MA Downtown Initiative
Technical Assistance Program

Program Information and Guidelines
FY2023

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Charles D. Baker, Governor | Karyn E. Polito, Lt. Governor | Mike Kennealy, Secretary

MA Downtown Initiative Program 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. The One Stop streamlines the experience for the applicant and better coordinates programs and staff on engagement and grant making. It reorients the Commonwealth from a passive reviewer of funding requests to an active partner in economic development strategy, priorities, and investment.

Access to this program is now exclusively available through the One Stop App Application. For more information, including key dates, frequently asked questions, and instructions on submitting an Expression of Interest and Full Application, please visit https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth.

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
FY2023 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.   <u>APPLICATION AND EVALUATION</u>

A. Application Components

The new Community One Stop for Growth application is a single online application portal designed to allow applicants to apply for consideration of 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 and 2), plus site information, if applicable,
- Additional Questions (Sections 3 through 7), based on the development continuum and the project components selected by the applicant,
- Additional Questions for Housing Choice Communities (Sections 8), only for communities designated as Housing Choice,

- Certification of Application Submission Authority (Section 9),
- Other Attachments (Section 10), 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:

Core Questions:

- **Section 1** - Applicant Information/Background: Identifying information of the applicant, and partners, if applicable.
- **Section 2** - Project Information: In this section, applicants will provide general project information, such as the project name, description, leadership and the ability to execute the project, timeline and anticipated outcomes. Applicant will indicate the category of funding for which they would like the project to be considered in question 2.1, which will drive additional questions.
- **Section 3** Additional Questions, based on the development continuum and the project components selected by the applicant in Section 2, Question 2.1,
- **Section 9** - Certification of Application Submission Authority: Signature page certifying the authority to submit the application on behalf of the applying entity and attesting that all responses are true and accurate.
- **Section 10** - Other/Optional Attachments: This section allows submit other attachments to support the application, including other site images, partner letters or support letters. Please note that these items will generally not be scored or assessed as part of the formal evaluation of the proposal.

Section - Attachment Name	Referenced Question #	Description
Summary – Municipal CEO Letter	Section 2.17	Letter from the municipal CEO outlining support for the applicant and/or proposed project.
Capacity Building – Cost Estimate	Section 3.3	This is not expected to be from a consultant. The goal is to best of your ability map out how you think the $25,000 technical assistance will be implemented.
Capacity Building – Downtown/Town Center Target Area	Section 3.6	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. The letters should reference the role that the writer 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.

III.   ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

All 351 communities in the Commonwealth are eligible to apply.

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. The consultant is paid through the MDI program.** 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/webinars, and to highlight these activities on the web, in print or using other media outlets.

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

IV.   MAXIMUM AWARD AMOUNT

Consultant services up to $25,000 per award will be provided.   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 grants. 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 in the following categories:

- **District Management- Business Improvement District (BID) 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, 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, 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.

- **Economic Equity:**
Requests for assistance may address assisting a community with developing approaches for creating a process for embedding equity and inclusion into transformational community-based economic development, including but not limited to: guiding communities through the RRP Equity Toolkit or a portion of the toolkit, programs that support creating a more diverse small business community in the downtown or town center.

- **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, and second story development assistance.

- **Downtown Mobility:**
Requests for technical assistance addressing downtown mobility will range from a parking management plan, creation of a parking benefit district, analysis of existing and future parking needs, walkability plan, trolley feasibility plan, bus route analysis, and other requests that address improving mobility in a downtown.

- **Small Business Support/E-commerce:**

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 entirety of businesses in your commercial district with marketing plan, customer building plan and other activities in support of small businesses. Funds could be used to develop a program that assists small business in your downtown to create an on-line presence. Please contact Emmy Hahn to discuss your application.

- **Wayfinding/Branding:**

Requests for assistance may address any aspect of developing a public wayfinding 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, and branding of a downtown through historic elements.

It is not required, but recommended that applicants discuss their application with the program coordinator, Emmy Hahn (Elizabeth.hahn@mass.gov).

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.

VI. APPLICATION REVIEW

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]