

City and Town

Amy Pitter, Commissioner • Robert G. Nunes, Deputy Commissioner & Director of Municipal Affairs



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The Who, What, When, Where and How of Community Innovation Challenge Grants

Last month, DLS was pleased to announce that the Patrick-Murray Administration, through the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, is soliciting plans and proposals for a competitive grants program to provide incentives and financial support for one-time or transitional costs to improve local government service delivery, efficiency, quality, and cost savings.

In the FY2012 budget, Governor Patrick authorized the development of a competitive grant program to invest in and incentivize innovation among local government to find new and more efficient ways to deliver core local services. The Community Innovation Challenge Grant Program was proposed in the Governor's budget and supported by the Legislature. It provides \$4 million for regionalization and other initiatives.

The new Community Innovation Challenge Grant Program will identify compelling strategies that will help cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth to maintain critical local services and stretch every taxpayer dollar as far as possible.

Municipalities, regional schools, school districts considering forming a regional school district or regionalizing services, and planning agencies and councils of governments are all encouraged to apply. Ideal projects for the grant program include those with the potential for the greatest impact, high levels of innovation and substantial potential cost savings for municipalities.

Informational meetings were held in Ashland, Plymouth, Greenfield, and Brookfield. At these meetings, we heard from a number of interested parties from across the Commonwealth and received a variety of questions such as:

What are the eligible uses of funds?

(Answer: Funds may be used for one-time costs, transitional costs or seed money for regionalization and other efficiency initiatives.)

What is the timeline for the project?

(Answer: Projects must be completed before or by December 31, 2012. However, special consideration may be given to extended timelines for extraordinary projects. Note if the project timeline is attached as a separate document.)

What are possible purposes of grant funds?

(Answer: The goal of the grant is to provide significant incentives and financial support for one-time or transitional costs related to improving local government service delivery efficiency, service quality, and achieving cost savings through either:

- Regionalization- Shared services, joint or regional facilities, intergovernmental agreements, consolidations, mergers, and other types of collaborations; OR*
- Other reform and efficiency initiatives- For a single entity to plan and implement innovative internal efficiency initiatives to improve the quality and efficiency of service delivery in ways that achieve cost savings.)*

Is there a limit to how much an applicant can request?

(Answer: Requests for awards up to \$500,000 will be considered. Applicants will be required to submit a detailed budget and project timeline.)

Is there a page/word limit for grant applications?

(Answer: No. Applicants should write what is necessary to make their case and explain the purposes and benefits of their proposal, as well as how the proposal will fit into the purposes of the grant program. That being said, applications should also not be excessive in length.)

Please visit [this website](#) to find the grant application and more information. If you have further questions, please call (617) 727-2040 or email CICgrants@state.ma.us.

These grants are intended to support cities and towns and foster new ideas. The deadline is January 17th, 2012. Recipients will be announced in February of 2012. If your community has an innovative project you feel would qualify, we highly encourage you to apply.

Robert G. Nunes
Deputy Commissioner & Director of Municipal Affairs

Equalized Valuations in 2012

Marilyn Browne, Chief of the Bureau of Local Assessment

The biennial Equalized Valuation Study is occurring behind the scenes and without additional documentation from local assessors. You recall that equalized valuations (EQV) are used in some local aid formulas for distribution and charges as well as determining municipal debt limits, etc. The Bureau of Local Assessment (BLA) reduced redundant documentation submissions and now uses the information it receives in as many ways as is possible.

Annually assessors submit their sales reports to BLA and with that came the opportunity to use those reports not only for checking interim year adjustments to real property but also for the EQV study. From that data we are also able to automatically generate the annual interim report for assessors for their review and submission to the Bureau.

So, on or before June 1, 2012 assessors will be notified of their proposed equalized figures. Remember, only the calendar year 2010 sales will be used when computing EQVs. Should assessors disagree with the proposed values there will be time for both an informal appeal to the Bureau as well as a formal appeal to the Appellate Tax Board should that be deemed necessary. EQVs will be finalized early in 2013. So while you are no longer being bombarded with repeated request for sales reports please know the EQV study is happening right now.

December Municipal Calendar

December 15: Taxpayer

Deadline for Applying for Property Tax Exemptions for Persons. If tax bills are mailed after September 15, taxpayers have 3 months from the mailing date to file applications for exemptions.

December 15: Accountant/Superintendent/School Committee

Submit Amendments to End of School Year Report to DESE - Last filing date to impact next year's Chapter 70 State Aid.

December 31: State Treasurer

Notification of Quarterly Local Aid Payments on or Before December 31

December 31: Water/Sewer Commissioners

Deadline for Betterments to be Included on Next Year's Tax Bill (M.G.L. Ch. 80, Sec. 13; Ch. 4, Sec. 42I and Ch. 83, Sec. 27)

December 31: Selectmen

Begin to Finalize Budget Recommendation for Review by Finance Committee

December 31: Assessors

Mail 3-ABC Forms to All Eligible Non-Profit Organizations

December 31: Collector

Deadline for Mailing Actual Tax Bills. For communities using the annual preliminary billing system on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, the actual tax bills should be mailed by this date.

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