

Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program

[FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS \(FAQ\)](#)

As of: 8/28/23

Reminders

Due Date: **Friday, September 15, 2023 – 5:00 p.m.**

Submission: **A completed application must be submitted as one document via Submittable. Attachments, including the budget form, must be uploaded within the application form.**

[Prior Grantees](#)

Q: Is there a list of previous grantees or projects?

A: Yes. Previous Community Empowerment & Reinvestment grantees and their projects from FY2022 and FY2023 can be found on Mass.gov, [the page is linked here](#).

[Eligibility Questions](#)

Q: Is my organization eligible to apply?

A: We have received several inquiries regarding eligibility for various types of organizations to apply for this grant. While we are not able to provide a verification for every specific type of organization, we believe that we will have the ability to fund appropriate projects proposed by any charitable, public, and/or non-profit organization. (The main exception would be private for-profit organizations/businesses, which are not eligible.)

The eligibility issue really only applies to the lead applicant, which would be the direct recipient of the grant. Different types of organizations in each community should be able to carry out various components of the project through subcontract arrangements. Eligibility for a subcontract is to be determined and agreed upon at the local level and should be outlined in the proposal.

The choice of who should serve as the lead applicant is to be decided locally. The one caveat is that the lead applicant must be a direct service provider or lead partnership convener that is able to execute a contract with the Commonwealth. Municipalities are already qualified for contracting. If it is a community organization, ideally, they are already a certified vendor of the Commonwealth. (While certification is not necessarily required at the time of the application, a non-vendor awardee will not have access to grant funds, until they get certified, which may delay the contracting by several months.)

Q: Who is eligible to be the lead applicant? Can the lead applicant be an organization that uses a fiscal sponsor?

A: A lead applicant must be a Massachusetts non-profit organization with a relevant IRS nonprofit determination letter that is fully capable of contracting with, and receiving funds from, the Commonwealth directly. Municipalities and other government organizations are also eligible to be lead applicants. Fiscal sponsors cannot be the lead applicant on behalf of their client organizations.

The lead applicant must be actively and directly leading the project on behalf of a local partnership. Nevertheless, this would not preclude an organization, once awarded and contracted, from utilizing a fiscal sponsor to manage their finances and accounting of the grant funds. The lead applicant is still responsible for the timely submission of reports to EOED.

As this program focuses on funding partnerships and collaborations, we encourage organizations that are not able to apply directly to partner with larger community organizations that can serve as the lead applicant on behalf of the group.

Q: What does EOED look for in a collaboration or a coalition?

A: EOED is looking for community-driven responses to community-defined economic opportunities that build leadership, collaboration, and capacity at the local level. Ideally, applications will come from established coalitions and/or partnerships that have a track record of working together on addressing community challenges in an innovative way. Competitive coalitions and collaborations have a thoughtful assembling of partners, including residents, community leaders, non-profits, businesses, and/or other partners with deep connections to the community.

Coalitions, partnerships and/or collaborators should be actively working together for the entire grant period to shape, execute and refine the grant project; coalitions should be meeting regularly during this time. An incidental referral relationship or loose professional association is not sufficient to be considered a partnership for these purposes.

Q: Can a partnership consist of just 2 organizations?

A: Yes. However, a competitive partnership of this size will need to demonstrate how it meets the goals of the grant program.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of applications my community can submit? Does one town/community need to submit a single application?

A: No – however, it is prudent for communities to collaborate where possible and to consider how their community organizations' efforts might overlap and/or intertwine in order to provide more effective services. Multiple applications from the same community conducting similar projects are essentially competing against each other, and reviewers may interpret that as lack of local coordination, making them less likely to be recommended for funding. For example: two applications from the same neighborhood proposing to provide ESOL services to the same target population.

Q: Can a single organization apply, or must they be part of a coalition?

A: A single organization may apply, however the most competitive applications will come from community-led partnerships with cross-sector collaboration. If the organization itself is a collaboration of multiple organizations, that should be made clear in the application.

Q: Can we collaborate with another organization in an adjacent community or neighborhood?

A: Within the same community, especially in larger cities, it is certainly appropriate to collaborate with organizations and/or residents across multiple neighborhoods. As far as partnering with adjacent cities/towns, each involved community would need to qualify under the RFP criteria. In all cases, the applicant needs to clearly outline how the coalition bridges the multiple neighborhoods or communities.

Q: Can our organization be lead on one application and participate in one or more other applications? Can our organization be part of several different coalitions? Can a nonprofit participate in or lead more than one project targeting different geographic communities?

A: A nonprofit with multiple locations may serve as a lead applicant in more than one application, each serving a single geographical community, if each community coalition demonstrates clearly that they are specifically seeking the lead organization to lead the efforts in their community. However, organizations should consider this strategically given that this is a competitive grant process. An organization can be a lead applicant in one application and part of a coalition in other applications, or part of multiple coalitions without serving as the lead applicant.

Q: Is there a list of eligible communities that meet the application criteria?

A: No, EOED does not have a particular eligibility list for this purpose. The eligibility criteria is defined in the budget line item. We are asking applicant coalitions to identify the prevalence of these challenges in their communities and to explain both how these challenges are impacting their communities and how their proposal can mitigate the impact of the criminal justice system, poverty, social and economic disadvantage, and historic underrepresentation.

Q: My organization received a previous Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant. Are we eligible to apply in FY24?

A: Yes.

Q: My organization has not applied for a Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant in the past. Are we eligible to apply in FY24?

A: Yes.

Q: My organization has multiple projects in mind. Can we submit them all in one application?

A: No. Each project should have its own application. Multiple projects in one application will not be considered.

Q: Would multiple departments of a single organization working together be considered a coalition or partnership?

A: No. Competitive coalitions and collaborations have a thoughtful assembling of partners, including residents, community leaders, non-profits, businesses, and/or other partners with deep connections to the community.

Q: Would a regional application serving multiple municipalities be competitive?

A: No. This program is most effective at serving single cities or towns in a project. Applications should be targeted at a single geographic community – a municipality or neighborhood.

[Project Categories](#)

Q: How does EOED define the housing stabilization project category?

A: Broadly, housing stabilization includes preventing homelessness, sheltering those for whom homelessness is currently unavoidable, and rapidly re-housing people experiencing homelessness to stable, permanent housing.

Q: How does EOED define the community organizing and leadership project category?

A: This category was developed to reflect that historically underrepresented and excluded groups may need specific support around organizing a coalition, conducting leadership training, developing and carrying out outreach, and otherwise formalizing early-stage collaborations already in the community. These collaborations may not yet be offering services but may need additional support to strengthen their collaboration's core processes.

Q: Can I apply under two categories for the same project?

A: No. Please select the project category that best describes the work your coalition is planning to undertake with the grant funds, if awarded.

[Programmatic Questions](#)

Q: Does programming have to directly serve people who are currently (or formerly) involved in the criminal justice system?

A: No. However, a project will need to demonstrate that it serves a community that is highly impacted by the criminal justice system and that there is a clear link between the interventions proposed and reducing recidivism and/or preventing criminal justice system involvement. Competitive projects will primarily and directly serve people impacted by the criminal justice system.

Q: Can my organization apply to provide services in multiple geographic communities?

A: This program is intended to support community-based projects in order to catalyze change and bring capacity to the local level. Each project should focus on one geographic community.

If an applicant wants to provide services in multiple geographic communities, each geographic community's project should be submitted as its own application. These applications will not be competitive unless they can very clearly demonstrate that each geographic community shares the applicant's vision and that the applicant's presence will be a benefit to the community served; that is, the community is actively engaged with the lead applicant and seeking to bring them in.

Q: Does this have to be a new project, or can it support a pre-existing project/services?

A: It can be either a new or a pre-existing project.

Q: My project doesn't serve a community impacted by all three of the conditions outlined in the RFP/budget line item. Would my application be competitive?

A: Each application will be evaluated and scored on the extent to which they meet each of the target criteria. The most competitive applications will demonstrate alignment with all three conditions - serving communities that – are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, have a high percentage of incomes below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level, **and** have a large population of socially and economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented groups. Having said that, meeting only one or two of the criteria does not preclude an applicant from submitting a proposal.

[Application](#)

Q: Are there word or character limits for the narrative?

A: Yes, the application fields have character limits that can be found on the bottom of each text box in the application form.

Q: Will proposed projects within a community be required to have a letter of support from city/town leadership in order to qualify for funding?

A: No, municipal support letters are not required for this grant round. However, these letters can be an effective way of demonstrating collaboration with a local municipality.

Q: Do minority/woman/LGBTQ/veteran-led lead organizations need to be certified as such in order to check that box on the application?

A: Yes. While we do not require applicants to attach any certificate(s) at the time of application, we may need awarded grantees to provide evidence of certifications during contracting. This question is optional and will be primarily used for statistical purposes. Applicants that do not have a formal designation but would like to self-identify as part of a classification(s), can include that information in the Organization Description question.

Q: Does the application require MOAs or MOUs from partner organizations?

A: No. EOED does not require the submission of MOAs/MOUs with the application. However, if awarded a grant, the lead organization will be expected to negotiate and execute an agreement(s) with each of their partner organizations that is receiving a subgrant. Such agreements must align and be consistent with the lead applicant's own EOED contract terms, including performance period and subaward amounts.

Q: My organization applied for a Community Empowerment grant last year. Can I assume that EOED has a baseline understanding of my organization, project, target population or community?

A: This is a new grant round, and applicants should assume that the reviewers will not have any previous knowledge of their project or work. It is a competitive grant, and applications will be scored against each other based on their responses for this application cycle alone.

Q: Will EOED consider qualitative data which speaks to the community-level impact of criminal legal system involvement?

A: Yes. EOED's scoring process takes into account municipality-level metrics of criminal justice involvement from Commonwealth data sets (including prison admission rates and arrest rates) so the most competitive applicants will provide information about justice system involvement, such as qualitative data, that brings detail and clarity to the community's specific experience.

[Funding and timelines](#)

Q: What can the funds be used for?

A: General program operating support, including overhead costs, to fund the work of community led collaborative projects in eligible communities to carry out the program's goals. Operating expenses generally are any direct, non-capital, expenditures that are necessary to successfully achieve the stated goals of a program or initiative. These may include the costs for staff, partner subcontracts, consultants, supplies/materials, meeting expenses, participant stipends, etc.

Funding **cannot** be used for any type of major capital purchase or expense, including but not limited to purchasing real estate, construction or renovation of real property, and large durable goods purchases over \$5,000 such as vehicles.

Q: Is the award amount the same each year for FY2024-2026? Can we request different amounts of funds for each fiscal year?

A: The award amounts are expected to be level funded for each year, if budget appropriations remain level in FY24, FY25, and FY26 and grantees are eligible for renewal. Applicants cannot request different amount of funds for each fiscal year under this procurement. Thus, if an organization received a \$100,000 award in FY2024 (January to June 2024), they could also receive \$100,000 in FY2025 (July 2024 to June 2025) and \$100,000 in FY2026 (July 2025 to June 2026), if the budget and renewal criteria are met.

Q: Can this funding be used to pay stipends to people while they receive job training, attend school, or participate in other services?

A: Yes. Documentation of all stipends paid will need to be provided to EOED.

Q: Do all funds need to be spent by June 30, 2024? How strict is the performance period?

A: Yes. The program funds are available through the FY2024 state operating budget. As such, funds can only be used for reimbursement of program expenses that are incurred through June 30, 2024. This is not a flexible deadline - any expenses incurred after that date are ineligible. Funds cannot be rolled into subsequent years, unless the legislature specifically continues appropriations from the prior fiscal year.

Q: Will further funding for this grant program be available in the next fiscal year?

A: These current funds are only available through the FY2024 state operating budget. Any future grant resources are subject to further appropriation by the legislature.

Q: Can the project I am proposing continue past June 30, 2024?

A: We certainly understand that the community organizations and coalitions applying to this program may have a project that spans one or more years. While it is appropriate to describe the long-term plans, this grant program is offering funding only for the expenses that occur between January through June 2024. Any activities that occur outside that period would need to be funded through other sources. Therefore, it will be important to clearly outline the activities and budget for the time period covered by this grant.

Q: What is the grant payment schedule?

A: The operating grant funds through this program are available for distribution on a cost-reimbursement basis. However, understanding the need for the prompt startup of the projects, EOED will disburse 50% of the FY2024 grant upon contract execution for FY2024. Following timely and complete filing of the first quarterly report, grantees will be eligible for an additional allotment equal to 25% of the FY2024 award. Final payment of remaining FY2024 grant funds, based on complete and accurate documentation of all expenditures, will be disbursed upon approval of the final report after the end of the grant period, typically mid to late summer.

Q: For overhead costs, is there a maximum amount or percent of total budget that is acceptable?

A: Overhead requests must be reasonable; generally, an indirect rate charged to this grant should be no more than 10-15%. However, if an applicant has a specific need and reasoning for a higher rate, that should be explained in the application.

Q: Will EOED make partial grant awards?

A: Maybe. After reviewing and scoring grant applications, EOED may decide to make partial awards.

[Outputs & Outcomes](#)

Q: Should applicants provide interventions, outputs and outcomes for all 3 years on this application?

A: Yes. The instructions in Section G of the application state, "In the table below, list specific services or interventions, outputs and outcomes of the project over the course of the FY2024, FY2025 and FY2026 fiscal years."

Q: Do you expect grantees will be able to revise quantitative goals for FY2025 and FY2026 if grants are renewed?

A: EOED may determine that a revision is needed if budget appropriations do not remain level or another exigency occurs. However, applicants should not assume that goals will be able to be modified and should provide SMART goals they would be comfortable with contracting under for the full three fiscal year period if the grant were to be level funded each year.

Q: Can organizations identify specific goals for each year rather than submitting a three year goal to be divided by three? For example, 30 students in FY24, 50 in FY25, 100 in FY26.

A: Applicants may submit one larger three year goal and also specify how it would divide annually. This is helpful information for evaluating the planned trajectory of a project.

General

Q: I was unavailable to participate in the webinar – is a recording available?

A: Yes, a recording is available at: [Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program | Mass.gov](#)

Q: Where can I learn more about the Urban Agenda grant program that was mentioned?

A: [The guidelines for the FY2024 Urban Agenda Grant program are available here](#). That round closed in June and the next round is expected to open in January 2024.

Q: How is a community defined?

A: For the purpose of this application, a community is defined as a specific geographic area, municipality, or neighborhood with a target population(s) that meets the criteria outlined by the program.

Q: Can a program evaluation be internal or does it have to be from an independent evaluator?

A: EOED has a strong preference for independent evaluation, especially if the applicant is requesting grant funds in order to pay for the evaluation. However, internal program evaluations may also be considered, with more weight given to those using a methodologically objective process.

Data Sources

Q: Where can I find US Census data about my community's median household income?

A: Visit <https://www.census.gov/> and type the community's name in the search bar.

Q: My project proposes to serve a target population that isn't specifically measured by the Census. What should I do?

A: Census data about the target population your project serves is not necessary. Rather, the application asks for data about the community (that is, the geographic community) that your target population lives in and your project serves. Census data should be based on that geographic community. Additional data about the target population are helpful but not required.