funders leveraging resources to strengthen aging-related policies and programs (<https://www.giaging.org/>), and Grantmakers in Health, an organization dedicated to helping foundations and corporate giving programs improve the health of all people (<https://www.gih.org/>).
- *Alzheimer's Orange County is an independent nonprofit to part with on addressing Alzheimer's disease. They split from the national Alzheimer's Association nearly a decade ago. Their culture and program offerings reflect the diversity of the population, they offer caregiver support groups in Spanish, Korean and Mandarin: <https://www.alzoc.org/services/support-groups/>. They recently held a Caregiver Recognition ceremony for Latino Caregivers: <https://www.alzoc.org/dedicated-latino-caregivers-honored-at-caregiver-recognition-day/>.

Next Steps & Follow-Up Actions:

- **Ongoing Advocacy:** ACC-OC member agencies and staff will continue to engage with federal agencies and legislative offices on key topics such as infrastructure, healthcare, homelessness, and environmental policies. Efforts will also be made to monitor grant deadlines and support member cities in applying for federal funds.
- **Conclusion:** The ACC-OC 2024 Federal Legislative Advocacy trip successfully advanced the interests of Orange County by securing vital information and fostering relationships with key federal stakeholders. This groundwork will inform future advocacy efforts, ensuring that the needs of our member cities are effectively represented at the federal level. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with federal partners to achieve meaningful outcomes for our communities.