



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING & ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**  
ONE ASHBURTON PLACE, ROOM 2101  
BOSTON, MA 02108

# **Urban Agenda Grant Program**

**Program Information and Guidelines  
FY2024**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. About the Program**

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

The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development 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. Urban Agenda is focused on supporting economic vitality and cultivating stronger urban neighborhoods across the entire Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth's 2019 economic development plan is [\*Partnerships for Growth: A plan to enable the Commonwealth's regions to build, connect and lead\*](#). The plan aligns the state'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. Community One Stop for Growth FY2024**

Urban Agenda is part of the [Community One Stop for Growth](#), a single application portal and collaborative review process of community and economic development grant programs that make targeted investments based on a Development Continuum. It is designed to allow applicants to apply for consideration of multiple sources of funding to support multiple phases and facets of a project. For more information, including key dates, frequently asked questions, and instructions on submitting an Expression of Interest and Full Application, please visit [www.mass.gov/onestop](http://www.mass.gov/onestop).

The One Stop Full Application is organized into the following sections:

- Form 1 – Applicant Information
- Form 2 – Project Information, and Site Information (if applicable)
- Form 3 – Development Continuum Category Questions (Sections 3 through 7)  
Based on the development continuum, project type and project focus selected by the applicant
- Form 3a – Special Designation General Questions  
Only for municipalities designated as a Housing Choice Community and/or Rural/Small Town
- Form 4 – Certification of Application Submission Authority
- Form 5 – Other Attachments

In order to be considered for Urban Agenda funding, applicants must include complete responses to all required questions. Please see the attached Urban Agenda-specific Full Application template for required sections and questions.

### **Additional Information**

- For information on the One Stop, including key dates, frequently asked questions, and instructions on submitting an Expression of Interest and Full Application, please visit [www.mass.gov/onestop](http://www.mass.gov/onestop).
- The Expression of Interest is an optional, but highly recommended form that allows an applicant to seek guidance from the One Stop partner agencies. Applicants are encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest prior to starting their Full Application(s).

- 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. The application form template and link to the portal will also be available on the [One Stop webpage](#).
- Eligible applicants may submit funding requests for more than one Community Activation and Placemaking project in the same round. However, a separate application 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.

## **II. PROGRAM FEATURES AND REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Program Highlights**

<b>Urban Agenda FY2024</b>	
<b>Maximum Award</b>	\$100,000
<b>Total Funds Available</b>	\$2,500,000 <i>(Subject to state budget appropriation)</i>
<b>Grant use</b>	General operating support for innovative and collaborative community economic development projects.
<b>Project Duration</b>	Project timeline should be no longer than 6 months (January through June 2024)
<b>Project Categories</b>	Entrepreneurship, Small Business Development and Technical Assistance;  Workforce Development, Training Initiatives, and Job Pipelines;  Supporting Access to Opportunity;  Community Organizing and Leadership Development
<b>Eligible lead applicant</b>	Municipality or a Community-Based Tax-Exempt Organization
<b>Eligible project partners</b>	Municipality, Community-Based Organizations, Schools, Local Businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Private Sector Partners, Neighborhood Associations, etc.
<b>Eligible Communities</b>	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.
<b>Review criteria</b>	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**

Municipal governments or nonprofit organizations in 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 which can act as the lead applicant. Priority will be given to projects located in urban communities with median household income that is less than 90% of state average.

All members of a coalition or partnership should collaborate to submit a single application. Multiple applications for the same project will not be funded, even if the lead applicant is different.

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 in a single geographic community. The primary funding priorities of the program, based on the development continuum outlined in the Community One Stop for Growth, will be Community Activation and Placemaking, specifically action grants focused on implementing a community development program. Project categories include 1) Entrepreneurship, Small Business Development and Technical Assistance, 2) Workforce Development, Training Initiatives, and Job Pipelines, 3) Supporting Access to Opportunity (providing services to support workers e.g., childcare, housing stabilization, reentry services), and 4) Community Organizing and Leadership Development.

For projects focused on workforce development, the project must reflect alignment with the [Regional Labor Market Blueprint](#) for the area where the project will take place, and/or outline changes in priority sectors due to the pandemic. In all cases, applicant should describe any coordination with MassHire partners.

Applicants are encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest through the One Stop for Growth in order to receive early-stage feedback about whether their project is well suited to the Urban Agenda program. The Expression of Interest period closes in March 2023.

Applicants seeking funding for the same project through both the Urban Agenda and Community Empowerment and Reinvestment grant programs for the same grant period, and/or any other operating grant programs operated by EOHED, will be considered by all programs simultaneously. EOHED may elect to fund a successful applicant through only one grant program.

### **D. Allowable Use of Funds**

Applicants may request general operating funds to cover all reasonable expenses associated with the implementation of the proposed project plan during the approximately 6-month grant period. 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.

Capital expenses, including real estate purchase, construction and/or renovation, are not eligible uses of funds for this program.

## **III. EVALUATION**

EOHED will carefully and thoroughly evaluate each complete proposal. Specifically, each complete grant application that is submitted to the Community Activation and Placemaking 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:

#### Target Population

- Description of the target population (and neighborhood) that will benefit from project.
- Description of how members of target population have been engaged in developing and/or carrying out the project.

#### Anticipated Outcomes & Impacts

- 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. Evidence that project has deep and broad ties to community and project's goals reflect the community's priorities.

#### Economic Opportunity – Project Plan

- Articulation of the identified needs of the target population that the project will address.
- Description of the economic challenge/opportunity that will be leveraged by this project, and how the project's activities directly respond to the opportunity.

#### Collaboration and Partnerships

- 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.

#### Applicant and Coalition's Track Record

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

#### Capacity to Succeed

- Evidence of strategic, timely and equity-oriented project planning and/or implementation thus far.
- 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.

#### BONUS (10 points)

- Clear articulation of how the project will advance equitable opportunities in the community, and/or how the project aligns with one of more of the recommendations from the Governor's Black and/or Latino Advisory Commissions' reports.

### **A. 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.

## APPENDIX: ACCESSING THE ONLINE APPLICATION

All applications to the Urban Agenda 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, accessed at <https://eohed.intelligrants.com>. A user account is required. Below are the steps for getting into the system.

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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.

**Current Admin Users** – Municipal CEOs and/or designees who have used the IGX system in past rounds may use their existing usernames to access the system. Applicants that have forgotten their username and/or password must use the "Forgot Username/Password" function on the IGX login page.

**New Organizations** – If your organization has not accessed the system in the past, a new registration is required. This should be done by the municipal CEO and/or a designee. Click the “New Organization? 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](mailto:onestop@mass.gov) to request assistance.

**New User in Existing Organizations** – 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.

**Creating a new Full Application or Expression of Interest** – Once accounts are registered and/or approved, a Grant Administrator can create an Expression of Interest or Full 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. Only a Grant Administrator will be able to create and submit the Expression of Interest and Full 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, Grant Administrators may submit the Full Application by selection the “Submit Full Application” option at the bottom of the left side menu, 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](mailto:onestop@mass.gov) for assistance.

**NOTE:** If an application is erroneously submitted, the applicant may contact [onestop@mass.gov](mailto: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. Once reopened, it is the responsibility of the applicant to resubmit prior to the deadline.