LETTER FROM OUR CEO

To the Accelerator Community:

2022 has been yet another dynamic year in the life of cities, and Accelerator for America has been proud to be your partner as we truly began to emerge from the pandemic and charted paths to an inclusive recovery and stronger, more equitable cities full of opportunity for all our residents. As we complete our fifth year, the Accelerator is stronger, more durable, and always flexible to meet the needs of our constituents – our Mayors and senior elected and community leaders who work tirelessly every day to generate economic mobility, redevelop disinvested neighborhoods, provide good paying, family-supporting jobs, and create wealth through small business growth and home ownership. The past year has shown the power of our work and our network – and it drives us in a clear direction forward into 2023.

We pride ourselves on our action orientation – embracing our “do tank” moniker. We think deeply and act quickly. We follow our north star of attacking economic insecurity and pivot our strategies and tactics to the times and challenges of the moment. When COVID-19 swept across America, the Accelerator turned on a dime and dove head first into pandemic needs, with rapid response tools that helped cities help their residents survive. As Federal resources began to flow, we expeditiously moved to provide cities with frameworks and playbooks to effectively digest the historic resources available under the American Rescue Plan Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and ensure that these funds are used for maximum long-term impact that helps reverse the discriminatory and inequitable practices of the past. In a post-pandemic world, we now return to our roots with innovative and forward looking tools, thought leadership and partnerships squarely focused on Accelerating an Inclusive Recovery – to leverage this moment and unprecedented levels of federal funding to accelerate progress toward our founding mission of building wealth and opportunities in historically left behind communities.

This year we added new partners, funders, and initiatives. With global corporate leader Honeywell we launched the Smart City Accelerator to assist five cities in building smart city strategic plans and pursuing federal infrastructure grants. We joined with North America’s Building Trades Unions to increase access to Apprenticeship Readiness Programs in cities across the country, helping to meet the demand for new talent to deploy infrastructure funds and providing pathways to family-supporting jobs. This spring we were presented with the unexpected opportunity to take United for Infrastructure under the AFAn umbrella to continue this nationwide program and the important work of infrastructure advocacy. We continued our multi-year partnership with the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth to support access to capital and economic growth in cities, and we welcomed significant new funding from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, DRK Foundation, and The James Irvine Foundation.

We celebrated success with our long-time partners HNTB and WSP, collaborating with several cities to achieve significant new funding to advance large infrastructure initiatives. Following the June 1 publication of Averting a Lost Decade: Rethinking an Inclusive Recovery for Disadvantaged Neighborhoods, and building on the success of our Stimulus Command Center model, we launched the Economic and Community Development Practitioners’ Network to provide a national peer sharing and learning platform.

This year, we added new partners, funders, and initiatives, including:

• United for Infrastructure is now an initiative of Accelerator for America Action.

• With support from the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, helped advance business growth in cities.

• North America’s Building Trades Unions Apprenticeship Readiness Programs

• Smart City Accelerator, with Honeywell

• Launched the Economic and Community Development Practitioners’ Network to provide a national peer sharing and learning platform

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To the Accelerator Community:

During these uncertain times, Accelerator for America has cemented itself as a go-to resource for America’s cities as our organization, and the Accelerator itself has matured and focused to meet the quickly evolving needs of our Mayors and cities. We are proud of the broad reach and deep impact of our work to create greater economic mobility and share excitement for the opportunities ahead.

As 2022 draws to a close, so, too, does our first year as Co-Chairs of the Accelerator, and what this organization has been able to achieve has exceeded our expectations.

The most important validator of the Accelerator’s work is the willingness of nine additional leaders – including seven mayors – to join our Advisory Council:

- Mayor Jane Castor of Tampa, FL
- Mayor Paige Cognetti of Scranton, PA
- Mayor John Giles of Mesa, AZ
- Mayor Todd Gloria of San Diego, CA
- Mayor Tim Kelly of Chattanooga, TN
- Mayor Ron Nirenberg of San Antonio, TX
- Mayor Mattie Parker of Fort Worth, TX
- Mike Monroe, Chief of Staff, North America’s Building Trades Unions (NABTU)
- Matthew Mullin, Vice President, Policy, Programs & Communications, International Economic Development Council

Their deep engagement with us underscores the regard in which civic leaders hold our work and enhances our ability to provide the kind of support that makes a tangible impact in City Halls and communities across the country.

Our commitment to Accelerating an Inclusive Recovery is about fundamentally changing the trajectory of communities across the country, for generations to come. For too long, America’s underserved communities have endured deliberate, often government-sanctioned discrimination and a resulting rigid status quo that perpetuated inequalities and drove lower economic, educational and health outcomes. We can move our communities – and our country – in a new direction if we harness this moment and make sure federal resources are invested through a long term and inclusive lens.

As Co-Chairs of the Advisory Council, we are thrilled to have helped secure and guide work this year that has resulted in direct technical assistance to cities on infrastructure, technology, and community wealth-building and redevelopment initiatives. We celebrate our collective “wins” of new funding for cities through federal competitive grants, collaborations with local funders, and historic allocation of ARPA funds towards economic repair and justice. Accelerator is proud to have worked alongside cities, business, labor and philanthropy to build capacity within city halls, provide direct support on several initiatives, and publish regular “news you can use” on salient topics for cities and their economic development partners. Together, we are seizing the moment and driving a more inclusive recovery. By accelerating a more inclusive recovery, we emerge stronger, more equitable, and ready for the long journey ahead. We look forward to continuing our work together in 2023.

Mayor Jane Castor
Tampa, FL

Mayor Paige Cognetti
Scranton, PA

Mayor John Giles
Mesa, AZ

Mayor Todd Gloria
San Diego, CA

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Mike Monroe,
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Matthew Mullin,
Vice President, Policy, Programs & Communications, International Economic Development Council

Kate Gallego
Co-Chair, Mayor of Phoenix, AZ

Quinton Lucas
Co-Chair, Mayor of Kansas City, MO
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An inclusive recovery relies on economic development within communities historically left behind. By developing and sharing models, tools, partnerships and thought leadership, the Accelerator provided direct technical assistance to twelve cities and impacted dozens more through other engagements that expand opportunity and accelerate equity and economic growth.

Stimulus Command Centers

With our longtime partners at the Drexel University Nowak Metro Finance Lab, the Accelerator established Stimulus Command Centers in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Birmingham, Louisville, Dayton, St. Louis, and Kansas City. This organizing model was launched by these first mover cities with intent for it to be replicated by other cities.

Stimulus Command Centers are a framework that helps cities “maximize this moment” of unprecedented federal investment via ARPA and other funding streams. Stimulus Command Centers help with capacity and align decision-making around long term and inclusive investments as opposed to one-time spending that follows the status quo.

Our Stimulus Command Center work also includes technical assistance to cities in pursuit of federal grant opportunities. Dayton’s $138 million Dayton Recovery Plan and St. Louis’ $250 million Economic Justice Plan are just two examples of initiatives shaped through Stimulus Command Centers. The first ARPA funds to flow were part of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) category. The Accelerator helped cities allocate $1.1 billion in SLFRF funds alone through Stimulus Command Centers in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) category. The Accelerator helped cities allocate $1 billion in SLFRF funds alone through Stimulus Command Centers with technical assistance towards an additional $2 billion.

Building Capacity, Delivering Results

Accelerator for America provides direct technical assistance and serves as an intermediary and connector for our cities – increasing the capacity of strapped City Halls. Partnership is a key component of our success. With support from the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, the Accelerator is working on initiatives in St. Louis, Birmingham, New Orleans, and several cities to increase access to opportunity for small business and redevelop historically disadvantaged areas. In Birmingham, AFA and Mastercard collaborated to bring more than $1 million of new funding to help support the growth of Black-owned businesses. In St. Louis, Birmingham, and Montgomery, the Accelerator is working closely with local officials to advance equitable redevelopment with the creation of Investment Playbooks to attract new capital and move important projects from the planning stage to construction and wealth creation for local residents.

Through the Accelerator’s partnership with WSP USA, seven cities received direct support towards advancing a complicated local infrastructure project, and several have already made applications for discretionary grants for plan implementation. This fall, we celebrated more than $31 million in RAISE grant awards for program participants Kansas City and Louisville.

Dayton, OH

Dayton’s $138 million Dayton Recovery Plan and St. Louis’ $250 million Economic Justice Plan are just two examples of initiatives shaped through AFA’s Stimulus Command Center work, providing technical assistance to cities in pursuit of federal grant opportunities.

St. Louis, MO

Center for Inclusive Growth

With support from the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, the Accelerator is working on initiatives in several cities to increase access to opportunity for small business and redevelop historically overlooked or disadvantaged areas.
According to Matthew Britt, Honeywell’s general manager of Smart Cities and Communities, “A smart city eliminates silos, identifies integration opportunities and uses data to institute change.” The Honeywell Smart City Accelerator Program – a partnership between the Accelerator and Honeywell – launched with five participating cities: Cleveland, Kansas City, Louisville, San Diego, and Waterloo. Each city is receiving significant in-kind technical support from Honeywell and Accelerator for America to develop a Smart City Strategic Plan. Each strategic plan will align key stakeholders, define priorities, and identify high-impact and inclusive initiatives that advance residents’ quality of life by improving climate resiliency, public safety, operational efficiency and service delivery. Each city is also receiving support in applying for federal grants to support the implementation of identified projects.

The five cities were chosen through an application process that looked at their leadership visions and data strategies and reviewed each city’s strategic plan, sustainability plan, climate plan, and operating and capital budgets. In 2023, we hope to celebrate federal grant awards and strategic plan implementation that improves the safety, well-being, and efficiency of the participating cities.

Workforce Development
The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation enlisted Accelerator for America to support efforts to enhance the regional workforce development ecosystem and connect employers and job seekers in the greater Kansas City region. Accelerator conducted interviews and focus groups directly with local stakeholders and produced a data tool developed in partnership with mySidewalk, a data analytics company. This project will help identify where gaps and opportunities exist in the local workforce system, with the goal of prompting regional collaboration among public, private, and philanthropic organizations to reskill, upskill, and increase talent in manufacturing, professional and technical services, healthcare, and transportation.

Identifying and creating local initiatives to grow community wealth and increase economic security is how we advance our mission to grow and create national change from the ground up.
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

At the core of Accelerator for America’s founding is the mission to ensure infrastructure investments are people focused, and our work in this space is intensifying amidst the federal government’s historic investment in the nation’s infrastructure.

United for Infrastructure

This summer, we were proud to announce that United for Infrastructure (UFI), the leading advocacy group behind the passage of the federal infrastructure bill, is now a project of Accelerator for America Action (AFA’s companion 501(c)(4)). UFI founded “Infrastructure Week” and brings together infrastructure supporters from across the political spectrum to advocate for continuing investment in our nation’s infrastructure.

One of our first Accelerator/UFI initiatives is the #InfrastructureWorks campaign, which kicked off in August with a video from Mitch Landrieu, the White House’s infrastructure coordination leader. This ongoing effort shares infrastructure stories from city, county, regional, and state officials from across the country, as well as airport, utility, professional association, and business leaders. In total, a bipartisan group of 30 mayors, four governors, and 40 other infrastructure leaders have shared their stories through this campaign, which highlights how infrastructure investments are making a difference in the lives of Americans. We’ve created over 100,000 impressions on Twitter!

The UFI Steering Committee has reconvened, and every original partner is back at the table to continue this important national advocacy work. We were thrilled to engage veteran infrastructure advocate Kerry O’Hare as Senior Advisor and Consultant to lead the UFI work alongside AFA’s Ross van Dongen; Kerry brings three decades of experience across state houses, Capitol Hill, and USDOT to UFI’s ranks, along with a deep understanding of the organization’s history and membership. Plans are underway for 2023 Infrastructure Week and regional programming highlighting IIJA funds at work and the need for ongoing investment in infrastructure.
White House Talent Pipeline Challenge

Accelerator for America and North America’s Building Trades Unions (NABTU) partnered to recruit Mayors and their cities to join the White House’s Talent Pipeline Challenge by committing funding for pre-apprenticeship programs over several years. AFA and NABTU secured commitment of millions in new funds from Mayors in cities across the country, including Albuquerque, Chattanooga, Las Vegas, Scranton, Salt Lake County, and San Antonio, with several more making plans to join the effort. AFA CEO Mary Ellen Wiederwohl and Director of Infrastructure Ross van Dongen were honored to attend an event at the White House hosted by President Biden, alongside our partners at NABTU, other Labor and Workforce Advocates and Professionals and members of our esteemed Advisory Council.

Ballot Initiatives

Several communities are starting to prioritize new local ballot referenda as local government leaders and transit agencies become more familiar with the formula funds and discretionary grant structures of federal programs through the IIJA and Inflation Reduction Act. For example, communities that have had to delay previous measures such as Las Vegas’ RTC of Southern Nevada, are making plans toward the ballot in an upcoming cycle, and cities that were previously unsuccessful in their ballot initiatives, such as Nashville and Portland, are building out strategies and coalition relationships for a second opportunity in future cycles.

By engaging with these communities and local leaders now, Accelerator for America Action can provide key polling, messaging and relationship building support at the ground level, and support the development of the organizational infrastructure for the campaign. Big thanks go to valued AFAA partner and industry leader HNTB, who along with other infrastructure partners, help make this work possible!

Coming Up

In addition to all the infrastructure work already underway, 2023 will see the Accelerator:

• Expanding our partnership with NABTU, individual unions, and workforce partners to advance talent pipeline efforts that grow the pool of skilled labor and provide greater opportunity for more Americans to enjoy family supporting wage jobs.

• Preparing several communities across the country for transit and transportation ballot initiatives in 2023 and 2024 that will create greater economic opportunity through greater mobility.

• Hosting Infrastructure Week 2023 and taking the Infrastructure Works campaign on the road with regional gatherings to lift up the success stories of infrastructure implementation across the country.

AFAA hits the road! AFA leadership and staff are frequent speakers at national events, highlighting best practices. Above, AFA CEO Mary Ellen Wiederwohl moderates an Infrastructure Week panel including White House Infrastructure Coordinator Mitch Landrieu, Siemens CEO Barbara Humpton, and KY Governor Andy Beshear. Above left, Wiederwohl speaking at an American Public Transit Association convening on ballot initiatives, and above right, AFA Senior Advisor Yusef Robb on a panel at same APTA meeting.
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

The Accelerator released a robust body of publications that provided up-to-the-minute information for our network, shared best practices and new tools through essential playbooks, and provoked discussion and action through thought leadership.

Newsletters:

- Urgent Federal Infrastructure Guidance
- ARPA Halftime Report
- Update On Infrastructure Implementation
- Perspectives On Private Financing For Public Infrastructure
- Broadband Funding And Deployment Opportunities For Cities
- Infrastructure Week 2022 Recap And Next Steps
- Accelerator And NABTU Promote Apprenticeship Readiness
  Programs At DOL’s Good Jobs Summit Newsletter
- Announced Today - Reconnecting Communities Pilot
- ARPA Clawbacks
- Lifting Communities Through RAISE Grants
- United For Infrastructure Launches #InfrastructureWorks Campaign

Major Publications:

- California Transportation Infrastructure Landscape Report
- Gold Standard Playbook For Workforce Development
- Averting a Lost Decade: Rethinking an Inclusive Recovery for Disadvantaged Neighborhoods
- Investor Home Purchases and The Rising Threat to Homeowners and Renters: Tales From 3 Cities

“...The Gold Standard Playbook sets the standard for inclusive and equitable workforce development in infrastructure.”

- Don Howard, Irvine Foundation

Accelerator for America publishes several reports annually in partnership with the Drexel University Nowak Metro Finance Lab. Visit our website to read and download the full reports.
ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

This year, Accelerator proudly added new partners, funders and initiatives, further proving the power of our work, and our network, and driving us in a clear direction forward into 2023.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXPENSES

AFA and AFAA both enjoy strong financial positions. AFA operated a $1.6 million 2022 adopted budget and AFAA a $250,000 2022 adopted budget. Following is a view of our organizational expenses by category:

- Personnel: 47.1%
- Operating Expenses: 13.1%
- Conference and Travel: 10.5%
- Communications: 6.7%
- Strategic Consultants: 22.6%
WHAT LEADERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE ACCELERATOR

“Accelerator is providing in-kind support for strategic planning and grant writing, communications strategy, and guides to help local government navigate the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.”

— MITCH LANDRIEU

“Accelerator for America is committed to lifting the voices of mayors and cities to push for smart, bold solutions to big challenges.”

— MAYOR PARKER

“Mayors are on the front lines of our economic recovery... our Advisory Council will be an incredible asset to the Accelerator’s work in cities across the country.”

— MAYOR GALLEGIO

“I have been honored to work with Accelerator for America to advocate for unprecedented levels of federal infrastructure funding.”

— MAYOR NIRENBERG

“Accelerator for America is emerging as one of our nation’s most essential conveners by bringing together local leaders to find solutions that create lasting change.”

— MAYOR KELLY

“Accelerator for America is a leading catalyst in the vital work of seizing this moment of opportunity, learning from past efforts, and identifying innovative solutions that will set into motion lasting and equitable growth for all.”

— MATT MULLIN, IEDC

“Accelerator for America is a national center of excellence and trusted resource in developing and sharing resources in economic development, transit, infrastructure, and workforce enhancement across the nation.”

— MAYOR BIBB

“Accelerator for America provides our nation’s cities with tested best practices to reduce economic insecurities, and focuses on issues that impact us.”

— MAYOR CASTOR

“I’m excited to join Accelerator for America’s Advisory Council and help build on the organization’s success in advocating for federal investment in and partnership with America’s cities.”

— MAYOR GLORIA

“I’m proud to have worked closely with Accelerator on the efforts to pass the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that will have a lasting impact on the local level.”

— MAYOR GILES
ABOUT THE TEAM

At Accelerator for America, we are led by an Advisory Council comprising mayors, elected leaders, labor leaders, corporate CEOs and nonprofit executives from across the country, and our work is driven by an exceptional staff.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Advisory Council is comprised of leaders from a variety of sectors, including mayors, labor leaders, corporate CEOs and nonprofit executives.

OUR STAFF

The staff at Accelerator for America is comprised of a diverse group of professionals with expertise in a range of areas, including policy, communications, and operations.

OUR RESEARCH PARTNERS

Accelerator for America partners with research institutions to conduct and share data-driven insights on urban development and policy.
ABOUT THE BOARD

The Accelerator Board grew this year with the addition of two former Mayors - Steve Benjamin and Michelle De La Isla. The Action Board grew as well, adding national infrastructure consultant Reyahd Kazmi.

ACCELERATOR FOR AMERICA

JONATHAN WEISS
Board Chair
Partner, Proskauer

GLEN DAKE
Board Secretary & Treasurer
Landscape Architect

MICHELLE DE LA ISLA
Managing Director, DRK Foundation & Former Mayor, Topeka, KS

STEVE BENJAMIN
Owner, Benjamin Firm LLC & Former Mayor, Columbia, SC

MARY ELLEN WIEDERWOHL
President and CEO, AFA

ACCELERATOR FOR AMERICA ACTION

DIEDRE LIND
Board Chair
President and CEO, Mayor’s Fund for Los Angeles

REYAHD KAZMI
Board Secretary
President, Kazmi Advisors

ACCELERATOR FOR AMERICA finds and develops solutions to economic insecurity and shares them with cities to create national change from the ground up.

WE ARE THE R&D ARM OF CITIES & MAYORS.
WE ARE A DO TANK, NOT A THINK TANK.

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