



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**
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Urban Agenda Grant Program

**Program Information and Guidelines
FY2023**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. About the Program

The Urban Agenda Grant Program is a competitive grant program that seeks proposals from municipalities for projects that entail community-driven responses to community-defined economic opportunities, and that build leadership, collaboration, and capacity at the local level.

The Baker-Polito Administration recognizes that urban centers face unique economic and quality of life challenges, and that the path to success lies in tapping into the unique local assets that they already possess, rather than in one-size-fits-all directives from government. The Administration's Urban Agenda is focused on supporting economic vitality and cultivating stronger urban neighborhoods across the entire Commonwealth.

In December 2019, the Administration released a new economic development plan for the state entitled: [*Partnerships for Growth: A plan to enable the Commonwealth's regions to build, connect and lead.*](#) The plan aligns the administration's economic development programs, funding, and legislative efforts within four central pillars – Respond to the Housing Crisis, Build Vibrant Communities, Support Business Competitiveness, and Train a Skilled Workforce – to address challenges and foster opportunities over the next four years. The Urban Agenda Grant Program is one of the state's most important tools to partner with community based organizations to pursue these opportunities.

B. What's New in FY2023

As in previous rounds, EOHEd will continue to offer grant funding to local partnerships, to implement projects that are based on creative collaborative work models with the goal advancing and achieving economic progress. While the program goals, requirements, and evaluation criteria remain the same, the application template and timeline for submitting project proposals will substantially change.

Last year, the program began accepting proposals through the [**Community One Stop for Growth**](#) which is a single application portal and collaborative review process for several state grant programs that make targeted investments based on a housing and economic development continuum.

EOHEd in partnership with the Department of Housing & Community Development and MassDevelopment is launching this second year of the Community One Stop for Growth application. The round will open on January 21, 2022. Prospective applicants will be able to submit an **Expression of Interest**, through March 18, 2022, outlining priority projects to receive feedback and suggestions on the best path for submitting proposals through a **Full Application** for funding consideration. Full Applications will be due in June 3, 2022.

Also, given the unprecedented and far-reaching impact of the global pandemic, EOHEd will continue to prioritize projects that are developing and/or implementing strategies related to covid-19 recovery efforts. Applicants should describe the most significant challenges faced by the community and the collaborative approaches that will be pursued to address them.

Finally, EOHEd will again give special consideration to projects that align with the recommendations outlined in the 2018 reports issued by the Governor's Black Advisory and Latino Advisory Commissions. This is particularly important due to the pandemic's disproportionate impact on low-income and minority communities.

II. PROGRAM FEATURES AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Program Highlights

Maximum Award	\$100,000
Total Funds Available	\$2,500,000 (<i>Subject to state budget appropriation</i>)
Grant use	General operating support for innovative and collaborative community economic development projects.
Project Duration	Project timeline should be no longer than one (1) year.
Project focus examples	Early Stage Strategy Development or Strategy Implementation by Existing Cross-Sector Consortium or Coalition
Eligible communities	All municipalities. Priority will be given to urban communities that have a median household income less than 90 percent of the state’s average income.
Eligible lead applicant	Municipality or a Community-Based Organization
Eligible project partners	Municipality, Community-Based Organizations, Schools, Local Businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Private Sector Partners, Neighborhood Associations, etc.
Review criteria	Proven Track Record Clarity of Vision - Alignment with Community Goals Strength of Community Partnerships Defined Target Population and Economic Need Demonstrated Significance of Economic Opportunity Capacity to Execute and Succeed Bonus points will be given to projects serving and/or supporting Black and Latino communities.

B. Eligible Applicants

All Massachusetts cities and towns proposing to create or expand a community based coalition and/or to develop/implement a coalition-based project are eligible to apply. In all cases, the application must be led by the municipality in partnership with a main community organization, either of can act as the lead applicant. Each community may submit only one application to the program, except for cities with a population over 150,000. In those cases, the city may submit either one citywide proposal or multiple “neighborhood” proposals. Priority will be given to urban communities with median household income that is less than 90% of state average.

It is also important to note that the program is intended to support the work being done by a community, not by any individual agency that happens to be working in the community. The idea is for projects to be developed and agreed upon by a community coalition or consortium. It is not meant to support or expand the reach of the municipality or any one organization.

C. Eligible Projects

As outlined, this program is designed to support community economic development that is grounded in collaboration and local leadership development. Generally, applicants should base their project proposal on locally significant economic opportunities. The key is that the project be in direct response to a need or opportunity that the community group has identified and deemed important. The primary funding priorities of the program, based on the development continuum outlined in the Community One Stop for Growth, will be the Creation or Expansion of a Cross Sector Community Consortium or Coalition, Early Stage Strategy Development, and Community Led Strategy Implementation.

In the case of strategy implementation, projects have generally been focused on workforce development and/or support to small business and entrepreneurs. Examples of projects that have received past favorable reviews, include: a commercial kitchen training at-risk residents for culinary careers in a region with a growing hospitality sector; and business training and entrepreneurial supports for women-, minority- and veteran-owned businesses in response to new local business opportunities. Given the impact of the pandemic, additional examples may include technical assistance and/or coaching to minority business owners on accessing state/federal assistance; workshops/webinars to help parents improve home- schooling skills; and creation of a network to support and guide low-income families facing evictions; etc. *Note: All the examples are for illustrative purposes only.*

D. Allowable Use of Funds

Applicants may request general operating funds to cover any and all reasonable expenses associated with the implementation of the proposed project plan. Generally, the budget should include the costs for personnel, consultants, partner agency subcontracts, supplies and materials, etc. The budget may include an allocation for indirect overhead costs. While not required, applicants are also asked to identify match funds, if any. Additional consideration is given to applications that include in kind and/or cash support from the municipality, other organizations, and/or private sources.

III. APPLICATION AND EVALUATION

A. Application Components

The new Community One Stop for Growth application 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. 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,
- Housing Choice General Questions (Section 8), only for communities designated as Housing Choice and seeking this program support,
- Certification of Application Submission Authority (Section 9), and
- Other Attachments (Section 10), for other/optional attachments.

A full proposal packet for consideration of Urban Agenda funding must include complete responses to all applicable questions in the following sections:

SECTION 1. Applicant Information: Identifying information of the applicant.

SECTION 2: Project Information: Main project narrative and questions about leadership and ability to execute the project as well as progress to date. Includes questions related to the project timeline and anticipated outcomes. Applicants to the Infrastructure category must complete the Site Information questions, which include identification of the specific site, ownership, zoning, as well as responses to the climate resiliency questions.

SECTION 3: Community Capacity Building Additional Questions: All the questions about the specific project for which funding is requested. Includes detailed scope of work, description of the community coalition and target population, budget, and required attachments.

SECTION 9: Certification of Application Submission Authorization: Signature page certifying the authority to submit on behalf of the entity and attesting that all responses are true and accurate.

SECTION 10: Optional Attachments: Other support letters from community partners that will be actively involved in the project, may be submitted. The letters should reference the role that the writer will be playing with the project. Please note that these additional attachments will not be scored or otherwise counted as part of the evaluation of the proposal.

IMPORTANT: The sections outlined above relate only to the Capacity Building 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.

B. Evaluation Criteria

EOHED will carefully and thoroughly evaluate each complete proposal through this new collaborative review process in partnership with DHCD and MassDevelopment. Specifically, each complete grant application that is submitted to the Capacity Building category and is seeking consideration for funding from the Urban Agenda Program, will be reviewed and scored on a 100-points scale based on the following criteria:

Applicant and Coalition's Track Record (10 points)

- Evidence of the applicant's experience in community economic development.
- Evidence of the partnership's history, experience, and past successes.

Vision and Goals (10 points)

- Description of the neighborhood, economic, and social context in which proposed project will operate, in order to place the work within a broader urban framework.
- Clear articulation of the vision and goals of the project. Consistency with host community's larger strategic vision and aspirations.
- If applicable, how the project responds to Covid recovery efforts and/or aligns with one or more of the recommendations from the Black and/or Latino Advisory Commissions.

Community Collaboration and Partnerships (20 points)

- Description of the existing community coalition or collaboration with thoughtful and intentional assemblage of partners.
- Demonstration of direct community and institutional support.

- Innovation of the collaboration: leveraging existing strengths and developing new local capacity and leadership.

Target Population (10 points)

- Description of the target population (and neighborhood) that will benefit from project.
- Description of how members of target population have been engaged in the project.
- Projects that target Black and Latino populations will be prioritized.

Economic Opportunity – Project Plan (40 points)

- Articulation of the identified needs of the population that the project will address.
- Description of the economic opportunity that will be leveraged by this project, and how the project activities directly respond to the opportunity.
- If applicable, description of how project addresses economic recovery from effects of the pandemic and/or how it supports the economic advancement of Black and Latino communities.

Capacity to Succeed (10 points)

- Clear and appropriate project timeline outlining key benchmarks. Specific outline of the project activities and anticipated outcomes.
- Detailed budget, including total project budget, allocation of the requested grant funds, and reasonable overhead costs.

Note: For projects focused on workforce development, the project plan must reflect alignment with the municipality's corresponding Regional Labor Market Blueprint, and/or outline changes in priority sectors due to the pandemic. In all cases, applicant should describe any coordination with MassHire partners.

C. Award Decisions

Applicants that are approved for funding will receive a commitment letter outlining the grant amount and any conditions of the award. All awards are subject to annual state budget appropriation and contingent upon full execution of a contract. Applicants that are not recommended for funding during the round will also be notified in writing, and invited to request feedback about their proposal, if interested.

D. Additional Information

- All applications must be submitted electronically. The online application portal, *IGX*, can be accessed at <https://eohed.intelligrants.com>. The application form template and link to the portal will also be available on the EOHEd webpage.
- Eligible applicants may submit funding requests for more than one capacity building project in the same round. However, a separate application, and completed Section 5, 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.
- EOHEd reserves the right to request additional information from the applicant or external sources as may be necessary in order to complete the application review. EOHEd also reserves the right to recommend partial grant awards, as deemed appropriate.