



**Massachusetts Office on Disability
Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act
Improvement Grant Program
FY 18 Annual Report**





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MUNICIPAL AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM
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Published by the Massachusetts Office on Disability

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) is pleased to present its second annual report of the Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvement Grant Program. Designed with the goals of creating new or updated Self Evaluation and Transition Plans and increasing access to programs, services, and activities through the removal of barriers for people with disabilities in the Commonwealth, the grant program has had another successful year.

Initially launched in late FY17, the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program provides communities with resources in order to update amenities and increase accessibility for all citizens of the Commonwealth. On August 1, 2017, the application process for FY18 opened, and the office received immediate inquiries and subsequent applications for grant funding for both Planning and Project Grants from towns and cities throughout the Commonwealth. A total of 87 grant applications were submitted for review of which 34 were Planning Grant applications and 53 were Project Grant applications. 27 grants totaling \$956,615 were awarded to municipalities following a competitive selection process based on scoring considerations, tangible impact within the community, and the funding available for FY18. The program awarded \$293,041 towards 13 Planning Grants and \$663,572 towards 14 Project Grants. The chosen applications reflected cities and towns of all sizes, demographics, socio-economic conditions, and locations within the Commonwealth.

Of the 13 Planning Grants awarded, 8 municipalities created Transition Plans for the first time. The other 5 municipalities updated their existing Self Evaluation and Transition Plans, with two of those existing plans dating back to the early 1990s.

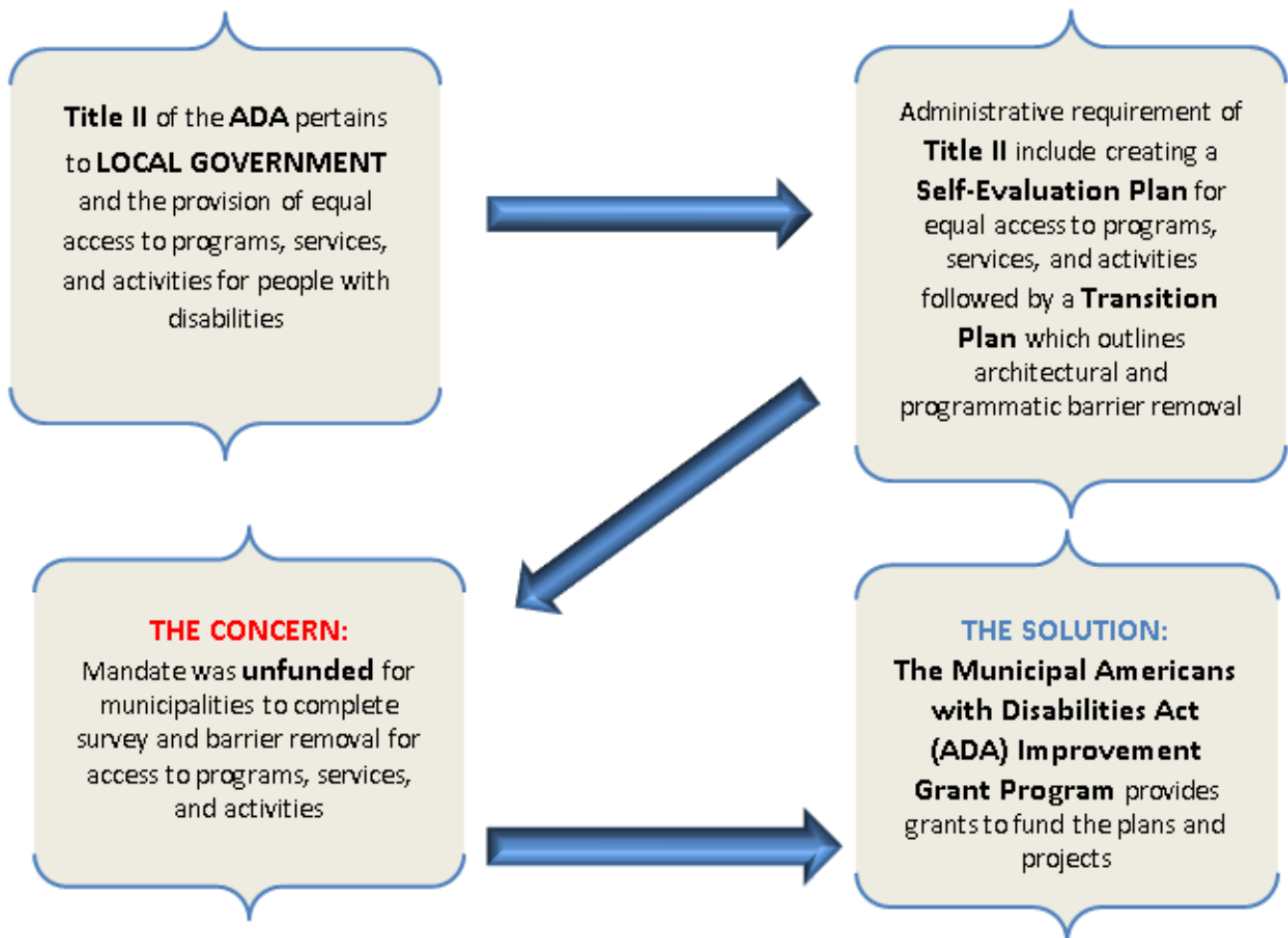
The 14 Project Grants awarded to 13 communities were used to update existing infrastructure and to purchase and install assistive technology. The projects addressed a range of disability related barriers including hearing, vision, and mobility, resulting in lasting impact for increased access to facilities, services, programs, and activities in these communities.

This report provides an overview of the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program, the grant application and selection process, the Planning Grant, impacts of the Project Grants, overview of internal controls, review of the FY18 program's success, and continued goals for the years ahead.

Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvement Grant Program Overview

The Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program is an innovative and competitive grant program that provides both Planning and Project Grants for the purpose of improving access to public programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities in the Commonwealth. Cities, towns, special purpose districts, and county governments are eligible for allocations of up to \$250,000. The program is overseen by the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) whose mission is to, *“Bring about full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life...in a manner that fosters dignity and self- determination.”*

Why This Grant Program Is Needed



Application and Selection Process

The application process for the FY18 Municipal Americans with Disabilities Improvement Grant Program opened on August 1, 2017. Information for the program and the application is located on the [Massachusetts Office on Disability's website](#). The program offers two types of Grants: Planning Grants and Project Grants. **Planning Grants** are for communities looking to create or update outdated Self-Evaluation and/or Transition Plans. To be eligible to apply for a Planning Grant, a municipality must have completed the first three administrative requirements under Title II of the ADA. **Project Grants** are for barrier to accessibility removal or purchase of assistive technology. To be eligible to apply for a Project Grant, a municipality must have completed all five administrative requirements under Title II of the ADA.

Title II
Administrative Requirements
a. Designation of Responsible Employee
b. Notice of ADA Requirements
c. Published Grievance Procedure
d. Self-Evaluation Plan
e. Transition Plan

Information regarding the scope of the project, cost estimates, additional resources, project schedule, maintenance, history of prior planning efforts for accessibility, census data of people with disabilities within the community, names of grant team members, and information regarding if anyone with a disability was involved in the grant application are also required for Planning and Project Grants.

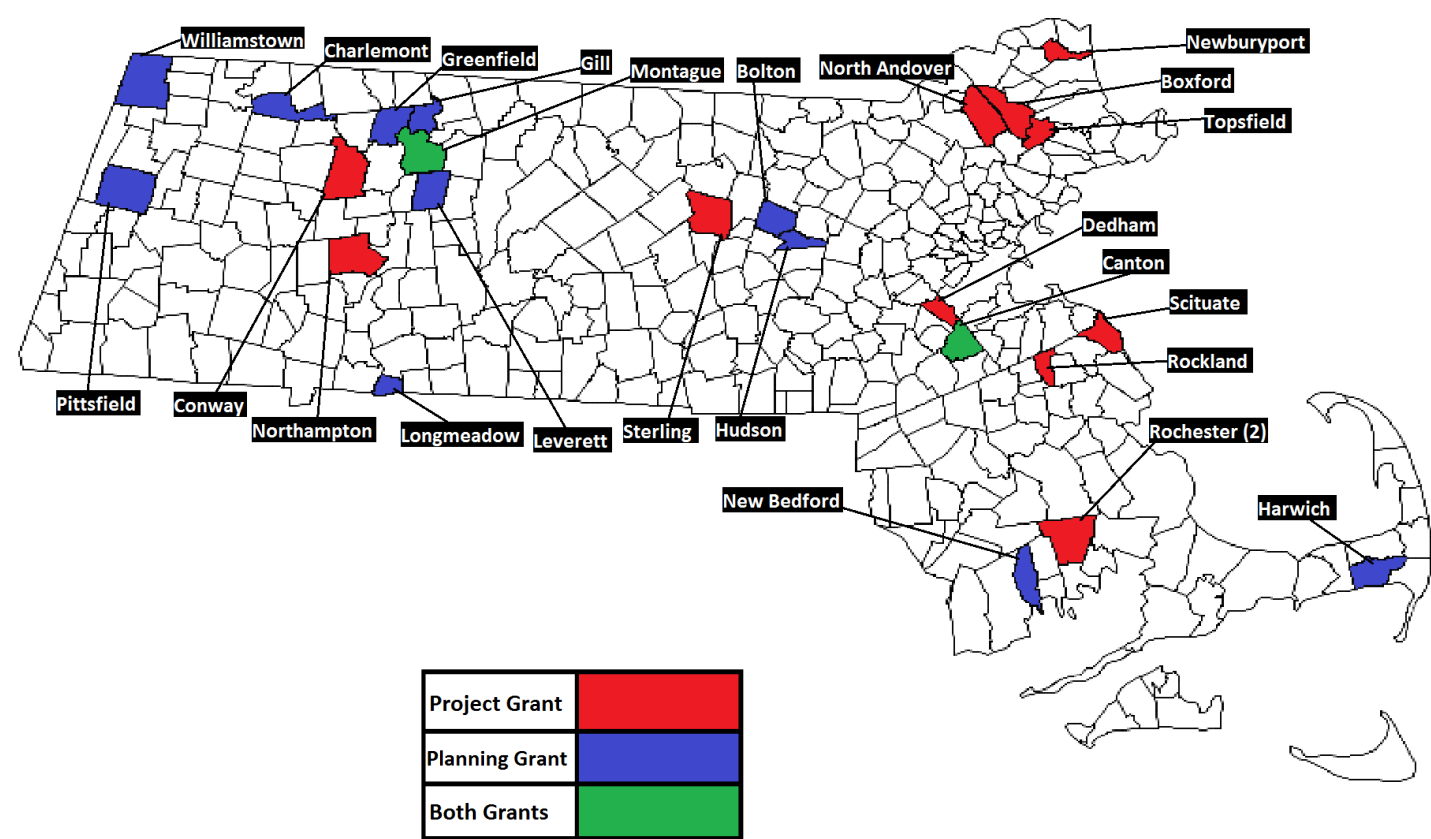
A Grant Selection Committee was responsible for approving the grants, utilizing a weighted scoring process. Every municipality in the Commonwealth is eligible to apply for a grant. At a minimum, applicants must be members of the Community Compact Cabinet (CCC), with additional consideration given to communities that select "Public Accessibility Best Practice" as an option. Furthermore, higher base scores were awarded to communities with a duly established Commission on Disability (COD) as well as a clear indication that the projects would have a positive tangible impact on persons with disabilities within those communities. Following the scoring and selection process, approved grant award notifications and denial letters were mailed out to grant applicant municipalities.

Communities that received approved grant awards were sent contracts to be signed and returned to MOD. Receipt of the signed contract triggered the allowance for the scope of work to commence as described in the contract.

Half of the communities receiving awards reported having a duly established COD. CODs play a vital role in responding to the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities within a community, as well as advocating for inclusive policies and procedures within municipal government. A significant role of MOD is to provide technical advice, support, and guidance to CODs throughout Massachusetts. These commissions also work to promote inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life.

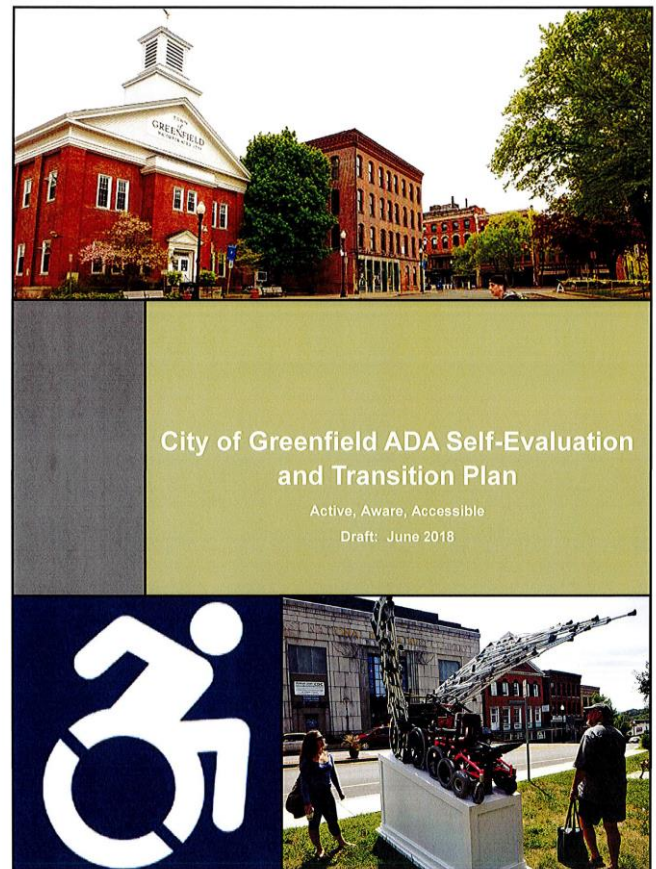
Most communities reported using additional resources to supplement the grant money including in kind work from municipal employees (electricians, plumbers, administrative assistants, and planners), investing municipal monies to complement the projects, and/or by combining funds from other grant programs that are available to communities.

The map below shows the 24 awarded communities in FY18 and the type(s) of grant they received. Blue shading represents an awarded Planning Grant, red shading indicates a Project Grant, and green shading represents an awarded Planning and Project Grant.

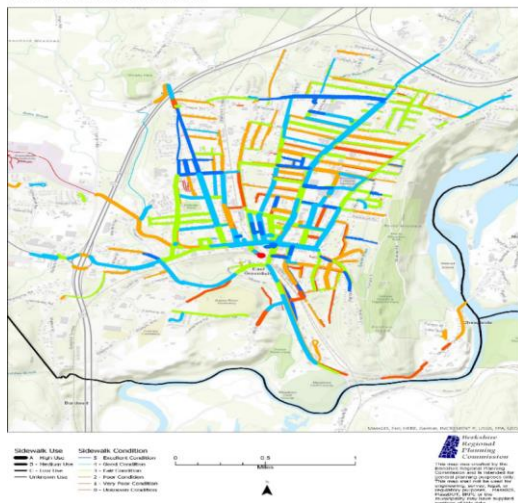


Planning Grants

Enacted in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act went into effect in 1992. By January 26, 1993, all cities and towns, regardless of size, were mandated to create a Self-Evaluation Plan to identify accessibility to their programs, services, and activities within their communities. Municipalities with 50 or more employees were required to create a Transition Plan within eighteen months of the effective date of the ADA. The Transition Plan would serve as an action plan to guide planning and budgeting priorities for making accessible updates, including barrier removal, purchasing of assistive technology, and additional necessities outlined in the Self Evaluation Plan. The two plans combined serve to actively assist communities in the strategic and fiscal planning of long term impact goals for accessibility to programs, services, and activities. The plans are proactive documents that aim to decrease reactionary work due to unforeseen issues related to accessibility arising within the community.

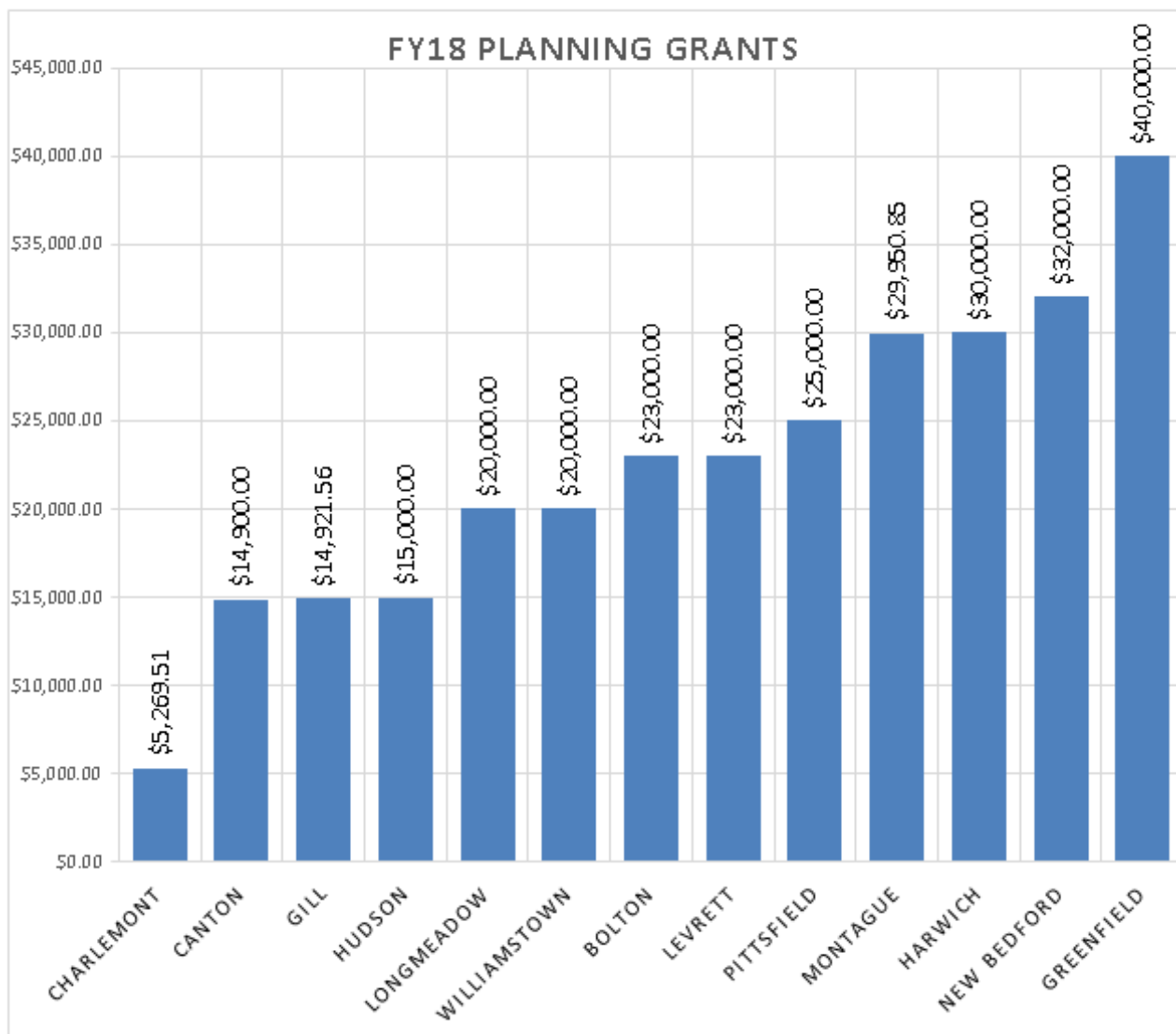


Sidewalk Condition and Use



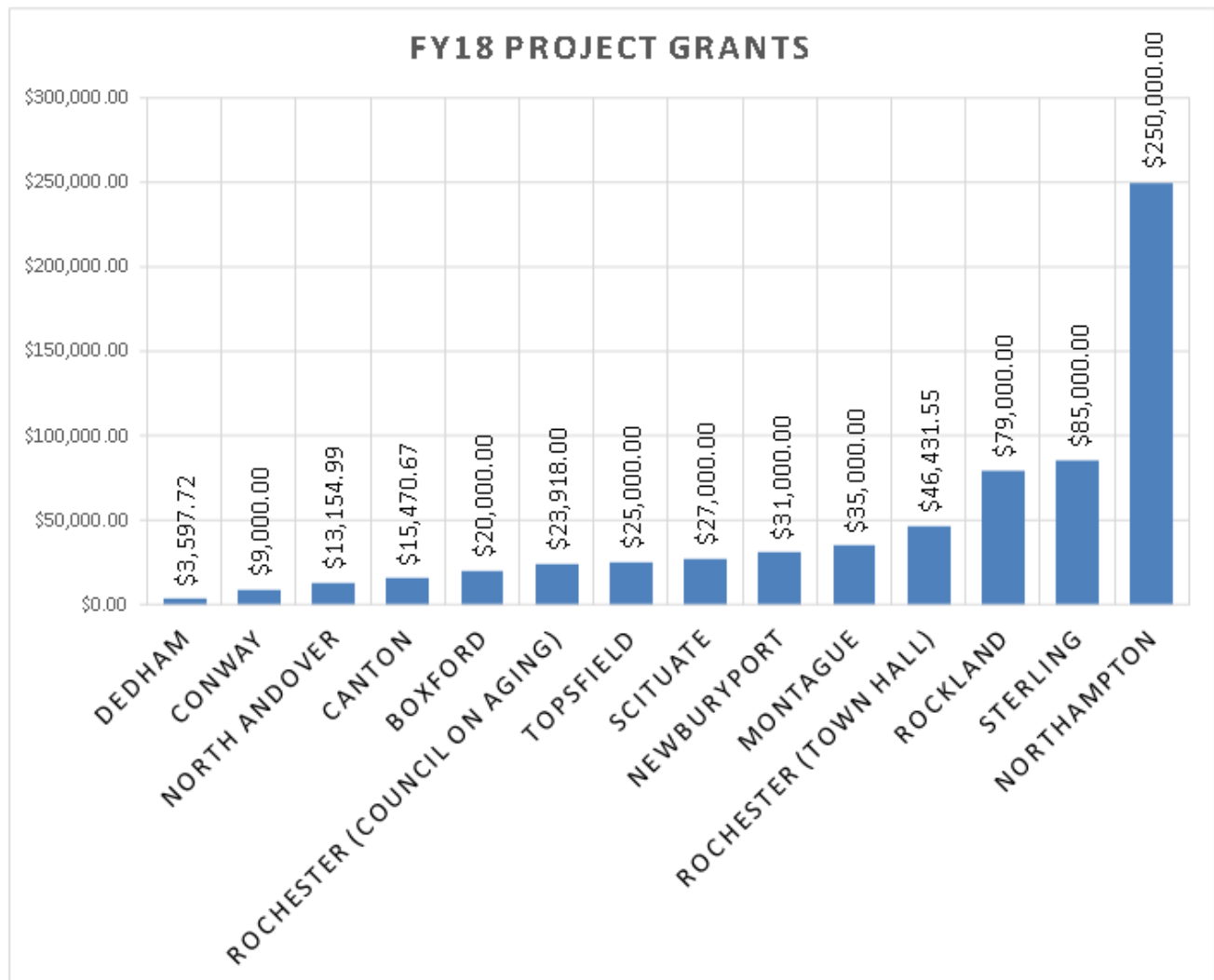
To date, of the 351 municipalities in the Commonwealth, MOD has 150 Self Evaluations and 160 Transition Plans on file. The Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program can be used to create these plans as well as to update outdated plans. Specifically, the Planning Grant portion of the Grant Program awards funds to communities who create new plans or update outdated ones.

In FY18 the program funded 13 Planning Grants ranging in awards from \$5,200 - \$40,000 for a total awarded amount of \$293,041. The communities of Bolton, Charlemont, Gill, Hudson, Leverett, Longmeadow, Pittsfield, and Williamstown created their first Self- Evaluation and Transition Plans.



Project Grants

A significant goal of the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program is to increase equal access for residents of the Commonwealth to services, programs, and activities within their communities. In FY18, the program awarded 14 Project Grants to 13 communities ranging in location, population, socio-economic status, and demographics. The awards ranged from \$3,597 to \$250,000 and totaled \$663,572. The impacts of these projects have benefitted multitudes of residents in these communities through increasing access to programs, services, and activities of local government including: City and Town Halls, Senior Centers, Veterans Services, recreational spaces, marinas, Police Stations, Libraries, restrooms, sidewalks, and curb cuts.



Project Grants have helped fund projects of architectural construction, renovation, and communication accessibility. Through this program 3 ramps were upgraded or constructed, 4 restrooms were remodeled, 4 assistive listening systems were installed (which included 4 transmitters, 39 personal receivers, 5 speakers, and about 80 accessories such as headphones, neck loops, and microphones), 18 curb cuts were constructed or reconstructed (including 46 truncated domes strips), 105 sidewalk panels were constructed or reconstructed, 8 accessible parking spaces were renovated, 3 elevators/lifts were installed or remodeled, 21 automatic door openers were installed, 17 door handles were installed, 2 thresholds were lowered, 16 identification signs were installed, and a beach mat, beach wheelchair, and Braille printer were purchased along with other items related to the projects. For more detailed information including the awarded community, the award amount and the description of the project, please see the individual project summaries below.

Boxford

"...we are just thrilled to have these door openers and this mat in place. It's hard to put into words how great of an impact these purchases will have on the community, especially at the pond and the COA." John Dold, Superintendent of Boxford Department of Public Works



Auto Door Opener at Police Station

Accessing multiple municipal buildings and recreational spaces in the Town of Boxford has been made substantially easier through the awarded \$20,000 Project Grant. The grant assisted with the installation of auto door openers in 4 municipal buildings and the purchase of beach access mats. Residents of the town benefitted from the installation of automatic door openers at the shared Town Hall, Library, Police Station, and Council on Aging. These openers will allow people to enter the buildings and utilize the services offered without struggle or an undue amount of effort.

Boxford's public swimming location, Stiles Pond, was also improved by the purchase of beach access mats, which allow people who use mobility devices to access the water and traverse over the sand on a stable surface. This project allows unrestricted access to the water and other recreational activities offered at the pond. These mats can be stored during the off-season, which will prolong their life expectancy.



Beach Mat at Stiles Pond

Canton

“Being able to improve people’s ability to engage with the meetings that take place here [Salah Meeting Room] and with allowing all our residents to use the town pool is just great”

Charles Aspinwall, Town Administrator

Through the awarded \$25,000 Project Grant, attendees of municipal meetings that are held in Town Hall, such as Town Meeting, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Zoning will have increased communication access provided to them via the newly installed Assistive Listening Device in the Salah Meeting Room. The new system transmits the voices of speakers using microphones straight into the headsets of the system’s receivers, increasing the hearing potential of those utilizing the system. The system also connects to Bluetooth enabled hearing aids, providing widespread and convenient access to effective communication. Additionally, signage was placed at the meeting room door to indicate the device is available upon request.



Assistive Listening System in Town Hall's Salah Meeting Room

The grant also assisted with the purchase and installation of an access ramp at the Bolivar Pool. The pool is a popular summer destination for residents of the town and through the grant access to the outdoor pool is now available. The new ramp, which replaced a 20 year old ramp that was in disrepair, is 48 feet long with a 5x5 foot landing in the middle. The ramp provides a gradual slope and handrails that assist in accessing the outdoor pool.

Conway

“With the Grant, the Town of Conway was able to make headway on the planned renovations of the building within a timeframe that may not have been possible without it.”

Thomas Hutcheson, Town Administrator for Conway



New Accessible Restroom at Town Hall

The Town of Conway was awarded a \$9,000 Project Grant to improve the accessibility of the Town Hall’s ground floor restroom. The awarded funds were used to assist in refurbishing the restroom, making it fully accessible. Before the renovations the 1960’s restroom featured multiple stalls, no accessible toilet, sink, or other accessible elements. The renovations consisted of converting the restroom into a single user lavatory, the relocation and installation of an accessible toilet, sink and mirror, the installation of two new grab bars, a lowered light switch to the appropriate reach range, and a new lever door handle to allow for easier grasping. The door to the restroom was replaced and the threshold was lowered to allow easier

access into the restroom. This restroom now includes appropriate signage, indicating that the restroom is accessible. The new signage includes raised lettering and Braille, which are two new accessible features that were not present previously.

Dedham

“The text displayed on the screen coming from the system is so large that even I can read it all the way in the back of the room. It’s going to be so easy for people to follow along with what is happening in town.” **Patricia Whitehouse, CART Coordinator**

The Dedham High School auditorium is the largest auditorium in town and is used to conduct town hall and other public meetings. The awarded funds assisted in the purchase of a Communication Real-Time Translation (CART) system that operates by using the two laptops in



**Projector for the new CART system
provided at the High School**

conjunction with a transmitter for audio through Skype. A person speaking at a meeting or on stage will have the sound of their voice sent to a typist who is listening in via Skype. The typist transcribes what is being said at the meeting to an onsite laptop which is connected to a projector. The transcription is displayed in real time in large easy to read text at the meeting.

Town Meetings in Dedham are set up so that Town Meeting Representatives and the Board of Selectmen sit in the front of the venue while the public sits in the back. At times, discussions and debates can be difficult to hear in the rear of the auditorium. The CART system not only remedies this issue but also gives people who require hearing assistance the ability to follow along with the Town Meeting or other events being held in the auditorium. Transcripts created through this system can also be used for meeting minutes.

The system is not only available for use at Town Meetings but also for school functions or holiday events at which a speaker is present. In addition, as it is portable, it can be used anywhere in town that has access to a power source and can provide access to Skype.

Montague

"...the area was made much safer for the residents as well as more accessible as now the residents have easier access to the rest of the street and village."

Stephen Ellis, Town Manager for Montague

The Town of Montague was awarded a \$35,000 Project Grant to improve the facilities of the main village, Turner Falls, and along the main road where the majority of town life unfolds. The village, and more specifically Avenue A, the main road, is the economic, cultural, and entertainment core of the town. Having this area be easily accessible to every resident of the town is a top priority for the Town Manager's office.

At the areas where Avenue A intersects 2nd – 7th Streets, renovations were made to the existing aging sidewalks and curb cuts that were in disrepair. Prior to the work, the existing concrete curb cuts and sidewalks were deteriorating and the cracks or heaved surfaces posed a safety hazard for people using walkers, wheelchairs, or other mobility devices. The grant funds assisted with replacing, resurfacing or adding truncated dome strips to the existing sidewalks and curb cut network. In total, 13 curb cuts and 74 sidewalk panels were impacted by this project which also included the installation of 41 truncated dome strips. These strips help anyone who is blind or has low vision identify where the route intersects a vehicular roadway, increasing safety for pedestrians and motorists.

These improvements make a world of difference to the people of Montague, especially the residents of Turner Falls. This area has a lot of pedestrian traffic from residents and tourists. This area is within the Massachusetts Cultural District and houses town services including the Senior Center, Town Hall, Senior Housing, and Carnegie Library. In addition to the vital town services located in this area, there are also many businesses and amenities that residents and visitors frequent.



A Before and After Picture of a Sidewalk and Curb Cut along Avenue A

Newburyport

“...with this new system people will be able to listen to things like the City Council meeting and actually fully participate without any issue.” Michael Bartlett, Facilities Manager

The Newburyport City Hall Auditorium, located on the second floor of the 1850 building, is the City’s primary location for the city meetings that take place approximately 5 days per week. The auditorium is also used as a performance space for the nearby Montessori school to practice band, theatre, and to host other artistic performances. Due to the frequent use of the auditorium and the value that the space provides for the community, the City of Newburyport was awarded a \$31,000 Project Grant to assist with improving communication access. This was done by purchasing and installing a Hearing Assistive Loop System and other necessary infrastructure, including necessary wiring, transmitters, speakers, and microphones. The loop system operates by transmitting the audio through a central receiver into the headsets of those using the individual personal receivers. Bluetooth enabled hearing aids also have the ability to be used in place of the individual personal receivers.



Assistive Listening System at City Hall

Prior to the grant, the auditorium was outfitted with an aging audio system that only had two microphones available for use at a time. In addition, sound coming through the system produced static and a high pitched feedback sound at times. Through the grant, the city was able to remedy this issue and improve upon the previous system in other ways. Now the city has up to 10 microphones (5 wireless handheld and 5 Laval pins) to share amongst those who speak at meetings. An automatic mixer was also purchased which equalizes the volume of people speaking. For example, if a speaker is soft spoken the mixer will automatically adjust the volume to compensate. If a speaker with a more projecting voice speaks the volume will automatically adjust ensuring all can hear. Signage is also provided in multiple locations to indicate the availability of the system for people who may need it.

Northampton

“...This grant allowed us to make much needed safety improvements that could have saved someone a lot of trouble or pain.” **Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability for Northampton**

The City of Northampton was awarded a \$250,000 project grant through the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant program to remove barriers and increase access to facilities and programs in 3 heavily used municipal buildings (City Hall, Municipal Office Building, and Memorial Hall) that house multiple municipal related services.



New portion of walk/ramp at City Hall

Northampton’s City Hall, known as “City Hall Campus” and its services are located in multiple buildings in close proximity to one another on the same plot of land with a parking lot in the center. With the grant monies, the accessible routes within and around the campus were improved. This included replacing or resurfacing deteriorating walkways and sidewalks, installing handrails for increased safety at significant elevation drops, updating and improving the accessible parking spaces, and improving the curb cuts and crosswalks in the area.

The small parking lot, consisting of only 15 parking spaces, received a renovation in the form of two newly designed accessible parking spaces with new signage and crosswalks. The parking lot has accessible spaces on either end of the lot, one close to the City Hall and one close to the Municipal Office Building. The two spaces are located adjacent to the improved curb cuts with truncated dome strips next to them for ease of access to the updated walkways. Across the parking lot, a new crosswalk was added that also has newly installed curb cuts with truncated domes at either end.

The improvements also incorporated changes to the front entrance and sidewalk outside the accessible entrance of City Hall. The accessible entrance’s walkways were updated, as were the crosswalks from the surrounding streets much like the rest of the campus. This included additional curb cut installations where none were provided previously.

The walkway leading from the parking lot to the accessible entrance of City Hall had handrails installed to assist those who may need the additional support. While the slope of the walkway has been decreased, the City felt the handrails would both increase the safety and accessibility of the walkway.



New Curb Cut at City Hall

North Andover

“Thank you for helping us provide our residents and students with hearing and vision related disabilities the ability to fully participate in town government.”

Laurie Burzlaff, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager for North Andover

North Andover was awarded \$13,154.99 to make improvements to increase communication access to facilities, programs, and services in their town for people with disabilities. Specifically, the grant was used to purchase a Braille printer and an assistive listening system.

The Braille printer was purchased for \$4,590 using the awarded funds and is located within the



Braille Printer at Town Hall

Town Hall. The printer is primarily used by employees of the town to create accessible documents for people who read Braille. The town also makes the printer available for use by the public. The printer has been used since installation and allows those who read Braille to have full access to printed documents. Town meeting information and other important meeting notices can now be produced in-house and easily distributed to people who need it.

The Assistive Listening System was purchased for \$8,564.99 using the awarded funds and has been installed in the auditorium of the high school where town meetings, school events, and other gatherings take place. The sound system (consisting of 36 rechargeable receivers, 36 headphones, 12 neck loops, a base-station transmitter, a storage rack, an antenna, and signage indicating these items are available to people who need it) is located in the multimedia box at the top of the auditorium. This system works by transmitting sound to the receivers where the individual can control the volume to assist with hearing the discussion.



Receivers for the Assistive Listening System

Originally the assistive listening system was purchased with the intention of using it for town meetings, however, North Andover High School has students who are benefitting from the new system during general assemblies, plays, etc.

Rochester

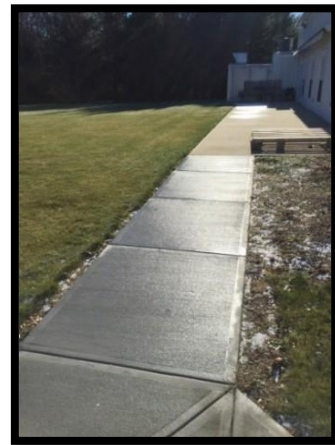
"We are really excited to have this work done, before it was difficult for people to get into the building, now we have an open and welcoming space for everyone"

Andrew Daniel, Facilities Director for Rochester

The Town of Rochester was awarded two grants for projects related to improving accessibility within the Council on Aging (COA) and Town Hall buildings, as well as increasing accessibility at their municipal ponds.

The first grant for the Rochester COA Building is a very active location offering a multitude of recreational, social, and exercise opportunities for the senior population. To improve the ease of access to all parts of the COA Building as well as access to the municipal ponds, the Town of Rochester was awarded a \$23,918 Project Grant. The grant was used to purchase and install auto door openers at the front entrance, the side entrance near the accessible parking spaces, and on the restroom doors inside the building. These openers allow those who utilize the facility to enter and partake in the programs with ease.

A backyard patio area also exists at this location. It is used as a recreational space during nice weather and serves as an emergency evacuation point. To increase access to this area, a concrete walkway was added that wraps around the side of the building from the parking lot towards the patio, opening another means of access.



New Walkway at the COA



New Water Wheels Beach Chair

This grant also improved access to the town's public beaches through the purchase of a Water Wheels Accessible Beach Chair. The chair allows a user to move over sand and move directly into either fresh or salt water. It is lightweight and easily foldable to allow for easy transportation and storage.

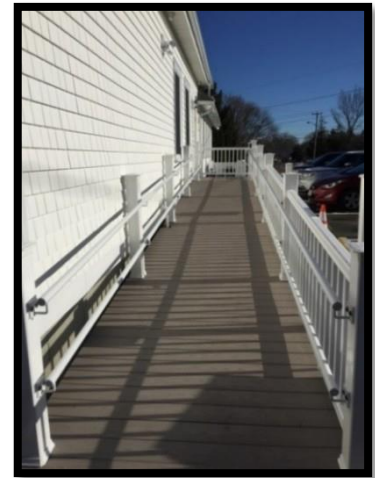
The second grant was awarded, totaling \$46,431.55 to make improvements to accessibility for their Town Hall. Prior

to receiving the grant, the access ramp was in disrepair. It was splintering and had a lip at the bottom, making access for people with mobility devices difficult and deterred people from using it. Using the grant monies, the town repaired the ramp and removed the lip at the bottom allowing people to easily access it. They also replaced the handrails at the appropriate height creating a more secure and updated handhold.

The entry door at the top of the ramp now has an automatic door opener with a push plate to assist people in gaining entrance to the Town Hall. The prior threshold was lowered to be more usable and accessible. In addition a motion sensor light was installed making the entrance usable, inviting, and safer for anyone visiting the building.

The two accessible parking spaces were renovated to increase their accessibility. The parking spaces were widened, repainted, and outfitted with new signage.

The meeting room, accessible via the ramp, was also renovated to improve accessibility. The renovation consisted of widening the hallway leading into the meeting area from the rest of the building, to allow for more space where it had previously been restricted.



Renovated Ramp at Town Hall

Prior to the grant, there were two inaccessible restrooms in the building. The grant funds allowed for the reconfiguration and creation of the first accessible single user restroom in the Town Hall. This new restroom has automatic soap and towel dispensers, appropriate grab bars, a new toilet at the appropriate height, as well as a new sink and relocated mirror. The grant funds also allowed for 12 lever style door handles to be installed, replacing the inaccessible knob style door hardware. Finally the grant allowed for the installation of automatic door openers at the front entrance.



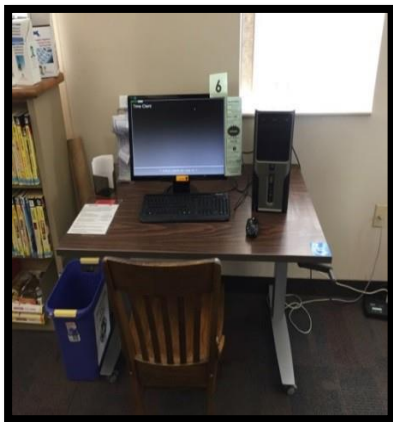
A Before and After Picture of the Renovated Restroom in Town Hall

Rockland

“The Esten School never had an accessible entrance before, and when people came to vote they sometimes had difficulty. I’m so glad that now people can get in and out of the school so much easier.” **Marcia Birmingham, Interim Town Manager for Rockland**

The Town of Rockland received a \$79,000 Project Grant to remove barriers and to improve access to programs, facilities, and activities. In total, 7 locations received improvements: the Town Hall, Memorial Library, Police Station, Highway Department Office, Sewer Department Office, Esten Elementary School, and the high school. The grant funds were used to make significant improvements in these town buildings which ultimately resulted in major benefits for everyone using these facilities.

The Town Hall, the Board of Selectman’s Office, and the Town Clerk’s Office installed accessible customer service counters. The counters unfold at a height that optimizes counter space, allowing for improved accessibility and usability while interacting with office employees. The Tax Collector’s Office within the Town Hall had a two way communication system added to their service window. This improves ease of communication between employees and patrons of the office. The elevator was also modernized by enlarging the cab size and by updating the internal controls and fixtures. This improvement allows patrons easier access to the multiple levels of the building. The rear parking lot was also updated to provide an accessible parking space with appropriate signage.



Adjustable Desk at Memorial

Memorial Library received a portion of the grant monies to update the door knobs in the building by converting them to lever style handles that are more accessible. An adjustable desk was also purchased that can be raised or lowered to change the height of the desk to make it more usable for people who need additional knee space.

The Police Station had automatic door openers installed at their front entrance and a two way communication system installed at their service window to allow for clearer communication.

These amenities will increase access to one of the most important buildings in town for the general public to access, and will simplify communicating with the officers behind the service window.

The Highway Department Offices and Sewer Department Offices received a portion of the grant funds to update the accessible parking spaces by installing above ground signage and repainting and widening the spaces and access aisles. The Highway Department installed automatic door openers at the main entrance and also remodeled the customer service counter at the front desk, similar to the counters installed at the Town Hall. The Sewer Department renovated the two restrooms,

which included replacing two toilets and adding automatic flushing controls, updating the faucets, and relocating plumbing lines.

The High School and the Esten Elementary School used a portion of the grant funds to install automatic door openers at the doors closest to the school gymnasiums. These doors are used during elections as well as by the students year round. The Esten School also repainted, widened, and installed appropriate signage for the accessible parking space.

Through the grant, Rockland was able to make significant improvements to a variety of municipal buildings, improving access for most everyone to engage in municipal services.



Auto Door Opener at High School

Scituate

“This gangway will give so many people new found independence getting to their boats and having a good time on the water. This means a lot to a lot of people.”

Varoujan Hagopian, Project Engineer, GEI Consulting

The Town of Scituate received \$27,000 to assist in the purchase of an accessible 80’ gangway for the Cole Parkway Municipal Marina. As part of a larger upkeep project, this gangway will



New Gangway to be Installed at Cole Parkway Marina

significantly improve access to the docks and to patron’s boats, and is estimated to be used by over 3,000 people during the boating season. While it has yet to be installed due to the ongoing work, it is planned to be installed in 2019 when the larger project is completed.

The new accessible gangway replaces the current gangway which is only 50 feet in length. The additional 30 feet allows for the slope of the gangway to be more gradual, and react to the varying tidal heights which will increase ease of use for all people utilizing the marina docks. The landing of the gangway is also designed to increase ease of use. The new gangway has a 3 foot landing lip that will smooth the transition from the gangway to the dock, whereas the previous gangway’s landing lip was too steep, causing an abrupt change in level. The new gangway is also wider than the previous one, allowing for people who use mobility devices to access the marina easier. Handrails are incorporated at the appropriate height and located along the entire gangway to provide additional support or leverage.

Sterling

“Because this building was built in the 1800’s, accessibility was not something they had in mind during construction. However, with the grant we were able to bring this building into the 21st century while maintaining the historic nature of the structure.”

David Gibbs, Member of the Sterling Historical Commission

The Town of Sterling was awarded an \$85,000 Project Grant to assist with the purchase and installation of a two-stop Wheelchair Lift in their Town Hall. Originally constructed in 1835, the Sterling Town Hall is a historic building in the center of town and offers recreational functions to the public as well as a multitude of types of performing arts and cultural shows in the upstairs auditorium. The Sterling Veterans Office, scouting groups, and town committees also utilize this building for meetings and events. The lift significantly improves accessibility to the building and allows for all residents to engage fully with services, programs, and activities.

The lift was installed towards the front (Main Street Side) of the building. On the ground floor the lift door is located near the main entrance directly after entering the building, while on the second floor it is located near the entrance to the auditorium.

The lift features call buttons at the lift doors, while call buttons for moving vertically are mounted on the side of the carriage. In the event of an emergency the lift also features an emergency stop button to ensure the safety of the rider, located directly next to the call buttons mounted on the side of the carriage. Signage exists to indicate that the lift is functional and available for use. When the lift is called the carriage comes to the floor from which the call was made and the threshold then provides a flat transition from hallway to lift carriage to accommodate those who utilize mobility devices.



Wheelchair Lift at Town Hall

The Town Hall offers residents the ability to engage with the community through recreation, municipal business, and events. Some events include plays, musical performances, poetry readings, and other cultural or artistic performances.

Prior to the grant and the work being completed, accessibility to the second floor was an issue due to the age and historic nature of the building. However with the grant monies and the matching funds provided, the town was able to remedy this by installing the lift while also maintaining the historic attributes that the town appreciates.

Topsfield

“We have so many activities in this building on the upper floors that were hard for people to get to. This grant helped us in more ways than you can imagine.”

Kellie Hebert, Town Administrator for Topsfield

The Town of Topsfield was awarded a \$25,000 Project Grant to assist with the purchase and installation of a three-stop elevator as part of a larger renovation and addition to the Town Hall. The historic Town Hall, which was constructed in 1873, is the central hub of municipal services as it houses the Town’s Administrative Offices on the first floor and a 150 seat hall, program offices, administrative offices, and the Council on Aging (COA) on the second floor. With the assistance of the grant monies the town was able to install the elevator that accesses all floors and offices of the building, something that hasn’t been possible since the buildings original construction. The elevator is located in the recently renovated portion of the building adjacent to the entrance, granting easy access to both the old and new wings of the building.

As part of the project, the meeting hall on the second floor is being renovated, offices are being relocated, and an expansion of the COA is being provided. The elevator will now access all services, programs, and activities that take place in this building, including Town Meeting.



Elevator at Town Hall

Internal Controls

Internal controls for the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program were accomplished through contracts, statements of work, periodic summaries of work, and timely receipt of invoices from all grantees. For all Planning Grants, receipt of plans via email were required and for all Project Grants on-site visits were conducted to ensure work was completed as described for the scope of the project.

Reflection and Forecast

The Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program had two primary goals: to increase the number of new and/or updated Self Evaluation and Transition Plans and to increase access and remove barriers to programs, services, and activities for residents within the Commonwealth. Utilizing awarded funds from the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program, these two goals were achieved. The program allowed for the creation of new and/or updated Self Evaluation and Transition Plans and resulted in numerous accessible updates among the selected communities.

Looking ahead, FY19 already proves continued interest in the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program from municipalities within the Commonwealth. The FY18 program received a total of 87 grant applications. FY19 recipients continue to be municipalities that range in size, demographics, and location within the Commonwealth. They address a variety of disabilities and align with MOD's mission to,

“Bring about full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life... in a manner that fosters dignity and self-determination.”