



Community Planning Grant Program

Program Information and Guidelines FY2026

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Maximum Award.....	2
Project Examples.....	2
Eligible Applicants	3
Use of Funds.....	3
Timeline of Use of Funds	4
Special Considerations	4
Community One Stop for Growth Application.....	4
Grant Award Process.....	6
APPENDIX 1: COMMUNITY PLANNING EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SCORING.....	7
APPENDIX 2: ACCESSING THE ONLINE APPLICATION.....	10

Community Planning Grant Program – FY2026

Introduction

Community Planning grants may be used for a variety of activities related to community planning such as a community plan, zoning revision, or planning for housing. As these are planning and zoning grants, grant funds must support direct community engagement efforts to involve community members in the planning process and/or produce planning or zoning document(s) and/or related materials in draft, phased, or final product form.

Program Information and these Guidelines have been developed for Community Planning Grant Program applicants. EOHLC may issue additional guidance, clarification, or revisions which shall be incorporated by reference into these Guidelines. This document is intended to clarify, interpret, and explain existing program requirements, and to provide guidance on EOHLC's applicant selection process. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

Maximum Award

Community Planning grants provide up to \$150,000 in funding for single entities. Applicants are encouraged to conduct due diligence to determine accurate estimates of project costs to better understand actual costs of the proposed project. Funding over this limit will only be considered for joint and regional applications on a case-by-case basis, at EOHLC's discretion, based on project need, outcomes, impact, and scope of engagement plan and implementation.

While a local cash match is not required, projects that include at least a 10% cash match will receive bonus points in application review. Please note that staff time is not considered a "cash match."

EOHLC reserves the right to reduce the amount of the award from the original request, and to deny an award to applicants with existing or past violations of EOHLC contractual obligations. Funding availability is subject to the final state budget.

Project Examples

Examples of eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

1. Planning for housing at specific parcel(s) including feasibility analysis, master plans, site plans, market assessments, and other parcel(s) specific planning projects.
2. Creation of a Housing Production Plan to better understand community housing needs and identify strategies to reduce barriers to housing production.
3. Creation of a multi-family zoning district near a transit station to comply with M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3A.
4. Review of current zoning to identify and remove language that excludes certain housing types.
5. Development of 40R/40Y Smart Growth or Starter Home districts.

6. Development of a new Urban Renewal Plan or identification of additional parcels to incorporate into an existing Urban Renewal Plan.
7. Review of zoning ordinances, creation of a plan to update zoning rules to unlock potential housing production, and implementation of strategies defined in a Housing Production Plan or other municipal plan.

Eligible Applicants

All Massachusetts municipalities, Regional Planning Agencies, and municipal entities (Redevelopment Authorities, Economic Development Industrial Corporations, bodies created by legislative act to serve a municipality) are eligible for consideration of an FY26 Community Planning grant. Applications may be submitted by:

- A single applicant,
- Two or more eligible applicants in a joint application with one lead entity, or
- A regional entity.

Applicants with adopted housing moratoria or other restrictive bylaws that do not allow for at least a 5% increase in housing production over a single year are ineligible. Contact mckenzie.bell@mass.gov with questions about this eligibility factor.

MBTA Community Compliance:

Applicants that are MBTA Communities determined to be non-compliant under Section 3A of the Zoning Act (MGL c.40A) and corresponding regulations for Multi-Family Zoning Districts (760 CMR 72.00) are ineligible for this grant program for all activities other than to fund efforts to become compliant with MGL c.40A, Section 3A.

Use of Funds

Funding is available through the “Planning and Zoning” category of the Community One Stop for Growth development continuum. Grants will fund a variety of activities related to:

- Community planning including, but not limited to, a Master Plan, Neighborhood/Downtown/Corridor Plan, Urban Renewal Plan, Housing Production Plan, Housing Plan alignment with State Housing Plan/regional goals, and Regional Plan;
- Zoning revisions including, but not limited to, Zoning Revision to Comply with Section 3A of MGL c.40A, Zoning Revision related to Accessory Dwelling Unit to comply with revisions to MGL c.40A Section 3, Zoning Revision to adopt pro-housing revisions that qualify for simple majority voting threshold, and Comprehensive Zoning Review & Revision; or
- Planning for housing including, but not limited to, a Housing Feasibility Plan, Infrastructure Plan, Housing Site Master Plan, and Housing Site Design Plan.

Grant funds shall not be used to support:

1. Any activities related to assertion of the General Land Area Minimum (GLAM) (1.5% of total land area) safe harbor under 760 CMR 56.03(b)(Chapter 40B); or
2. Routine administrative tasks of municipal staff including, but not limited to, grant application preparation.

Timeline of Use of Funds

FY26 grants are expected to be awarded in the fall of 2025. Funded projects **must be completed by June 30, 2027**.

At the discretion of the EOHLC, applications for activities to become compliant with Section 3A of MGL c.40A may be awarded on an “early action” timeline prior to the fall of 2025.

Special Considerations

- **Rural and Small Towns** (towns with populations less than 7,000 or density of less than 500 persons per square mile): At EOHLC’s discretion, up to 10% of available Community Planning funds will be set aside for Rural and Small Towns, depending on the number of applications received and competitiveness of the application round.
- **Gateway Cities:** At EOHLC’s discretion, up to 10% of available Community Planning funds will be set aside for Gateway Cities, depending on the number of applications received and competitiveness of the application round.
- **Seasonal Communities:** At EOHLC’s discretion, up to 10% of Community Planning funds will be set aside for Seasonal Communities, depending on the number of applications received and competitiveness of the application round.

Community One Stop for Growth Application

The Community Planning Grant Program is part of the [Community One Stop for Growth](https://www.mass.gov/onestop), a single application portal and collaborative review process of community and economic development grant programs that make targeted investments based on a Development Continuum. 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.

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

- Form 1 – Applicant Information
- Form 2 – Project Information
- Form 3 – Certification of Application Submission Authority

In order to be considered for the Community Planning Grant Program funding, applicants must include complete responses to all required 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.
- 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). Visit the [One Stop Expression of Interest webpage](#) for more information and access to the Expression of Interest form.
- 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 Planning and Zoning 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.

EOHLC reserves the right to request additional information from the applicant or external sources as may be necessary in order to complete the application review. EOHLC also reserves the right to recommend partial grant awards, as deemed appropriate.

Applications will be scored for the responsiveness to the following criteria. See [Appendix 1](#) for full Evaluation Criteria and Scoring:

- **Project Need:** What community and housing needs are met by the project? Evaluation will consider factors such as impact on housing development, preservation, and/or rehabilitation; impact on other municipally identified needs; and advancing opportunities for target populations.
- **Project Readiness:** Is the project scope reasonable and achievable within the proposed timeline? Evaluation will consider factors such as timeline feasibility and scope; identified leadership with experience and ability to execute the project; implementation readiness; and inclusion of a comprehensive public engagement plan.
- **Project Financial Feasibility:** Is the project's budget reasonable? Evaluation will consider factors such as whether the project is fully or partially funded; reasonableness of cost estimate; and inclusion of cash match(es). In-kind contributions are not match eligible.
- **Progress & Commitment to Date:** Does the applicant show commitment to the project through past activity and investment? Evaluation will consider factors such as progress to date; prior state/federal funding; and zoning or local by-law changes related to the project.

- **Project Outcomes & Impact:** What are the projected outcomes of this project and the impact this project may have on the community? Evaluation will consider factors such as impact of the project relative to the community and responsiveness to identified need; tangible housing outcomes; community engagement plan; and implementation strategies.

Grant Award Process

Contract with EOHLC and Award of Funds:

Successful applicants must be ready to enter into a contract with EOHLC within 30 days after receiving contract documents. Funding is subject to approval of the EOHLC operating and capital budgets. Grant projects may begin as of the execution of the contract. If selected, an awardee 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 EOHLC).
- Completed Contractor Authorized Signature Listing Form.
- Completed Fiscal Exercise Form (available from EOHLC).

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 100 points** through a panel review process.

Community Planning Scoring Criteria (maximum total 100 points)**Project Need (maximum 31 points):**

Overall Project Need (Project will receive one of the following scores below)

- Project will advance recent Chapter 40A reforms (MBTA Communities or simple majority zoning votes) and/or housing development, preservation, and/or rehabilitation. **(18 points)**
- Project will advance a more livable community, economic development, or local transportation options and has documented evidence of this community need. **(13 points)**
- Project either supports a different need or lacks community-based evidence of the need for project. **(7 points)**

Priority Project Need (Projects that meet the following criteria will receive bonus points)

- **BONUS:** The community does not have a full-time planner or project-related full-time municipal staff assistance; project will help address municipal staffing capacity and unlock further housing or economic development potential. **(4 points)**
- **BONUS:** Application is submitted by two or more eligible entities (joint or regional application). **(3 Points)**
- **BONUS:** Project is located within an Environmental Justice census block group. **(3 points)**
- **BONUS:** Project will advance opportunities for community members who have been socially and economically disadvantaged, and/or historically underrepresented. **(3 points)**

Project Implementation (maximum total 15 points):

Scope and Timeline (Project will receive one of the following scores per criteria below)

- Project scope and timeline are feasible and within the grant timeline (end by 6/30/27). Project has identified a consultant and/or has a sample cost estimate. **(5 points)**
- Project scope and timeline may be feasible within the grant timeline (end by 6/30/27), but there is no sample cost estimate or identified consultant. Project is ready to release an RFP within 3 months of award. **(3 points)**
- Project may not be achievable within grant timeline and/or project is not ready to bid upon within 3 months of award. **(0 points)**

Ability to Execute (Project will receive one of the following scores per criteria below)

- Project leadership is clearly identified, and has requisite experience and ability to effectively manage and execute the project. **(5 points)**
- Project leadership may have experience to manage and execute the project, but may face some challenges with capacity and/or unclear leadership structure. **(3 points)**

- Project leadership is not identified and/or has little to no experience leading a similar project. **(0 points)**

Community Engagement (Project will receive one of the following scores per criteria below)

- Project includes a comprehensive public engagement plan that includes all the following: inclusive participation process, engagement of new voices, empowerment of diverse stakeholders, and feasible implementation plan. **(5 points)**
- Project outlines a public engagement plan that has at least one but not all of the following: inclusive participation process, engagement of new voices, empowerment of diverse stakeholders, and a feasible implementation plan. **(3 points)**
- Project outlines a limited public engagement plan and/or does not have a feasible implementation plan. **(0 points)**

Project Financial Feasibility (maximum 12 points):

Project Financial Feasibility (Project will receive one of the following scores)

- The funding request fully funds the project or fills a gap in an otherwise fully funded project, and, as applicable, unlocks private/partner spending match. **(6 points)**
- The funding request includes a draft warrant article or other recommended community funds request to obtain remaining necessary funds with an award schedule that allows for project to be completed within the grant timeline (6/30/27). **(4 points)**
- The funding request is a portion of the necessary funding to complete the project, and application provides evidence of other grant applications and potential award schedule to be able to complete project within the grant timeline (6/30/27). **(2 points)**
- The funding request is more funding than the applicant is eligible for, or is more funding than is justified or available to the entire grant program. **(0 points)**

Priority Project Financial Feasibility (Projects that meet the following criteria will receive bonus points)

- **BONUS:** The project includes at least a 10% local funding match. Note that only cash (including DLTA, ARPA, and other municipal/organizational appropriations) counts as a match; staff time does not count as a match. **(3 points)**
- **BONUS:** The project includes another match funding source. Note that only cash (including DLTA, ARPA, and other municipal/organizational appropriations) counts as a match; staff time does not count as a match. **(3 points)**

Progress & Commitment to Date (maximum 12 points):

Priority Project Progress Commitment to Date (Projects that meet the following criteria will receive points)

- Project is the result of another previously identified plan or community-based initiative/project that accomplished a community goal. **(4 Points)**
- Project has evidence of prior EOHLC support and/or project will follow up on an ongoing commitment from other state/federal agencies and/or grants. **(4 Points)**
- Project allows the community to either use a first-time tool or address a long known need that has not been tackled due to lack of resources. **(4 points)**

Project Outcomes & Impact (maximum 30 points):

Overall Project Outcomes & Impact (Project will receive one of the following scores)

- Project will create opportunities for tangible outcomes that advance housing development, preservation, and/or rehabilitation. Project clearly outlines how public engagement and/or implementation strategies will advance housing goals and clearly solves the identified project need. **(18 Points)**
- Project will result in recommendations or tactics/strategies/tools that may eventually advance housing development, preservation, and/or rehabilitation, but may face significant challenges due to mismatch of scope, funding, and/or grant timeline (finish by 6/30/2027). Project plans to solve the identified need may not be clearly defined. **(12 Points)**
- Project will advance another need to improve community wellbeing (such as more livable community, economic development, or local transportation options) and/or the project does not solve the identified need. **(7 Points)**

Priority Project Outcomes & Impact (Projects that meet the following criteria will receive bonus points)

- **BONUS:** Project includes focus and intent to produce affordable housing. **(4 points)**
- **BONUS:** Project will use funds to come into compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3A. **(5 Points)**
- **BONUS:** Project reasonably and realistically takes climate change and environmental sustainability into consideration. **(3 points)**

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

The entity should activate a primary account with the 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 EOED, 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 EOED. 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.

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 – Once accounts are registered and/or approved, a Grant Administrator can create a Full Application(s) from the “Start New Document” 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 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 for assistance.

NOTE: If an application is erroneously submitted, the applicant may contact 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.