MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund

Program Information and Guidelines

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MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund – FY26

Introduction

The MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund is a new grant 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 housing construction and infrastructure projects associated with housing development.

Program Information and these Guidelines have been developed for MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund grant 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

Awards will typically fund projects with grant requests between $250,000 – $1M. An applicant should request funding to support a complete project or complete phase 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 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 make partial awards for amounts less than 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 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, 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 have received a determination of compliance letter from EOHLC at the time of the funding request are eligible for consideration of an MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund grant. Eligible municipalities must be the lead applicant and recipient of grant funds.

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.

Use of Funds and Project Location
Grants will fund a variety of activities in eligible locations* related to housing development and infrastructure projects associated with housing development that help produce and/or preserve housing units.

* To be eligible for this fund, projects must adhere to the following restrictions:
- Infrastructure projects to support multi-family developments in a 3A District may be located **within or adjacent to** an approved 3A District. 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.

Funding is available through the "Infrastructure" categories of the Community One Stop for Growth development continuum. Grants will fund a variety of activities related to:
- Infrastructure to support housing growth and mixed-use developments to advance housing development, preservation, and/or rehabilitation related to:
  - Design and engineering of infrastructure projects
  - Construction of new or improved infrastructure, including roadway/streetscape improvements, bridge/culvert repair or replacement, water/sewer, public utilities (gas, electric, etc.)

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, and funded projects **must be completed by June 30, 2027**.

Community One Stop for Growth Application
The MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund 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. 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.

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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 MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund 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.
- 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 Development Continuum Category 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.

This guidance has been developed for implementation by EOHLC vendors and is intended for internal management purposes only. Throughout the program year, EOHLC may issue additional guidance, clarifications, or revisions as EOHLC deems necessary, which shall be automatically incorporated into this guidance. This guidance is intended to assist EOHLC vendors in administering the various aspects of the program. It is intended to help fill in the gaps, to clarify, interpret, and explain existing law, and to provide guidance on EOHLC's administration of the law. It is not intended to be exhaustive. EOHLC vendors that receive requests for a copy of this guidance should refer the party to the EOHLC Public Records Request webpage (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/eohlc-public-records-requests) which includes a link to submit an online public records request.

MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund Evaluation Criteria
Applications will be evaluated for the responsiveness to the following:
- **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.

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 the approval of the EOHLC operating and capital budgets. Grant projects may begin as of the execution of the contract. If selected, the grantee will be required to execute the following forms to complete a contract:
- Applicable Commonwealth Standard Contract Form, filled out and signed by the Respondent
- Commonwealth Scope and Budget Form (available from EOHLC)
- Completed Contractor Authorized Signature Verification 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 any outstanding grant funds.

APPENDIX 1: ACCESSING THE ONLINE APPLICATION

All applications to the MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund 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.

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