

# NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY and CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST



## Regional Restoration Partnership Program Grant - Fiscal Year 2027

*This is an announcement only*

### Overview

The Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), within the Department of Fish and Game, invites grant proposals from eligible applicants to strengthen regional ecological restoration efforts through the designation as a DER-supported Regional Restoration Partnership. The designation and associated funding will support **established collaboratives**<sup>1</sup> seeking to expand their capacity to lead and implement aquatic ecosystem restoration and nature-based climate resiliency projects across the Commonwealth.

The purpose of the [DER Regional Restoration Partnerships Program](#) is to provide support to regional organizations such as watershed groups and regional planning agencies who work with municipalities and other local partners to implement river and wetland restoration projects in Massachusetts.

A single Request for Responses (RFR) will be developed to solicit proposals for state fiscal year 2027. The RFR will be posted on COMMBUYS and grant applications will be accepted through the [Partnerships Program RFR website](#).

### Expressions of Interest

DER strongly encourages potential applicants to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) via the [online web form](#), which is also available on the [Partnerships Program RFR website](#). This is an optional, non-binding opportunity for applicants to provide information about a potential Partnership and receive a detailed

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<sup>1</sup> An **established** collaborative is a formal partnership between organizations and/or individuals who have worked together over time to share resources, expertise and decision-making to accomplish shared objectives. Here's what defines an established collaborative:

1. **Collaborative strategy:** The Collaborative has a well-defined and documented strategy which outlines its goals and provides a clear roadmap of actions to achieve objectives.
2. **Demonstrated Strong Relationships:** The Collaborative has built and sustained strong relationships with partners and individuals in its region, ensuring effective coordination, communication and shared resources/ expertise.
3. **Clear Process for Identifying and Prioritizing Needs:** The Collaborative has a systematic approach to recognize and prioritize the needs and opportunities in the region it serves.
4. **Ability to Communicate Restoration Benefits:** The Collaborative can effectively explain how its restoration efforts positively impact the community and environment.

In summary, an established Collaborative has a proven track record of effective cooperation, guided by a strategic framework, strong partnerships, a clear decision-making processes, and the ability to articulate the benefits of its work.

response about Partnerships Program structure, budgets, and/ or Partnership activities and projects. EOIs must be submitted to DER via the online form. Each individual applicant is asked to submit no more than one (1) EOI form. Any feedback to potential applicants will be provided before the Request for Responses and application is posted to COMMBUYS expected in March 2026.

### **Eligible Costs and Activities**

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DER is interested in supporting Partnership capacity-building efforts and restoration activities including regional planning and project identification, project development and implementation, technical assistance and trainings. All proposed activities must be tied to a specific task which includes following the intent of the collaborative's documented restoration strategy. DER seeks to fund an integrated approach to restoration based on an understanding of the existing and future aquatic ecosystem stressors in each Partnership Region. More information on the Partnership funding structure is available on the [Partnerships Program website](#) and will be provided in the RFR. Eligible restoration and nature-based climate resiliency activities should align with DER's mission and practices. More information on these practices is available on the [DER website](#).

### **Eligible Applicants**

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Tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations and Massachusetts Regional Governments and Planning Agencies may apply. Applicants must demonstrate partnership establishment through strong relationships with stakeholders, clear processes for identifying and prioritizing regional needs as evidenced by a documented strategy to achieve objectives, and ability to clearly articulate restoration benefits to diverse communities. Only one applicant can serve as the Lead Partnership Sponsor/ Applicant. Additional Core Partners/ stakeholders should coordinate with the Lead Partnership Sponsor/ Applicant prior to applying to the Partnership Program. Eligible recipients for sub-awards include Regional Planning Agencies, 501(c)(3) organizations, tribal governments or municipalities.

### **Request for Response (RFR)**

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The Request For Response (RFR) for this grant opportunity is expected to be released in Spring 2026. Partnership awards for selected lead organizations for Fiscal Year 2027. This RFR will be posted to COMMBUYS and on DER's website.

Applicants are solely responsible to monitor COMMBUYS for amendments to this announcement, if any, and for the complete RFR posting. Applicants may monitor the site through publicly accessible search and browse tools in addition to visiting DER's website: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/ders-partnerships-program>.

**Expected Program Timeline**

- January 26, 2026 Optional Expression of Interest (EOI) Form open to response
- February 6, 2026, 5pm EST Optional Expression of Interest Form closes
- February 2 – February 24. 2026 EOI Feedback provided to applicants
- March 2026 – Partnerships Program RFR posted to COMMBUYS and application open
- March RFR question/ answer period
- April 2026 Application Due
- Summer 2026 – Awards announced