

Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program

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

As of: 9/6/22

Reminders

Due Date: **Wednesday, September 14, 2022 – 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 grantees and their projects are summarized in the [Community Empowerment and Reinvestment grant announcement from February 2022](#), 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: My organization utilizes a fiscal sponsor. Can our sponsor apply as the lead applicant on our behalf?

A: No. The lead applicant must be actively and directly leading the project on behalf of a local partnership. A lead applicant must be a Massachusetts non-profit organization or municipality fully capable of contracting with, and receiving funds from, the Commonwealth directly. Fiscal sponsors cannot be the lead applicant on behalf of their client organizations.

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 EOHED.

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: 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 eligible organization submit an application, 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 geographical 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 wants the specific 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 single list of eligible communities that meet the application criteria?

A: No, EOHED 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 FY22 Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant. Are we eligible to apply in FY23?

A: Yes. However, as was discussed with FY22 grantees, priority will be given to those organizations that successfully completed their project by June 30, 2022. While still eligible, grantees that have not completed their project by September 30, 2022, will be de-prioritized.

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.

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 link between the interventions proposed and reducing recidivism and/or preventing criminal justice system involvement.

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

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. In rare instances, a regional project submitted as a single application may be funded if it can demonstrate that it serves geographically adjacent communities that share both a common concern and a common vision for how to solve it.

If an applicant wants to provide services in multiple geographic communities and does not meet the regional project definition described above, 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.

Q: My project focuses on addressing an inequity that is correlated with criminal justice system involvement but not directly targeted at people who are involved in the justice system. Is my project eligible?

A: Yes. However, we would note that the most competitive applications will clearly outline the correlation between the targeted population, the services offered, and the outcomes.

Q: How does EOHED 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.

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. EOHED 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 EOHED contract terms, including performance period and subaward amounts.

Q: Many of the questions for the FY23 application are the same/similar to that of the FY22 application. We will update statistics, project goals, etc., but still expect some of our answers to be the same/similar to those last year. Is this in line with expectations on your end?*

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.

[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: Can this funding be used to provide food and other meeting expenses?

A: Yes, so long as the meeting or event serves the project's goals.

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.

Q: Do all funds need to be spent by June 30, 2023? How strict is the performance period?

A: Yes. The program funds are available through the FY2023 state operating budget. As such, funds can only be used for reimbursement of program expenses that are incurred through June 30, 2023. This is not a flexible deadline - any expenses incurred after that date are ineligible. (Subject to change only if/when a PAC is approved by the legislature.)

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

A: These current funds are only available through the FY2023 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, 2023?

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 2023. 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. In accordance with the Commonwealth's bill paying policies, all payments will be disbursed within 45 days of a reimbursement request. Generally, EOHEd expects to be able to issue payment 7-10 days after a report is reviewed and approved.

However, understanding the need for the prompt startup of the projects, EOHEd will disburse 50% of the grant upon contract execution. Following timely filing of the first quarterly report, grantees will be eligible for an additional allotment equal to 25% of the award. Final payment of remaining grant funds, based on complete and accurate documentation of all expenditures, will be disbursed after submission and approval of the final report at the end of the grant period.

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 proposals up to \$1 million be considered? Are there special requirements for proposals over 500k?*

A: Yes, proposals up to \$1 million will be considered. Applicants requesting grants over \$500,000 will need to demonstrate that they will be able to effectively expend all grant funds by 6/30/23 by completely filling out "Section A: Verifications for Applications Exceeding \$500,000" on the application form. The questions can be previewed on the application template. The size of the coalition will also be a factor in the review of an application for a larger grant. Larger coalitions, with multiple community partners receiving sub-grants, will be considered better equipped to expend larger grant awards during the grant period.

Q: Will EOHEd make partial grant awards?*

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

Q: Section A (Verifications for Applications Exceeding \$500,000) question 3 asks us to describe experience managing grants over \$500,000. Can you clarify if this should reference the lead applicant or a fiscal sponsor? What kind of description is EOHEd looking for here?*

A: This question refers to the lead applicant. As stated in the FAQ, fiscal agents are not eligible to be applicants. In this question, EOHEd asks for an organization's experience managing grants over \$500,000, by which we mean the size, source, program or project description, partners or collaborators, as well as the relative successes and challenges of the grant. Applicants should include any relevant information that would help EOHEd evaluate the applicant's capacity to manage grants over \$500,000.

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 FY23 Urban Agenda Grant program are available here](#). That round closed in June and the next round is expected to open in January 2023.

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

A: EOHED 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.

Q: How is a community defined?

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

Data Sources

Q: Where can I find the reports for the Governor's Black and Latino Advisory Commissions?

A: [The Governor's Black Advisory Commission report can be found here](#).
[The Governor's Latino Advisory Commission report can be found here](#).

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: Where can I find data about the impact of the criminal justice system in my community?

A: EOHED encourages applicants to consider the broad impact of the criminal justice system on a community beyond incarceration rates alone, and to provide data that reflect that impact. Responses will be scored based on the applicant's demonstration of their understanding of the community they serve, not on statistics alone.

However, we are offering some broad data sources to help applicants contextualize the criminal justice system's *relative* impact on their community. For those looking for incarceration data, [the Vera Institute offers county-level data on this page](#), with options for jail admissions, jail incarceration, pretrial incarceration, prison incarceration, and more. [The Massachusetts Department of Corrections offers](#)

[periodic reports on prison population trends](#). Finally, [this older data from Boston University offers community-level relative prison admission rates](#).

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.

*Indicates that the Q&A is new or has been expanded upon as of 9/6/22