



# MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund

## FY27 Program Information and Guidelines

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## Overview

The MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund (Catalyst Fund) is a program of the Healey-Driscoll Administration to support its efforts to increase housing production in the Commonwealth and recognize local efforts by MBTA Communities with an approved 3A district compliant with M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3A. Grant funds may be used for a variety of activities related to horizontal infrastructure projects associated with housing development.

Program Information and these Guidelines have been developed for Catalyst Fund applicants. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (HLC) 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 HLC's applicant selection process. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

## Maximum Award

There is no set minimum or maximum amount that an eligible applicant may request. Awards will typically fund projects with grant requests between \$250,000 – \$1M. Applicants should request funding to support a complete project **or** complete phase(s) and must provide clear justification for the requested amount. Applicants are encouraged to conduct due diligence to determine accurate estimates of project costs to better understand actual costs and timing of expenditures for the proposed project.

While a cash match is not required, a match may factor in HLC's applicant selection process. Projects that include at least a 10% local cash match will receive bonus points in application review. To be considered, any match funds must contribute to the direct costs of the infrastructure work. Note that staff time is not considered a "cash match."

HLC reserves the right to make partial awards for amounts less than the original request and to deny an award to applicants with existing or past violations of HLC contractual obligations. Funding availability is subject to the final state budget and capital investment plan.

## Project Examples

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

1. Improvements to physical public infrastructure near a permitted housing project in a compliant 3A district, such as water, sewer, sidewalks, roads, or other multi-modal infrastructure to increase safety, mobility, and accessibility, that will support and/or yield new or additional housing units.

2. Engineering designs for improvements to physical infrastructure, such as water, sewer, sidewalks, and roads, that will create capacity for increased multi-family housing production.

## Eligible Applicants

Municipalities that are MBTA Communities and that have received a determination of compliance letter from HLC by the time of application deadline are eligible for consideration of a FY27 Catalyst Fund grant. Eligible municipalities must be the lead applicant and recipient of grant funds.

Other public entities and private firms, such as but not limited to Redevelopment Authorities, Economic Development Industrial Corporations, Water and Sewer Districts, other bodies created by legislative act to serve a municipality, and home builders, are ineligible to apply as the lead applicant. Ineligible lead entities must apply in partnership with an eligible municipality.

## Housing Moratoria or restrictive bylaws

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. Email McKenzie Bell, Senior Community Grants Coordinator, at [mckenzie.bell@mass.gov](mailto:mckenzie.bell@mass.gov) with questions about this eligibility factor.

## Use of Funds and Project Location Restrictions

Funding is available through the “Infrastructure” category of the Community One Stop for Growth development continuum. Grants will fund a variety of activities in eligible locations related to horizontal infrastructure projects associated with imminent housing development. Eligible activities include but are not limited to design, construction, repair, and other improvements to infrastructure to advance projects that support housing and/or mixed-use development, such as:

- Sewer lines, septic systems, and other sanitary waste disposal systems, water lines, wells and water treatment systems;
- Utility extensions;
- Streets, roads, curb cuts, and other transit improvements such as, crosswalks, traffic calming measures, pedestrian and bicycle ways; and
- Other related horizontal infrastructure work adjacent to planned or imminent housing improvements.

To be eligible for funding, infrastructure projects must be located **within or adjacent to** a 3A District determined to be compliant by HLC. For the purposes of this grant, “adjacent” shall mean a parcel or right-of way that immediately abuts the approved 3A District or a

parcel or right-of way documented to be associated with the approved 3A District despite not being included in it.

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);
2. Routine administrative tasks of municipal staff including, but not limited to, grant application preparation, procurement, or grant administration;
3. Vertical construction or building and foundation activities;
4. Parking decks or garages; or
5. A development with primary municipal use.

## Timeline of Use of Funds

FY27 grants are expected to be awarded in the fall of 2026. As a two-fiscal year grant, FY27 grant funded projects **must be completed by June 30, 2028**.

## Community One Stop for Growth Application

The MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund is part of the [Community One Stop for Growth](#) (COSG), a single application portal and collaborative review process of community and economic development grant programs that make targeted investments based on a Development Continuum.

The Full Application is organized into the following sections:

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

To be considered for funding through the COSG, applicants must include complete responses to all required questions.

## Additional COSG Information

- For information on the COSG, including key dates, frequently asked questions, and instructions on submitting an Expression of Interest and Full Application, please visit the [COSG webpage](#).
- The Expression of Interest is an optional, but highly recommended form that allows an applicant to seek guidance from the participating COSG agencies. Applicants are encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest prior to starting their Full Application(s). Visit the [COSG Expression of Interest webpage](#) for more information and access to the Expression of Interest form.

- Full Applications must be submitted electronically through the [online application portal IGX](#). An online webinar outlining the use of the system will be available on the site. Full Application form templates and a link to the application portal will also be available on the [COSG webpage](#).
- Eligible applicants may submit funding requests for more than one Development Continuum category project in the same round. However, a separate Full Application is required for each project. Each Full Application will be evaluated independently against the criteria and will be competing directly with all others.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to be aware of all requirements and deadlines, and to ensure that their Full Application is complete and submitted on time. All Full Applications will be logged as to date and time received and kept on file as public record. Late submissions will not be considered.

## Application Review

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

Full Applications will be scored for the responsiveness to the following criteria. At the discretion of EOED and HLC, scoring criteria for infrastructure projects may be shared between MassWorks Infrastructure Program and Catalyst Fund to review eligible projects accordingly.

- **Project Eligibility:** Does the project promote multi-family housing production? Does the project meet the outlined location restrictions within or adjacent to a compliant 3A District?
- **Project Readiness:** Is the project achievable within the proposed timeline? Evaluation will consider planning to date with factors such as due diligence, stakeholder/public engagement, site readiness, permitting, and design completeness.
- **Project Financial Feasibility:** Is the project's budget reasonable? Evaluation will consider factors such as whether the project is fully or partially funded, match funding, schedule of expenditure, and reasonableness of cost estimates.
- **Project Outcomes & Impact:** How will the project directly produce multi-family housing units? Evaluation will consider factors such as the number of housing units developed, the number of affordable units developed, and the level of affordability of said units.

Evaluation will also consider the following factors:

- Past performance with all prior HLC capital grants and capital grant contracts;
- Regional/geographic diversity of awardees;
- Whether an applicant is a first-time HLC capital grants recipient;
- Prior HLC support or investment;

- Successful implementation of a prior HLC capital grant;
- Environmental resiliency; and
- Alignment with Secretariat priorities.

## **Grant Award Process**

### **Contract with HLC and Award of Funds**

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

- Commonwealth Standard Contract Form, filled out and signed by the Awardee.
- Commonwealth Scope and Budget Form (available from HLC).
- Completed Contractor Authorized Signature Listing Form (available from HLC).
- Completed Fiscal Exercise Form (available from HLC).

### **Grant Distribution and Invoicing**

Granted funds will be disbursed on a cost reimbursement basis. Only work completed during the period of the executed contract will be eligible for reimbursement. Upon receipt of all required deliverables, the grantee will be reimbursed for the balance of any outstanding grant funds.

## APPENDIX 1: Accessing the COSG Full Application

All Full Applications must be submitted electronically through the Community One Stop for Growth application process. The Full Application will be available and accepted through the [IGX Platform](#). A user account is required. Below are the steps for getting into the platform.

An applicant 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. Users who have forgotten their username and/or password must use the "Forgot Username/Password" function on the IGX login page.

**New Organizations** – If an applicant has not accessed the system in the past, a new registration for the organization is required. This should be done by the municipal CEO and/or designee. Click the “New Organization? Register Here” link to submit a registration request. When the account is approved by EOED, the system will send an email notification 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 is not received after 48 hours, email [onestop@mass.gov](mailto:onestop@mass.gov) to request assistance.

**New User in Existing Organizations** – Once a Grant Administrator is established, that user(s) may then create and/or approve additional user accounts for municipal staff and/or consultants, such as grant writers, engineers, etc. Requests for user access should be made directly to the 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 follow 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 a Full Application** – Full Applications may be edited in IGX at any time up until the deadline. Official submissions to the COSG will only be accepted during the posted dates. During these dates, Grant Administrators may submit the Full Application by selecting the “Submit Full Application” option at the bottom of the left side menu. Applicants will receive an email confirming receipt within 24 hours. If an email is not received after 24 hours, email [onestop@mass.gov](mailto:onestop@mass.gov) for assistance.

**NOTE:** If a Full Application is erroneously submitted, email [onestop@mass.gov](mailto:onestop@mass.gov) to reopen the Full 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.