Commonwealth of Massachusetts - Executive Office of Economic Development
Community Workforce Partnerships Grant Program

<u>FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)</u>
As of: April 24, 2025 (Final Update)

<u>Reminders</u>
Due Date: <u>**May 2, 2025 – 11:59 p.m.**</u>
Submission: **A completed application must be submitted at once via Submittable. Attachments must be uploaded within the application form.**

<u>Eligibility Questions</u>

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. The lead applicant must be actively and directly leading the project on behalf of a local partnership.

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 EOED.

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

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

A: Single organizations without project partners are not eligible. If the organization itself is a collaboration of multiple organizations, that should be made clear in the application.

Q: My organization is currently receiving a Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant. Are we eligible for this grant program?

A: Yes, assuming your organization meets all of the other criteria for eligibility. However, only projects that are fully distinct from any funded Community Empowerment projects will be considered for funding. Target populations, services provided, project partners, outcomes, and geographic area will all be considered in assessing whether the proposed project is sufficiently different.

Q: The city or town my project takes place in has a poverty rate of less than 20%, can we still apply?

A: Yes, this is a scoring factor, not an eligibility factor. However, it is worth noting that cities or towns with lower poverty rates will not be as competitive.

Geography

Q: Can we collaborate with another organization in an adjacent city, town or neighborhood?

A: Within the same city or town, especially in larger cities, it is certainly appropriate to collaborate with organizations and/or residents across multiple neighborhoods. As far as partnering with organizations in adjacent cities/towns, that is likely to be interpreted as a project that is not focused on a single geographic place without specific discussion about why a local partner is not available to fill the same role and where any relevant services are actually offered.

Q: Can my organization apply to provide services in multiple cities or towns?

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 – that is, one city, town or neighborhood.

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

Q: A particular census tract in or near the city or town that I'm applying in has a higher poverty rate than the city or town as a whole – can I apply based on this tract alone?

A: No. EOED will calculate the poverty rate for the city or town that your project is taking place in based on the city or town as a whole. The only exception here is the City of Boston, for which the percentage of people in poverty will be calculated by EOED based on the neighborhood, due to the size of each neighborhood. You do not need to provide the

percentage of people in poverty, as this will be calculated by EOED in order to ensure consistency, but it is good information to know.

Q: **Do the workforce development services (e.g., training, courses) have to be provided in the same city or town that the project targets?**

A: While all services do not necessarily need to take place in that city or town, the project will come under increased scrutiny for partnering with outside providers and/or having participants travel. In order to be competitive, an applicant would need to compellingly explain why they need to provide services outside the city or town they intend to serve, why the services are not available in the city or town, and how they would address the increased barrier than travel would create for participants. An applicant who elects to use a partner outside of the city or town in favor of a partner providing the same services elsewhere will be at a disadvantage in the scoring process.

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 cities or towns?**

A: A nonprofit with multiple locations may serve as a lead applicant in more than one application, each serving a single city or town. 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: **Would a regional application serving multiple municipalities be competitive?**

A: No, regional applications are not eligible.

Q: **Is there a limit to the number of applications my city or town can submit? Can each city/town submit only a single application?**

A: No, there is not a limit to the number of applications that can come from a single city or town or neighborhood. However, organizations that share a city or town should consider how their efforts might overlap and/or intertwine in order to provide more effective services. Multiple applications from the same city/town/neighborhood conducting similar projects are directly competing against each other, and reviewers may interpret the duplication 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.

Partnerships

Q: **Can a municipality (city/town government) be a partner on the project?**

A: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Does the city or town need to be a partner on the project?

A: The city or town where the project takes place is not required to be a partner.

Project Categories

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

A: Please select the one project category that best describes the work your partnership is planning to undertake with the grant funds, if awarded.

Q: What is the small business worker development category?

A: Small business worker development includes teaching skills and best practices to people who work in small businesses, whether they are microbusiness founders (and thus self employed), entrepreneurs, or employees of a small business. This can include traditional roles like apprenticeships, but can also include teaching digital skills, bookkeeping, marketing, and other facets of small business work that will benefit both the business and the individual.

Programmatic Questions

Q: Does the grant project actually need to provide the job skill training, language or literacy instruction, or can the project just help people access those services?

A: The project must actually provide the workforce development service, such as job training, language or literacy instruction.

Q: My organization runs a summer job program for youth. Is this eligible?

A: It may be; however, the applicant would need to clearly demonstrate that the youth are being trained for specific jobs and that they will begin working in the same field shortly after completing the training program. Generally, competitive applicants will need to show that the training received on these summer jobs alone is sufficient to make the youth strong job candidates within a year of completing the program. For example, a summer job as a lifeguard, with appropriate training, certification and support, could transition into a high-demand employment option immediately after, within a few months of, or almost a year after completing the summer job.

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: Are the supportive services eligible to be funded limited to those listed in the RFP?

A: No, the partnership or collaboration may provide any services it deems necessary to support the target population in addition to that list. However, the applicant must demonstrate that the collaboration or partnership will provide at least two of those listed in the RFP (Childcare, Transportation, Healthcare, CORI sealing) in order to maximize their score in that section.

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: Are projects required to have a letter of support from city/town leadership in order to qualify for funding?

A: Municipal support letters are not required.

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

A: No. EOED does not require the submission of MOAs/MOUs with the application; instead, each partner's letter should explain their role in the project. 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 has received EOED grants in the past. Can I assume that EOED has a baseline understanding of my organization, project, target population or community?

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

Funding and timelines

Q: Is this grant program federally funded?

A: No, this program is funded with state dollars.

Q: What can the funds be used for?

A: General program operating support to fund the work of community led collaborative projects 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. Funding cannot be used to purchase alcohol, gift cards, sales tax, or to pay for the organization's own legal services.

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: What is the window for spending the funds?

A: Funds can be used for reimbursement of program expenses that are incurred between January 1 and December 31, 2026.

Q: Can the project I am proposing begin before January 1, 2026 or continue past December 31, 2026?

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 and December 2026. 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: If our grant project is expected to take less than 12 months to complete, is that ok?

A: Yes, absolutely. The grant period is the maximum amount of time that funding will be available for the project, but if the project will conclude earlier that is fine.

Q: What is the grant payment schedule?

A: The grant funds for 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 grant upon contract execution.

Following timely and complete filing of a quarterly report demonstrating that the first 50% has been spent, grantees will be eligible for an additional allotment equal to 25% of the award.

Final payment of remaining 2026 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.

Q: For overhead or administrative 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%.

Q: Will EOED make partial grant awards?

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

General

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

A: Yes, a recording will be posted on the Community Workforce Partnership page on Mass.gov.
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Data Sources

Q: Where can I find US Census data about my municipality's percentage of people in poverty?

A: Visit https://www.census.gov/quickfacts and type the city or town's name in the search bar.