

## Massachusetts Downtown Initiative FY2022 Technical Assistance Program

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Department's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns. The primary mission of the MDI is to make downtown revitalization an integral part of community development in cities and towns across the Commonwealth. MDI's guiding principle is that the most effective approach to downtown revitalization is a holistic one that addresses economic and community development needs, and provides a framework of interrelated activities that promote positive change in a downtown to keep it healthy and prosperous.

Through the Technical Assistance Program, MDI provides consultant services to assist a community with its downtown revitalization efforts.

### II. CHANGES TO THIS YEAR'S APPLICATION

This MDI Technical Assistance Application will be part of the Community One Stop for Growth Application - see below

### III. APPLICATION AND EVALUATION

This program will be accepting proposals through a new application process – The Community One Stop for Growth – which is a single application portal and collaborative review process for several state grant programs that make targeted investments based on a housing and economic development continuum.

The Community One Stop for Growth application has been created through a partnership among the Executive Office of Housing and Community Development (EOHED), Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) and MassDevelopment. The funding round will open in January 2021 with a series of informational webinars. Prospective applicants will be able to submit an **Expression of Interest**, through April 2, 2021, outlining priority projects to receive feedback and suggestions on the best path for submitting proposals through a **Full Application** for funding consideration. Full Applications will be due by June 4, 2021.

#### A. Application Components

The new Community One Stop for Growth application is a single online application portal designed to allow applicants to submit a single application for multiple sources of funding to support multiple phases and facets of a project. The application is organized into the following sections:

- Core Questions (Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4), plus site information, if applicable,
- Additional Questions (Sections 5 through 10), based on the development continuum and the project components selected by the applicant,
- Certification of Application Submission Authority (Section 13),
- Required Attachments (Section 14), primary repository for required attachments, and
- Other Attachments (Section 15), for attachments related to special projects.

A full proposal packet for consideration of MDI Technical Assistance must include complete responses to all applicable questions in the following sections:

**Section 1 – Applicant Information:** Identifying information of the applicant, and partners, if applicable.

**Section 2 – Applicant / Community Background:** Information about the applicant main goals, challenges, and past projects. Section seeks information about the community's engagement in state initiatives and includes a checklist of various economic and housing development tools and strategies.

**Section 3 – Project Summary:** Identification of all the categories for which the applicant seeks funding support, including Capacity Building. Includes the project name, abstract, and project type.

**Section 4 – Project Details / Core Information:** Main project narrative and questions about leadership and ability to execute the project as well as progress to date. Includes questions related to the project timeline and anticipated outcomes.

**Section 5 – Community Capacity Building Additional Questions:** All of the questions about the specific project for which funding is requested. Includes detailed scope of work, description of the community coalition and target population, and budget.

**Section 13 – Certification of Application Submission Authority:** Signature page certifying the authority to submit the application on behalf of the organization, and attesting that all responses are true and accurate.

**Section 14 – Required Attachments:** This section is for uploading attachments. The following items are required for applications requesting support in the Capacity Building category:

Section - Attachment Name	Referenced Question #	Description
Summary – Municipal CEO Letter	3.16	Letter from the municipal CEO outlining support for the applicant and/or proposed project.
Capacity Building – Cost Estimate	5.11	Cost estimate or proposal from consultant(s) and/or professional services provider(s).
Capacity Building – Downtown/Town Center Target Area	[5.XX]	Downtown/town center target area map with area delineated.

Optional Attachments: Other support letters from community partners that will be actively involved in the project may be submitted. Each support letter should reference the role that the particular community partner will be playing with the project. Please note that these additional attachments will not be scored or otherwise counted as part of the evaluation of the proposal.

**IMPORTANT:** The sections outlined above relate only to the Capacity Building category. Applicants may be required to complete other sections of the Community One Stop application, depending on the other categories they may have selected. Please review the instructions for the One Stop carefully.

- All applications must be submitted electronically. The online application portal, /GX, can be accessed at <https://eohed.intelligrants.com>. An online webinar outlining the use of the system will be available on the site. *(See Appendix 2 for additional guidance on accessing online application.)*
- The application form template and link to the portal will also be available on the EOHED webpage. Applicants will have at least 12 weeks to review the application questions and prepare their project proposal.
- Eligible applicants may submit funding requests for more than one project in the same round. However, a separate application, and completed Section 11, 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.

- DHCD reserves the right to solicit additional information from applicants in order to confirm or clarify factual or procedural responses to application requirements such as copies of legal advertisements, minutes, survey instruments, letters, etc. Acceptance of these materials is subject to DHCD's satisfaction that the omitted material was in existence at the time of application and submission of the requested documents is made within a specified timeframe.

### **III. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

All communities are eligible to apply. Some of the funding will be reserved for only **non-entitlement** Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) communities.

### **IV. USE OF FUNDS**

Funds are to be used exclusively for technical assistance in the form of consultant services to address a specific issue in the categories listed in Section V. **The consultant used to deliver the technical assistance will be chosen by MDI staff from a list of pre-qualified consultants.** A grantee community can expect its consultant to develop a specific scope of services that may include research, analysis, preliminary design ideas, and a strategic outline of next steps. The community and consultant must agree upon a final product resulting from the technical assistance. In addition, the community is responsible for involving all pertinent stakeholders, as appropriate, in the process of delivering the technical assistance. Communities must agree to share the final products with DHCD and with other communities through reports, meetings and workshops, and to highlight these activities on the web, in print or using other media outlets. Communities must also agree to participate in the FY20 MDI workshops, as appropriate.

**The grant does not pay for staff salaries, software, or physical improvements.**

### **IV. MAXIMUM AWARD AMOUNT**

\$25,000 is the maximum award amount. These funds will be paid by DHCD to the chosen consultant to fund technical assistance in the form of consultant services. DHCD reserves the right to reduce the amount of the award from the original request.

The technical assistance provided is limited. DHCD/MDI Program expects to award up to \$300,000 in state and federal funds, for up to 20 awards. Additional awards may be made at the discretion of the Undersecretary. DHCD will fund as many qualifying projects as are possible from the funds available.

### **V. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES FOR FUNDING**

Applications will be accepted for Technical Assistance for Improving a Downtown or Commercial Center.

Examples of Technical Assistance Projects are:

- **District Management -- Business Improvement District (BID), Parking Benefit District (PBD) or Volunteer-based Organization**

Requests for assistance may address any aspect of creating a BID, PBD or a Volunteer-based Organization, including but not limited to: review of the proposed district, or development of a local strategy for implementation of a district management option.

- **Design:**

Requests for assistance may address any design issues related to downtown or town center revitalization, including but not limited to: preliminary design guidelines, sign and facade program, or concepts for streetscape design.

- **Economics of Downtown:**

Requests for assistance may address any economic development issue related to downtown or town center revitalization, including but not limited to: a review of market areas for the downtown, feasibility studies, building reuse, or business development.

- **Housing:**

Requests for assistance may address any aspect of determining how to increase housing in the downtown or town center, including but not limited to: a housing plan, market analysis for suitable housing mix, zoning recommendations, or second story development assistance.

- **Downtown Mobility:**

Requests for assistance addressing downtown mobility may include, but are not limited to: a parking management plan, analysis of existing and future parking needs, walkability plan, trolley feasibility plan, bus route analysis, or other requests that address improving mobility in a downtown.

- **Small Business Support:**

Requests for small business support may address any aspect of providing technical assistance to your downtown businesses. This could include workshops, small group training, or one-on-one onsite consultations with 6-8 businesses. It could also be used to support the individual businesses in your commercial district with marketing plan, customer building plan and other activities in support of small businesses. Alternatively, if you are not sure what kind of assistance would be best for your downtown businesses, this grant could be used to conduct a review/needs assessment of your business community's challenges to determine what kind of help is needed. Please

contact Emmy Hahn to discuss your application.

- **Wayfinding/Branding:**

Requests for assistance may address any aspect of developing a public way finding system and the creation of a distinguishable image or logo that carries through the various streetscape elements, including but not limited to: creation of public design elements that will be used throughout the downtown, way finding plan, cost analysis for implementation, or branding of a downtown through historic elements.

It is DHCD's intention to award at least one grant in each category. If an insufficient number of grants are received in any of the categories, or application scores are significantly lower in one or more categories, DHCD reserves the right to adjust the awards as needed.

#### **A. Evaluation Criteria**

Applications will be reviewed to determine overall consistency with the goals of the MDI, support of the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) and the Commonwealth's priorities and initiatives, and impact on local downtown/town/village center revitalization efforts. DHCD will evaluate applications based on the following:

- Achievable Project Scope
- Ability to Execute and Leadership
- Achievable Timeline
- Reasonable Budget, Showing Commitment
- Outcomes and Impact
- Progress to Date, Showing Commitment
- Responsiveness [to support of Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles]

## **APPENDIX 2: MASSACHUSETTS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES**

**Concentrate Development and Mix Uses** – Support the revitalization of city and town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that is compact, conserves land, protects historic resources, and integrates uses. Encourage remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures, and infrastructure rather than new construction in undeveloped areas. Create pedestrian friendly districts and neighborhoods that mix commercial, civic, cultural, educational, and recreational activities with open spaces and homes.

**Advance Equity** – Promote equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning and decision making to ensure social, economic, and environmental justice. Ensure that the interests of future generations are not compromised by today's decisions.

**Make Efficient Decisions** – Make regulatory and permitting processes for development clear, predictable, coordinated, and timely in accordance with smart growth and environmental stewardship.

**Protect Land and Ecosystems** – Protect and restore environmentally sensitive lands, natural resources, agricultural lands, critical habitats, wetlands and water resources, and cultural and historic landscapes. Increase the quantity, quality, and accessibility of open spaces and recreational opportunities.

**Use Natural Resources Wisely** – Construct and promote developments, buildings, and infrastructure that conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, and materials.

**Expand Housing Opportunities** – Support the construction and rehabilitation of homes to meet the needs of people of all abilities, income levels, and household types. Build homes near jobs, transit, and where services are available. Foster the development of housing, particularly multifamily and smaller single-family homes, in a way that is compatible with a community's character and vision and with providing new housing choices for people of all means.

**Provide Transportation Choice** – Maintain and expand transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel, and improve air quality. Prioritize rail, bus, boat, rapid and surface transit, shared-vehicle and shared-ride services, bicycling, and walking. Invest strategically in existing and new passenger and freight transportation infrastructure that supports sound economic development consistent with smart growth objectives.

**Increase Job and Business Opportunities** – Attract businesses and jobs to locations near housing, infrastructure, and transportation options. Promote economic development in industry clusters. Expand access to education, training, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Support the growth of local businesses, including sustainable natural resource-based businesses, such as agriculture, forestry, clean energy technology, and fisheries.

**Promote Clean Energy** – Maximize energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities. Support energy conservation strategies, local clean power generation, distributed generation

technologies, and innovative industries. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and consumption of fossil fuels.