Massachusetts CDBG Welcome Guide for New Grantee Staff and Consultants

Welcome to the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program! The CDBG Program is one of the leading federal investments in community-based initiatives. CDBG is flexible, responsive, sustainable, collaborative, and empowering. It is the one of the most successful and highly utilized community development resources in the U.S.

The program has many complexities and nuances. This resource sheet for new community development staff is intended to give you a beginning roadmap to learn about the program, where to find information about activities and requirements, and to introduce you to the Massachusetts State CDBG Program that supports projects in over 80 Massachusetts communities (this number represents lead and joint participants). Welcome! You are an important part of implementing projects that have been envisioned and prioritized by local communities.

## The CDBG Big Picture

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (HCDA), authorizes the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to make grants under the CDBG Program. Beginning in 1975, it replaced eight different categorical programs into a single non-competitive “block grant” awarded annually on a formula basis to states, cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low and moderate-income persons. This new approach allowed communities the flexibility to design programs that reflect local needs.

Statutory changes in the 1980’s clearly focused CDBG so that at least 70% of expenditures must benefit low to moderate-income people. Initially, only “entitlement jurisdictions” (larger cities and urban counties) were eligible to receive CDBG block grants directly from HUD based on a distribution formula. Congress amended the HCDA in 1981 to give each state the opportunity to administer CDBG funds for “non-entitlement” areas – units of local government not eligible to receive a formula allocation. All states, except for Hawaii, operate their own CDBG program.

The Massachusetts CDBG Program is one such state program. It is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to help small cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. **The Community Development Fund (CDF)** awards grants to communities throughout the Commonwealth. This program helps eligible cities and towns to meet a broad range of community development needs in housing, infrastructure, revitalization, economic development, and public social services. The **Mini-Entitlement Program** is for communities identified through a formula calculation based on a high statistical indication of need, poverty rate and size.

Applications for funding are generally accepted on an annual cycle and correlate with the HUD-mandated Consolidated Plan and One-Year Action Plan. These Plans describe community needs and priorities, including the planned methodology for awarding funds that have been appropriated by Congress and allocated to the state. Information on the Massachusetts CDBG Program, including Annual Action Plans, application processes, and grant management resources can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/community-development-block-grant-cdbg>

## Getting Started with CDBG

The HUD website contains vast resources related to CDBG. To start your learning journey, HUD offers a suite of trainings called “Explore CDBG.” This is an excellent place to start! These resources illustrate the real-life work of CDBG and introduce the eligible activities and requirements of the program. The *Explore CDBG* page can be found here:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg/cdbg-ta-products/#all-products>

## National Objectives and Eligible Activities

The primary **goal** of the CDBG Program[[1]](#footnote-1) is the development of viable communities, by providing, principally to persons of low- and moderate-income:

* Decent housing
* A suitable living environment
* Expanded economic opportunities

Each CDBG activity MUST meet one of the three **national objectives**:

* Benefit to low- and moderate-income persons (often referred to as LMI)
* Aid in the prevention or elimination of slums and blight
* Meet a need having a particular urgency (referred to as urgent need)

The first two categories also include sub-categories:



Criteria for National Objectives

24 CFR 570.483

[eCFR :: 24 CFR 570.483 -- Criteria for national objectives.](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-570/subpart-I/section-570.483)

The most common **activities** funded by the Massachusetts CDBG Program are:

* housing rehabilitation
* infrastructure
* micro-enterprise or other business assistance
* community/public facilities
* public social services
* planning
* removal of architectural barriers to allow access by persons with disabilities
* downtown or area revitalization

The full list of eligible activities, as defined in Section 105(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act, can be found in the links below.

Basic Eligible Activities

HCDA Section 105(a)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/sites/onecpd/assets/File/CDBG-State-National-Objectives-Eligible-Activities-Appendix-A.pdf>

24 CFR 570.201

[eCFR :: 24 CFR 570.201 -- Basic eligible activities.](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-570/subpart-C/section-570.201)

This HUD Guide provides greater detail related to National Objectives and Activities, including documentation requirements:

*Guide to National Objectives and Eligible Activities for State CDBG Programs*

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2179/guide-national-objectives-eligible-activities-state-cdbg-programs/>

## Other Federal Requirements

CDBG projects often trigger other federal requirements that serve to protect the health, safety, rights, and wellbeing of citizens and communities before, during, and after a project. As you become more familiar with the project lifecycle, you will learn about these requirements. The HUD Exchange provides valuable resources on these topics.

* [Citizen Participation Plans](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-A/part-91/subpart-B/section-91.105)
* [Environmental Review](https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/environmental-review/)
* [Non-Discrimination and Equal Access](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/fair_housing_rights_and_obligations)
* [Labor Standards](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/hudclips/handbooks/sech/13441)
* [Uniform Relocation Assistance](https://www.hudexchange.info/trainings/ura-the-hud-way/)
* [Section 3: Training, employment, contracting, and other economic opportunities to low- and very low-income persons](https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/section-3/)

## Massachusetts CDBG Grants Management

The entry point for new CDBG grants is the annual application process. Grant award announcements are made after reviews, scoring, and prioritization are complete. Grants and their associated activities generally begin at the start of the Commonwealth’s Fiscal Year, a 12-month cycle that starts on July 1 and ends on the following June 30. Please note the difference between the Commonwealth’s Fiscal Year (FY) start – end dates and HUD’s program year (by which they track everything) running from April 1 to March 31. A start-up training with all awardees is held annually. Required administrative start-up actions are described in this training. Further information is available on the Mass CDBG website:

[Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/community-development-block-grant-cdbg)

This is an example of trainings from the FFY21 grant awards:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5j_GOwgdxB5fq8f_DalxLvq4xxgHHanz> (start-up playlist)

Each grant is assigned a EOHLC Program Representative and a Fiscal Representative. These EOHLC staff serve as the community’s primary resource for grant management and support. Program reporting and fiscal activity for each grant are managed through a web-based grants management system (CGMS) called Intelligrants. An online link for basic training on the Intelligrants / CGMS system can be found below. The fiscal representative will provide training on processing claims and other fiscal reporting requirements, and overall support, consultation and technical assistance will be provided to communities on an ongoing, as needed basis for the duration of the grant.

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/gms-cgmm-training/download>

## Other Useful References

### Regulations and Statutes

24 CFR 570 Subpart I - State Community Development Block Grant Program

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-570/subpart-I>

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations

<https://www.ecfr.gov/> (for searching a regulation)

### Other Resources

HUD’s Training Resource, Basically CDBG Online

[Basically CDBG - HUD Exchange](https://www.hudexchange.info/trainings/basically-cdbg/)

HUD CPD website: State Administered CDBG

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-state/>

HUD’s Publication, *Keeping Your CDBG Funds Moving: Guidelines for Managing Your Overall CDBG Program in a Timely Manner*

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Keeping-Your-CDBG-Funds-Moving-Guide.pdf>

National Community Development Association (focused on the CDBG Program for entitlement communities)

<https://ncdaonline.org/cdbg/>

1. As defined by Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (CDBG), as amended. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)