

Community Workforce Partnerships 2027 FAQ

Last Updated: April 17, 2026

Eligibility & Geography

Q. Who is eligible to serve as the lead applicant?

A. The lead applicant must be a Massachusetts nonprofit organization with federal tax-exempt status, experience providing workforce development services, and a minimum of \$500,000 in gross support and revenue on its most recently filed IRS Form 990. The lead applicant must apply on behalf of an active partnership or coalition with at least one other active organization and must primarily carry out the project, manage grant funds, and file reports.

Q. Can the lead applicant be an organization that uses a fiscal sponsor? Alternatively, can a fiscal sponsor be the lead applicant?

A. The lead applicant must meet all the eligibility criteria set out in the RFP, and be capable of contracting with and receiving funding directly from the Commonwealth. 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.

Fiscal sponsors cannot be the lead applicant on behalf of their client organizations.

Q. Is the \$500,000 nonprofit support and revenue threshold a firm requirement, and whose revenue counts?

A. Yes. The \$500,000 threshold is an eligibility requirement for the lead applicant, based on the organization's most recently filed IRS Form 990. It does not refer to the organization's budget or the proposed project budget. Applicants should assume this threshold is firm.

Q. Can a project cover multiple cities or towns?

A. No. Projects must focus on a single Massachusetts city or town, or one Boston neighborhood. Multi-city, countywide, or regional projects are not eligible.

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. For projects that take place in Boston, do I have to select just one neighborhood?

A. Applicants based in Boston may choose whether their project is best suited to serving just one neighborhood or may select the entire city of Boston, but their responses must be consistent throughout, including describing the target population.

Q. Does the municipality itself have to be the lead applicant?

A. No. In fact, a nonprofit organization must serve as lead, though they could include the municipality as a formal project partner. This program is structured around lead applicants working through active partnerships, which can include municipal government, educational institutions, businesses, chambers, and community groups.

Q. How does EOED define a benefit to the municipality – does it need to be jobs physically located within the town, or can it include residents gaining employment regionally and increased workforce participation?

A. EOED prioritizes projects that include community-defined solutions to community-defined workforce needs or opportunities. We look to applicants to show what the community need is and how they propose to respond to it most effectively, as well as to demonstrate their own ties and connection to the community.

Q. Are current/previous Community Workforce Partnerships grantees eligible to apply in this round?

A. Yes.

Q. May a lead applicant submit more than one application?

A. Yes. However, applicants should keep in mind that this is a competitive grant program, so all submitted applications are being evaluated against each other.

Q. Is there a particular geographic focus for the grant? Or area where EOED expects most of the grantmaking to be directed?

A. This grant has no geographic focus. EOED will consider geographic diversity when making awards; we welcome applications from across the Commonwealth.

Partnerships & Project Design

Q. What counts as a partner for this grant program?

A. Partners should be active co-stewards of the project, not merely referral sources, funders, or vendors. The RFP emphasizes a collaboration model in which partners help shape planning and implementation over time. Possible partners can include municipalities, employers, training providers, educational institutions, private-sector organizations, and community groups.

Q. Can a public official be a partner?

A. Maybe. If the public official is actively participating in regular project partnership meetings, as well as helping to lead the project on a regular basis, they might be considered a partner. It is up to the applicant to demonstrate that the official's level of engagement and leadership rises to the level of partnership for this grant's purposes.

Q. Can a single organization apply?

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. What project types are eligible?

A. Eligible projects fall into three categories: 1) job skill training, 2) literacy and language skills, including either adult literacy or English-language learning with a workforce focus; and 3) small business employee skill development, apprenticeship, recruitment, or retention.

Q. What is the "small business employee skill 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.

Q. How many partner letters of support should be included?

A. Provide a letter from each named partner that describes that partner's role in the project. The RFP does not set a separate numeric minimum beyond the requirement that the proposal includes at least one partner and thus, at least one partner letter of support. Applicants should only include letters from organizations that are truly helping steer or deliver the project.

Q. Are youth or high-school-age participants allowed?

A. The RFP does not set a specific age floor or ceiling. However, competitive proposals must show a credible pathway to stable employment and/or wage growth within one year. For youth-focused proposals such as summer jobs or internships, applicants should clearly explain the occupational skills being taught, any credential or industry connection involved, and how participants will become strong job candidates in the same field shortly after the program ends. Projects should also be sure to comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Q. What does EOED mean by a clear and timely path to employment or wage growth?

A. The program is designed for workforce initiatives that can help participants secure stable employment, improve wages, or strengthen small-business earning power within the one-year grant framework. The RFP does not define a single universal deadline such as six months after completion; instead, applicants should present a realistic near-term workforce pathway tied to the project's local economic opportunity, sector focus, and measurable outcomes.

Q. How important are supportive services such as childcare, transportation, housing stabilization, healthcare navigation, or CORI sealing?

A. These supports are central to the program's economic-mobility lens. The RFP and webinar materials strongly prioritize projects that directly provide at least two foundational supports through the lead applicant or a named project partner. Applicants should not rely on external referrals alone. The strongest proposals will show how these supports reduce participation barriers for the target population and improve access to equitable workforce outcomes.

Q. Can partners be involved in more than one project?

A. Yes.

Q. Are there any training partners or employers that EOED would recommend?

A. This project is designed to fund community-led responses to community workforce needs and opportunities. The best partners or employers are those that are deeply familiar with your target population, community, and would help to accomplish the community's goals.

Budget, Costs & Reporting

Q. What costs can the grant cover?

A. Allowable costs include operating expenses connected to the project, such as program staff salaries, project materials, partner subcontracts or sub-grants, necessary consultants, participant stipends, student technology, and supportive services like childcare, transportation, housing-related supports, and CORI sealing when tied to the project.

Q. What costs are not allowable?

A. The grant may not be used for capital expenditures such as real estate purchase, construction, renovation, or durable goods over \$5,000; vehicles; gift cards; Cash App or Venmo transactions; legal fees incurred by the organization itself; alcohol; fundraising costs; or employee taxes and fringe. Applicants should also avoid proposing subgrants to entities that employ an officer, director, agent, or employee of the grantee, or an immediate family member of such a person.

Q. Are indirect or administrative costs allowed?

A. Yes. Administrative or overhead costs are allowed up to 10% of the total grant award. Applicants should keep this line separate from direct project expenses and should not place indirect costs in other budget categories.

Q. Can grant funds pay partner organizations for training or other project work?

A. Yes. Partner subcontracts or sub-grants are an allowable expense category. If a partner organization will deliver training, direct supports, or another defined part of the scope of work, applicants should describe that role clearly in the partner table, budget, and letters of support.

Q. How is the grant paid, and what reporting is required?

A. This is a cost-reimbursement grant. EOED plans to pay 50% at contract execution, 25% after a quarterly report showing the first 50% has been spent, and the final 25% after the final report, or the remaining documented spending if that amount is lower. Grantees must submit quarterly financial and program reports documenting expenditures and project milestones.

Q. What type of documentation is required for reimbursement?

A. For financial documentation, EOED requires documentation of each dollar spent towards the grant. This may include payroll journals, cancelled checks, itemized receipts, and other documentation. We work closely with grantees to orient them and guide them through the reporting process by holding webinars, offering office hours, and producing a grantee handbook.

Q. What is the window for spending the grant funds?

A. Funds can be used for reimbursement of program expenses that are incurred between January 1 and December 31, 2027.

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

A. Yes, the stipend budget section is intended to provide this type of financial support to workforce development participants. Documentation of all stipends paid will need to be provided to EOED.

Q. Can grant funds be used for capacity-building towards future projects? Or for advocating for the expansion of the project?

A. These funds can be used for the direct expenses associated with carrying out the proposed workforce development project; generally, allocating grant funds to capacity-building or advocacy related to the project would not be considered within the scope of the program. Additionally, some types of advocacy may also blur the line with prohibited fundraising-type expenses.

Q. What type of personnel expenses are permitted?

A. Payment of staff time directly associated with the project is reimbursable under the grant. Taxes and fringe are not reimbursable.

Application Process & Follow-up

Q. Is the video component required, and what should applicants know about it?

A. Yes. The video is a required part of the application. It should be a simple 5–8 minute recording that responds to the listed prompts in the RFP. Reviewers will focus on authenticity and complete responses rather than production quality, so a straightforward cellphone or laptop video is appropriate.

Q. Who should record the grant video?

A. The people who appear should be able to speak credibly about the organization, the partnership, and the proposed project. Typically, this is staff from the organization. Beyond that, we defer to the applicant to determine who should record the video.

Q. What must be submitted with the application?

A. Applicants must submit the Submittable eligibility form, the Submittable application form with a complete budget, the most recent IRS Form 990, the required video response, and partner letters of support. EOED specifically asks for letters of support rather than memoranda of understanding.

Q. Can organizations apply if they already receive other state or quasi-public funding?

A. Yes. The application asks applicants to disclose other committed state or quasi-public funding that will support the project in 2027. Applicants should clearly distinguish how each funding source will be used.

Q. If the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment grant is funded again, how will eligibility or competitiveness for that program interact with this program?

A. EOED can't speculate about what that program's eligibility or evaluation criteria might be if it were to be funded in the future.

Q. Will webinar materials and answers be shared after the session?

A. Yes. An informational webinar was recorded and posted on Mass.gov, and questions were aggregated and addressed in this FAQ document posted on the program webpage.

Q. Can partners be involved in more than one project?

A. Yes.