Community Planning Grant Program

Program Information and Guidelines FY2023

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Charles D. Baker, Governor | Karyn E. Polito, Lt. Governor | Mike Kennealy, Secretary

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Community Planning Grant Program
FY2023

Introduction

The Baker-Polito administration is pleased to provide a grant program to provide communities funding for technical assistance for Community Planning projects.

Community Planning grants may be used for a variety of activities related to land use, such as the development of a Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, Zoning revisions including for MBTA Communities seeking to comply with "draft guidelines" for M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3A, Urban Renewal Plan, Land Use Plan, Downtown Plan, Parking Management Plan, District Improvement Financing (DIF) Plan, Municipal Surplus Property Disposition Plan, Regional Plan, or Other Strategic Plan. These are planning grants and projects must use the funds to produce a planning document. For FY2023, approximately $1 Million is available in grants.

Grants in this category will likely be $25,000-$75,000.

Examples of these projects include:
- Create a housing production plan to better understand housing needs of the community and identify strategies to reduce gaps in existing housing relative to identified needs.
- Create a multi-family zoning district near a transit station to comply with M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3A "draft guidelines".
- Create a corridor study of a commercial area that seeks land use alternatives to promote multi-modal access, introduce mixed-use, and achieve more compact commercial development.
- Review current zoning to identify and remove language that excludes certain housing types.
- Develop 40R Smart Growth or Starter Home zoning districts.
- Review zoning ordinances and create a plan to update zoning rules to unlock potential housing production and economic development growth.

Eligibility and Criteria

Eligible Applicants: All Massachusetts municipalities, Local Redevelopment Authorities, regional applications from multiple municipalities, and Regional Planning Agencies are eligible for consideration of an FY23 Community Planning grant.

Use of Funds: Funding is available through "Planning and Zoning" category of the One Stop development continuum. Grants will fund professional services to complete Community Planning projects a variety of activities related to land use, such as the development of a Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, Zoning revisions including for MBTA Communities seeking to comply with "draft guidelines" for M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3A, Urban Renewal Plan, Land Use Plan, Downtown Plan, Parking Management Plan, District Improvement

Financing (DIF) Plan, Municipal Surplus Property Disposition Plan, Regional Plan, or Other Strategic Plan.

Timing: FY23 grants are expected to be awarded in the fall of 2022 and **must be completed by June 30, 2024**.

<u>**Maximum Award Amount:**</u> $75,000 is the maximum grant award. DHCD reserves the right to reduce the amount of the award from the original request, and to deny award to communities who owe funds to DHCD. Funding availability is subject to approval of state budgets.

Community One Stop for Growth Application
The Community One Stop for Growth is a single online application portal designed to allow applicants to apply for consideration of multiple sources of funding to support multiple phases and facets of a project. To help guide applicants, the One Stop uses a Development Continuum or lifecycle that describes how a typical economic development project moves from concept to reality within diverse communities. The One Stop encourages applicants to think about their economic development priorities in the context of this Development Continuum, both to guide applicants towards best practices and strategies and to help applicants identify the types of projects that will help achieve their economic development priorities. Applicants should consider this spectrum of activities as it prepares to submit applications to the One Stop, thinking fully about the steps necessary for progress in the development of a project.

Programs	Community Capacity Building	Planning & Zoning	Site Preparation	Buildings (vertical)	Infrastructure (horizontal)
Commonwealth Places	✔				
Urban Agenda	✔				
Mass Downtown	✔	✔			
Real Estate Services	✔	✔			
Community Planning		✔			
Brownfields			✔		
Site Readiness			✔		
Collaborative Workspace				✔	
Under Utilized Properties				✔	
MassWorks					✔
Housing Choice		✔			✔
Rural Development		✔	✔	✔	✔

Figure 1: One Stop for Growth Development Continuum.

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The application is organized into the following sections:

- Core Questions (Sections 1 and 2), plus site information, if applicable,
- Additional Questions (Sections 3 through 7), based on the development continuum and the project components selected by the applicant,
- Additional Questions for Housing Choice Communities (Sections 8), only for communities designated as Housing Choice,
- Certification of Application Submission Authority (Section 9),
- Other Attachments (Section 10), for attachments related to special projects.

A full proposal packet for consideration of Community Planning Grant Program funding must include complete responses to all applicable questions in the following sections:

Core Questions (Sections 1 and 2), plus site information, if applicable,

- **Section 1** - Applicant Information/Background: Identifying information of the applicant, and partners, if applicable.
- **Section 2** - Project Information: In this section, applicants will provide general project information, such as the project name, description, leadership and the ability to execute the project, timeline and anticipated outcomes. Applicant will indicate the category of funding for which they would like the project to be considered in question 2.1, which will drive additional questions. Those applying to the Site Preparation, Buildings and Infrastructure categories must complete the Site Information questions, which include identification of the specific site, ownership, and zoning.

Additional Questions (Sections 3 through 8), based on the development continuum and the project components selected by the applicant in Section 2, Question 2.1,

- **Section 4** – Planning and Zoning Additional Questions: This section is where applicants will provide detail about the proposed planning project, outcomes, leadership and implementation.

Certification of Application Submission Authority (Section 9),

- **Section 9** - Certification of Application Submission Authority: Signature page certifying the authority to submit the application on behalf of the applying entity and attesting that all responses are true and accurate.

Other/Optional Attachments (Section 10),

- **Section 10** - Other/Optional Attachments: This section allows submit other attachments to support the application, including other site images, partner letters or support letters. Please note that these items will generally not be scored or assessed as part of the formal evaluation of the proposal.

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IMPORTANT: The sections outlined above relate only to the "Planning and Zoning" category. Applicants may be required to complete other sections of the Community One Stop application, depending on the other categories they may have selected. Please review the instructions for the One Stop carefully.

- All applications must be submitted electronically. The online application portal, *IGX*, can be accessed at https://eohed.intelligrants.com. An online webinar outlining the use of the system will be available on the site. *See Appendix 2 for additional guidance on accessing online application.*
- The application form template and link to the portal will also be available on the EOHED webpage. Applicants will have at least 12 weeks to review the application questions and prepare their project proposal.
- Eligible applicants may submit funding requests for more than one project in the same round. However, a separate application, and completed required sections, is required for each project. Each proposal will be evaluated independently against the criteria and will be competing directly with all other proposals.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to be aware of all requirements and deadlines, and to ensure that their application is complete and submitted on time. All applications will be logged as to date and time received and kept on file as public record. Late submissions will not be considered.
- DHCD reserves the right to solicit additional information from applicants in order to confirm or clarify factual or procedural responses to application requirements such as copies of legal advertisements, minutes, survey instruments, letters, etc. Acceptance of these materials is subject to DHCD's satisfaction that the omitted material was in existence at the time of application and submission of the requested documents is made within a specified timeframe.

 As part of the One Stop for Growth Continuum *(see Figure 1 above)*, if your community is designated as a Housing Choice Community or you qualify as a Rural or Small Town, you are eligible to submit a planning and zoning application for consideration by those respective grant programs. If you choose to do so, please review the Housing Choice Grant Program and Rural and Small Town Grant Program guidelines.

Community Planning Evaluation Criteria
Grant proposals will be scored for the responsiveness to the following criteria. See Appendix 1 for full Evaluation Criteria and Scoring:
- **Project Need:** What community needs are met by the project? Preference will be given to projects that lead to or support housing production; create economic development; respond to COVID-19 related need; respond to clearly defined local priority; address a need identified in another community based or identified plan; address local transportation needs; address local infrastructure needs; lead to, support, or aim to identify other needs.

- **Project Readiness:** Is the project reasonable and achievable within proposed timeline; led by appropriate leadership with the requisite experience and ability to execute the project; ready to implement or be executed; feasible and achievable?
- **Project Financial Feasibility:** Is the project's budget reasonable? Preference will be given to projects that leverage funding outside of the requested grant funds but is not required. Projects with a cash match over 10% will receive special consideration. In-kind contributions are not match eligible.
- **Progress & Commitment to Date:** Does the applicant show commitment to the project through past activity and investment?
- **Project Outcomes & Impact:** What are the projected outcomes of this project and the impact this project may have on the community? How is equity included in your project? **(See appendix 3 for equity information and definitions)**.

Grant Award Process

Contract with DHCD and Award of Funds: Successful applicants must be ready to enter into a contract with DHCD within 30 days after receiving contract documents. Funding is subject to approval of the DHCD operating and capital budgets. Grant projects may begin as of the execution of the contract. If selected, the grantee will be required to submit the following forms to complete a contract:

- Commonwealth Standard Contract Form, filled out and signed by the Respondent.
- Commonwealth Scope and Budget Form (available from DHCD).
- Completed Contractor Authorized Signature Verification Form.

Grant Distribution and Invoicing: Granted funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis. Only work completed during the period of the executed contract will be eligible for reimbursement. Upon receipt of all required deliverables the community will be reimbursed for the balance of outstanding grant funds.

APPENDIX 1: COMMUNITY PLANNING EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SCORING

Applications to the Community Planning grant program will be eligible to receive a **maximum of 120 points** through a panel review process.

Community Planning Scoring Criteria (maximum total 120 points)

Project Need (maximum 30 points):
Project Need will be scored based on demonstration of one or more of the following:
- Project responds to recent 40A reforms (MBTA Communities or simple majority zoning votes), promotes an increase in housing production, promotes economic development needs, or clearly relates to a COVID-19 need. **(25 points)**
- Project responds to pressing local priorities identified as an action item or strategy in community documents such as Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, or other plans. **(20 Points)**
- Project responds to other municipally identified and <u>documented</u> need supporting housing, economic development, or local transportation options. **(15 points)**
- Project responds to other municipally identified and need supporting housing, economic development, or local transportation options **(10 points)**
- **BONUS:** The community does not have a full-time planner/project related municipal staff and requires consultant/non-municipal staff assistance to complete this project and unlock further housing or economic development potential. This bonus point will be awarded to communities that describe this need in project background. **(5 Points)**

Project Readiness (maximum total 20 points):
Readiness will be scored based on demonstration of the following:
- **Scope and Timeline:**
  - Project scope and timeline are feasible and within the grant timeline. **(5 points)**
  - Project may face scope and timeline challenges. **(3 points)**
  - Project is not achievable within proposed timeline or goes beyond allowed timeline. **(0 points)**
- **Leadership:**
  - Project leadership has requisite experience and ability to execute the project. **(5 points)**
  - Project leadership has some experience to lead the project. **(3 points)**
  - Project leadership has little to no experience leading a similar project. **(0 points)**
- **Timely project implementation:**
  - Project is ready to start and has identified a consultant that provided a cost estimate. **(5 points)**
  - Project is ready to release an RFP upon award. **(3 points)**
  - Project is not ready to bid upon award. **(0 points)**
- **Community engagement:**
  - Project includes a comprehensive public engagement plan. **(5 points)**

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o   Project includes a limited public engagement plan. **(3 points)**
o   Project is missing a public engagement plan. **(0 points)**

Project Financial Feasibility (maximum 20 points):
Financial Feasibility will be scored based on demonstration of one or more of the following:
* The project request fully funds the project or fills the last funding gap in an otherwise fully funded project. **(15 points)**
* Project request includes a draft warrant article or other recommended community funds request to pursue remaining funding with a funding award schedule that allows for project completion by grant deadline. **(10 points)**
* The project requests a portion of the funds necessary to complete the project and evidence of other grant applications and potential award schedule is provided. **(5 points)**
* **BONUS:** The project includes more than 10% local funding match. Note that only cash counts as a match, staff time does not count as a match. **(5 points)**

Progress & Commitment to Date (maximum 15 points):
Progress and Commitment to Date will be scored based on the following:
* Project is the result of either another previously identified planning document or community-based initiative that accomplishes a previously set community goal or is an update to a previously completed planning project that has met some or all of its goals. **(15 Points)**
* Project responds to a community need that requires further evaluation and planning. **(10 Points)**
* Project is a new community planning tool being used by the community. **(5 points)**

Project Outcomes & Impact (maximum 35 points):
Outcomes & Impact will be scored based on demonstration of one or more of the following:
* Project will result in change in zoning rules, or clearly outline tactics and strategies using tools that will directly support increased housing production, economic development, and infrastructure improvements that allow for housing, economic development, transportation improvements including multi-modal access. **(15 Points)**
* Project will affect a single property or site. **(10 Points)**
* Project will not result in clear and direct improvement to increased housing production, economic development, infrastructure improvements, parking, transportation, or multimodal access but will improve the quality of life and wellbeing of current residents. **(5 Points)**
* **BONUS:** Project will develop materials for compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3A "draft guidelines". **(10 Points)**
* **BONUS:** Project demonstrates a strong equity focus and addresses the Sustainable Development Principle to "Advance Equity." **(5 Points)**
* **BONUS:** Project will impact at least 1 census block group of an Environmental Justice Population in Massachusetts. **(5 Points)**

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APPENDIX 2: ACCESSING THE ONLINE APPLICATION

All applications to the Community Planning Grant Program must be submitted electronically through the **Community One Stop for Growth application process**. The application will be available and accepted through the IGX Platform, which is an upgraded version of IntelliGrants. The system can be accessed at https://eohed.intelligrants.com. A user account is required. Below are the steps for getting into the system. **This is the same system that the MassWorks grant program has used since 2018.**

The municipality should activate a primary account with the municipal CEO and/or designee(s) as a "Grant Administrator". This person(s) can then add other users, as necessary. Please refer to the IGX Grantee User Manual for technical instructions.

Current Admin Users – Municipal CEOs and/or designees who have used the IntelliGrants system in past rounds may be able to use their existing usernames to access the new application as a Grant Administrator in the IGX system. However, you must use the "Forgot Username/Password" function to reset your password when you first login and/or if you do not remember your username.

New Admin Users – If your community, or public entity, has not accessed the system in the past, a new registration is required. Similarly, this should be done by the municipal CEO and/or a designee. Click the "New User? Register Here" link to complete and submit a registration request. When that account is approved by EOHED, an email notification will be sent from the system confirming designation as a Grant Administrator.

NOTE: All new requests for Grant Administrator must be approved by EOHED. These will be reviewed as they are received. Applicants will get an email notification from the system confirming the approval. If confirmation not received after 48 hours, please contact onestop@mass.gov to request assistance.

Other Users – Once a Grant Administrator is established for your organization, that user(s) may then create and/or approve additional accounts for municipal staff and/or consultants, such as grant writers, engineers, etc. Requests for access to IGX should be made directly to your community's Grant Administrator.

Starting an application – Once accounts are registered and/or approved, a Grant Administrator will be able to start an application(s), from the "My Opportunities" panel, and following the prompts in the portal. Any designated user may access, edit, and/or save an application on behalf of their organization, and are encouraged to save their work often, particularly after completing each section. However, only a Grant Administrator will be able to formally submit the application(s).

Submitting an application – Applications may be edited in IGX at any time up until the deadline. Official submissions to the Community One Stop for Growth will only be accepted during the posted dates. During that timeframe, the "Application Submitted" option will become available (**to Grant Administrators only**), to officially submit an application. Applicants will receive an email confirming receipt within 24 hours. If an email is not received after 24 hours, please contact onestop@mass.gov for assistance.

NOTE: If an application is erroneously submitted prior to being finished, the applicant may contact EOHED at onestop@mass.gov to reopen the application for further editing and completion, as long as it is before the deadline. Staff will try to accommodate these requests as they are received but may not be able to respond to all requests immediately. DHCD is not responsible for delays or missed deadlines due to applicant errors.

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APPENDIX 3: EQUITY IN COMMUNITY PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM

Sustainable Development Principle: Advance Equity
The Commonwealth's [Sustainable Development Principles](#) define advancing equity as:

Advance Equity: Promote equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning and decision making to ensure social, economic, and environmental justice. Ensure that the interests of future generations are not compromised by today's decisions.

Environmental Justice Population
The Commonwealth defines a neighborhood as an [Environmental Justice Population](#) if one or more of the following four criteria are true:

1. the annual median household income is not more than 65 per cent of the statewide annual median household income;
2. minorities comprise 40 per cent or more of the population;
3. 25 per cent or more of households lack English language proficiency; or
4. minorities comprise 25 per cent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 per cent of the statewide annual median household income.

To assess whether at least 1 census tract in your project area is an EJ community you may use the following map and community list:

- [Environmental Justice Map Viewer](#)
- [List of Massachusetts Cities & Towns with Environmental Justice Populations](#)

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