



MVP Toolkit: Environmental Justice & Equity

Discover ways to ensure that environmental justice and equity are meaningfully considered when addressing climate change hazards through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant program.

Global climate change is a local environmental justice issue because it has disproportionate impacts on socially vulnerable populations in Massachusetts. With climate change expected to exacerbate current and future vulnerabilities in our communities, municipalities are strongly encouraged to approach their MVP Planning Grant and Action Grant projects with a clear focus on addressing existing environmental, economic, and social disparities. Please share your thoughts and feedback with us as we work to improve this “living document” as a resource for Massachusetts communities. Comments can be emailed to kara.runsten@mass.gov.

Whether a municipality is embarking on the initial [MVP Planning Grant](#) process or is ready to implement priority actions with an [MVP Action Grant](#), a municipality may consider the steps outlined in this toolkit as possible ways to integrate equity and environmental justice into a project.

Watch the [January 2021 webinar](#) that features MVP project teams centering environmental justice, equity, and community engagement in their work.

Learn about the intersection of MVP, environmental justice, climate vulnerability, & equity



Find below the definitions the MVP team uses for environmental justice and climate vulnerable populations and how these concepts are incorporated into MVP grant applications.



What are the definitions, and how do I identify EJ and other climate vulnerable populations?

The MVP program implements the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' [2021 Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Policy](#).

The EJ Policy states:

Environmental justice is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or English language proficiency. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.

The Policy defines an ***"EJ Population"*** as a census block group in which one or more of the following criteria is met, and as depicted the [Massachusetts EJ Viewer Map](#):

- the annual median household income is not more than 65% of the statewide annual median household income
- 40% or more of its population are minority, including individuals who identify themselves as Latino/Hispanic, Black African American, Asian, Indigenous people, and people who otherwise identify as non-white
- 25% or more of households lack English language proficiency
- minorities comprise 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income

It further defines a "Vulnerable Health EJ Population" as a segment of the population that has evidence of higher than average rates of environmentally-related health outcomes, including but not limited to childhood asthma, low birth weight, childhood lead poisoning, and/or heart disease morbidity.

Recognizing that there may be people who live or work in your community who are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change that do not meet the specific criteria or thresholds of an EJ population, the MVP program also incorporates another concept into the program: **climate vulnerable populations**. Climate vulnerable populations are those who have lower adaptive capacity or higher exposure and sensitivity to climate hazards like flooding or heat stress due to factors such as access to transportation, income level, disability, racial inequity, health status, or age. At this time, we do not have one distinct tool to use to identify climate vulnerable populations in Massachusetts. Because of this, MVP relies on municipalities to identify populations based on data and experience at the municipal level that can be informed by the tools listed here:

- The MA Department of Public Health ["Climate Change Vulnerability Map"](#) includes census tract level data layers on factors that could lead to increased climate vulnerability like race, income level, and age. It also has layers related to exposure (e.g., FEMA flood maps), that can be overlaid on these demographic data layers to identify areas of town that may be most vulnerable based on demographics and exposure to climate impacts.
- The MA Department of Public Health ["Climate Enhanced Community Profile"](#) can generate a report for every Commonwealth municipality that includes municipal-level demographic information and health data that is helpful for identifying potentially climate vulnerable populations.
- The U.S. Census Bureau can generate a [data profile](#) specific to your municipality with information on social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics.
- The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) created [a map with climate vulnerability by census tract](#) to extreme heat and the impacts of flooding and lays out their methodology for identifying these areas.



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In this toolkit, the concept of **equity** is rooted in fairness, ensuring everyone has access to opportunities, networks, resources, and support. It means taking steps to proactively address the root causes of inequities and dismantle barriers that may prevent some in a community from achieving this access.

How does the MVP program prioritize EJ and climate vulnerable populations?

The MVP program prioritizes projects that directly benefit and meaningfully engage EJ Populations and/or climate vulnerable populations through its application scoring criteria. Before delving into this toolkit, please familiarize yourself with those application questions and how they are scored, detailed below:

Environmental justice and the MVP Planning Grant application:

One of the questions on the [MVP Planning Grant](#) application asks the applicant to indicate if the municipality contains [EJ populations](#) or climate vulnerable populations (defined above). The applicant must provide specific relevant demographic information related to the EJ population (i.e., income, race, and English isolation) or climate vulnerable population, a description of where the community is located geographically, and how the municipality will work proactively to involve these groups in the planning process. This could include activities like including a compensated community liaison as a member of the project team (i.e., a community-based organization or individual representative from an EJ and/or climate vulnerable population who is qualified to manage public involvement and community engagement in a culturally competent, sensitive, and meaningful way), providing childcare at meetings, translating outreach materials into the significant non-English languages spoken in the community, providing professional grade interpretive services at MVP-related meetings and otherwise facilitating communication with persons with Limited English Proficiency, scheduling planning meetings at times and in formats conducive for attendance by working families, among many other outreach strategies. (Note: there is a [statewide contract for foreign language interpretation and translation services](#) that municipalities may utilize when conducting language services.) Applicants may request extra funding to pursue such activities that will contribute to a more equitable planning process.

Environmental justice and the MVP Action Grant application:

There are two questions on the [MVP Action Grant](#) application (FY22 round) that address environmental justice and equity:

EJ and climate vulnerable population demographics and impact

This question awards points for a project located within a mapped EJ population, identified through the Massachusetts [EJ viewer](#), with demonstrated positive impacts to that community and demonstrated support from the community. To receive full points, the applicant must provide specific relevant demographic information related to the EJ population (i.e., income, minority, and English isolation); a description of where the community is located geographically relative to the project site; and how the project will increase climate resiliency (i.e., the ability to anticipate, cope with, and rebound from events and trends related to climate change hazards) for this EJ population. Importantly, the applicant must show support from the EJ population that the project is intended to benefit. Demonstration of support can include: 1) Letters of support from residents or community groups representing these populations 2) Indication that residents or community groups representing these populations will be part of the project team, and, specifically how much of the project budget will be used to compensate them for their work and on which tasks. This partnership should be clearly shown in the proposed scope/budget. Projects that positively impact and involve climate vulnerable populations outside of a mapped EJ area may also receive a subset of points in this category.



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Public involvement and community engagement

This second question relates to how the municipality will conduct community engagement. Applicants must craft a public involvement and community engagement plan to identify print, digital, and in-person methods they will use during the project. They also must identify **equitable engagement modifiers** or what methods they will use specifically to overcome barriers to participation that EJ or climate vulnerable populations regularly encounter. Examples of equitable engagement modifiers include:

- Including and compensating a community liaison (i.e., a community-based organization or individual representative from an EJ and/or climate vulnerable population who is qualified to manage public involvement and community engagement in a culturally competent, sensitive, and meaningful way) as part of the project team.
- Identifying and sharing content with alternative language online media outlets that service members of the EJ or climate vulnerable population.
- Translating project content and deliverables into the most prevalent languages spoken in the community (again, municipalities may use a the [statewide contract](#) when acquiring these services).
- Hosting at least one community event in a dominant language other than English and include interpreters at all other events.
- Using one of the other methods identified in the [Request for Responses](#).

In this question, applicants must also identify how stakeholder feedback will be incorporated into the project and the mechanism by which stakeholders will be notified of the results of the public involvement and community engagement process and the final project deliverables. Example mechanisms include:

- Establishing and advertising one or more project information repositories in town that are convenient and accessible to the impacted community.
- Holding a public meeting, with interpreters present in appropriate languages, to share results of the public involvement and community engagement process and how that feedback was incorporated into the final deliverables.
- Creating, translating, if appropriate, and posting to the project website a document summarizing the response to public comments received along with project deliverables.

The MVP program provides [extensive guidance](#) in the Action Grant Request for Responses (RFR) issued annually on crafting a thoughtful public involvement and community engagement plan for projects. These guidelines have been designed to ensure that the climate adaptation work of MA communities provides “seats at the table” for EJ and climate vulnerable populations.

Example Innovative Public Engagement Strategies

Below are innovative ideas from the FY21 Action Grant round for enhancing public involvement and community engagement in your MVP project:

- The Town of Agawam received a grant to create a stormwater master plan and will work with a local theater group and a local environmental group to conduct a 10-day residency at a public school entitled, “Where Does Your Water Go?” The 10-day residency will culminate in a public storm drain art project and community event at which students will present a gallery of their work and share what they have learned about the stormwater master plan project and its importance to the community.
- In a project to redesign its Department of Public Works site, the City of Malden facilitated a new coalition of community leaders of color, youth, environmental advocates, and government stakeholders. This group formed the Malden River Works Steering Committee, which includes seats for compensated community liaisons. This Committee deploys innovative engagement ideas, such as conducting surveys at the end of each community meeting to evaluate attendees’ impressions of how well they were heard in the meeting. They also feature talks from activists or artists of color on themes of resilience and social justice at each meeting. (See case study below for further details on this project.)
- The Town of Athol is conducting a feasibility study for critical improvements to the Lord Pond Plaza parking lot area to reduce flooding. The Town will undertake a competition to select a mural of the project elements that will be painted on a façade of the plaza building. The competition will be open to Athol residents, and there will be a dedicated effort to engage at-risk teenagers. Guidelines for mural content and ranking criteria will be generated by the Town and their community partner, the North Quabbin Community Coalition.



Team up with local partners to maximize environmental justice and equity impacts in your project

When convening an MVP Planning Grant [Community Resilience Building \(CRB\) Workshop](#) or seeking partners to work on priority action items through an MVP Action Grant, it is critical to invite diverse and representative participants to the table.

Start with identifying the [EJ](#) and other climate vulnerable populations in your community (see the section "Learn More" for more details on how to do this). Then reach out to representatives of these populations to get their input.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the types of individuals and organizations that you could reach out to:

- Community members and community group representatives of [EJ populations](#) and other climate vulnerable populations
- Community-based organizations and social advocacy groups with a focus on environmental, social, and racial equity, housing, education, community development, or public health
- Representatives from local [Community Health Centers](#)
- The elderly and those with limited mobility, and advocates such as Councils on Aging and [Aging Services Access Points](#) staff
- Outdoor workers, such as farmers, and their labor groups
- Immigrant rights groups and their advocates
- Students from local public schools, particularly those in EJ neighborhoods
- Mutual aid groups, block captains, and other neighborhood networks
- Community Development Corporations
- Public Housing Authorities
- Municipal Public Health Directors/ Local Boards of Health
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion professionals
- Other people or organizations that may be able to bring an underrepresented perspective to the table

Tip: If you need help identifying community groups try asking your Regional Planning Agency, school district, department of social services, or local board of health as a starting point.

By building and maintaining relationships with these stakeholders and empowering them to contribute their expertise, municipalities can craft competitive MVP proposals that demonstrate strong environmental justice goals and benefits. When submitting an application, consider:

- Including letters of support from members of EJ or climate vulnerable populations or local community groups that work with these populations
- Including these community members or community groups directly on the project team and detailing how they will be compensated through the project budget (i.e., the community liaison model described below)
- Giving examples of previous collaborations with community groups (e.g., school meal programs, anti-racism trainings, citizen science initiatives, and health access points) to demonstrate your commitment to working with your stakeholders over time.



A poster from a community event for Medford's FY20 Action Grant



Craft projects that promote both equitable processes and fair outcomes for environmental justice and climate vulnerable populations

MVP values equity in both project process and outcomes. Read below for tips and examples before you start an MVP application.

Equity in Process

1. Involve community members and organizations from the start

When municipalities are planning for climate adaptation projects, community members and organizations should be engaged as early in the process as possible – even during project brainstorming— and frequently throughout the project's duration. The most valuable input often results from participants who feel invested in the municipality because they are treated as long-term partners who are not just being invited to the table for individual projects. Any project proposed within EJ areas or that could affect EJ populations (i.e., anything from a new land use regulation to a dam removal) should include representatives of those groups in the project team or as compensated advisors to the project team.

When thinking about MVP project ideas, the single best action you can take is to ask members of EJ neighborhoods what issues they care about, ideally at the MVP Planning Grant stage. Many stakeholders may not name climate change as their number one priority or may think of it in different terms (e.g., they may be concerned about air quality which is impacted by climate change). But many critical projects that prepare us for the impacts of climate change have co-benefits to public health, recreation, job creation, and our environment which makes them attractive initiatives to further these common community values.

If you have already conducted your CRB workshop and it did not incorporate the ideas of EJ and climate vulnerable populations in town, it is not too late. You can reconvene your core team and newly identified stakeholders to discuss revising the priority actions in your MVP Summary of Findings Report and document these changes in the MVP Yearly Progress Report that is a required attachment to the Action Grant application. This makes these new ideas eligible for Action Grant funding. Your MVP regional coordinator would be happy to answer any questions about this process.

2. Include Community Liaisons in your project and budget

MVP applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the **Community Liaison Model** when setting up a project team. The Community Liaison Model refers to a strategy of engagement whereby community-based organizations or individual representatives from EJ populations and climate vulnerable populations are brought on board as paid participating members and advisors of the project team. The objective of these partnerships is to promote equitable and inclusive outcomes and engagement processes for climate resiliency projects. See the Amherst, Malden, and Medford case studies below for examples of how this model can work in practice.

3. Identify how stakeholder feedback will be considered, incorporated, and reported out to the community

It is crucial to identify how stakeholder feedback will be incorporated into the project and the mechanism by which stakeholders will be notified of the results of the public involvement and community engagement process and the final project deliverables.



Malden's FY21 Action Grant application, for example, included a robust plan for incorporating and sharing out stakeholder feedback including publishing the feedback online and reporting out at community meetings; reserving time at regular steering committee meetings to evaluate how well the project team is reaching the community and assessing if any changes to community engagement strategies are needed; and providing a survey at the end of each community meeting to evaluate how well participants felt they were heard during the event.

In their recent application, Somerset stated that they would identify one common feedback response contact that would be published on all circulated materials and serve as the central collection point. This would help keep the team organized to log each comment and share them at the monthly project planning meetings. A summary of all comments would be posted on the department website and translated into the three most prevalent languages in town. The town would also identify a publicly accessible information repository in town to hold all project documents and deliverables.

Other example mechanisms as well as lists of additional equitable engagement practices and how to incorporate them into MVP Action Grant proposals can be found in the [guidance](#) that is issued with the Request for Responses annually.

4. Build in trainings on anti-racism, equity, and justice for the project core team and stakeholders

Applicants should consider incorporating anti-racism or equity & justice trainings as part of their MVP planning or action grant process. For example, as part of its FY21 MVP Action Grant, the Town of Great Barrington is working on a strategy to bring the needs of underrepresented and historically marginalized communities into the center of the community's climate change adaptation and planning strategy. To do this, they are partnering with Multicultural BRIDGE, a local service provider specializing in community engagement and cultural competence, equity, and inclusion training. Multicultural BRIDGE will train key Town staff and stakeholders on climate justice, equity and inclusion and lead community outreach to climate vulnerable populations. Their goal is that this training will lead to sustainable, replicable means and methods for communicating with and involving underrepresented groups not just in climate change planning, but also in planning for emergencies, hazards, as well as land use and conservation.

5. Strive to continuously improve access

Applicants should also think about how they can improve access to all engagement activities and materials. As described above, translation and interpretation services of project materials and meetings are important to including those experiencing English isolation in town. If you are unclear of the languages most prevalent in your town, it is helpful to connect with your school district or local board of health who will be knowledgeable about this topic. Municipalities may use the [statewide contract](#) when acquiring professional translation and interpretative services. Other issues of access include timing meetings so that members of EJ and climate vulnerable populations are more likely to be able to attend, providing transportation to meetings, and providing childcare and refreshments at meetings and events. During this time of COVID-19 and social distancing, we also acknowledge that those with limited access to technology may be much harder to reach. The MVP team has created [a toolkit](#) with resources for conducting virtual engagement, as well as other remote methods for those with limited technology access.



Other resources to increase equity in process:

The following resource is extracted from the annual Request for Responses issued for MVP Action Grants and includes the guidance and requirements for public involvement and community engagement:

- [FY22 MVP Action Grant Guidelines](#)

The following resources from the Georgetown Climate Center provide tools and procedures that ensure decision-making processes are centered in equity:

- [Community-Driven Engagement Processes](#)
- [Governance & Budgeting](#)
- [Data, Metrics & Monitoring Tools](#)

The following tools from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity capture an overall approach to integrating racial equity into routine decision making, as well as examples from their cohort of government bodies at the forefront of advancing racial equity:

- [Racial Equity Core Teams](#)
- [Racial Equity Plans](#)
- [Racial Equity Resource Guide](#)
- [Racial Equity Toolkit](#)

The Urban Sustainability Directors Network created a holistic curriculum of webinars, videos, and worksheets to help local government staff apply an equity lens to a sustainability project, including choosing a good project, communicating about the project and racial equity, building a team, applying proven equity tools, and designing the project to embed an equity lens in local government practice.

- [Equity Foundations Training](#)

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Credit: International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org



Equity in Outcomes

Implementing policies and programs that adapt to climate impacts while dismantling barriers to access, increasing equity, and investing in historically marginalized communities can lead to a more resilient and just society.

Example projects focused on equitable outcomes include:

- An MVP Action Grant in Springfield, MA will help the City to advance adoption of a [Racial Equity Impact Assessment](#) for new development projects, policies, and plans. This would require information about impacts of a project on different racial groups to be factored into decision-making.
- One component of an MVP Action Grant awarded to the Town of Great Barrington will focus on increasing the capacity of local food systems and supporting local food production methods that sequester carbon and increase soil health. The Town plans to launch a program to provide community supported agriculture (CSA) shares, starter plants, seeds, and educational classes to people of color and marginalized populations in the Berkshires. Outreach work conducted by community partners found that these community members have a strong interest in self-determined food access (e.g., being able to cultivate their own food) and the Town aims to prioritize this interest through this work.
- An MVP Action Grant awarded to Haverhill will fund a feasibility study for the removal of a dam in the downtown area within an EJ community. Removal of the dam is expected to lessen flooding risk to the EJ neighborhoods immediately upstream. The dam removal feasibility study will also reveal potential risks, such as contaminants in accumulated sediment behind the dam that may have the potential to be mobilized by future climate impacts and will begin to develop plans for mitigating such risks. Later phases of the project will prioritize aesthetic and quality of life benefits for the neighborhood, and are intended to increase tree cover, riverfront access, and open space amenities in the community.
- The Commonwealth's [Greening the Gateway Cities Program](#) concentrates its efforts in environmental justice neighborhoods and plants trees in areas that have lower tree canopy, older housing stock, higher wind speeds, and a larger renter population. Program goals are to plant 5 trees per acre, which will reduce the Urban Heat Island effect, and decrease summer air temperatures in city neighborhoods through shading and increased transpiration. The program also aims to boost the local economy by hiring local planting crews and growing trees at local nurseries.

Any projects aimed to increase equity in outcomes should also strive for equity in process from project idea to project implementation.

Other resources to increase equity in outcomes:

The following resources from the Georgetown Climate Center explore case studies that center equitable outcomes from climate adaptation initiatives.

- [Economic Resilience](#)
- [Resilient Affordable Housing, Anti-Displacement & Gentrification](#)
- [Natural Resilience](#)
- [Resilient Energy & Utility Industry Measures](#)
- [Resilient Water](#)
- [Equitable Disaster Response & Recovery](#)
 - This section highlights the [USDN Resilience Hub Guidance Document](#)
- [Public Health](#)

The EPA report [Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities \(2013\)](#) describes strategies for how municipalities can develop in a manner that is equitable and environmentally sustainable.

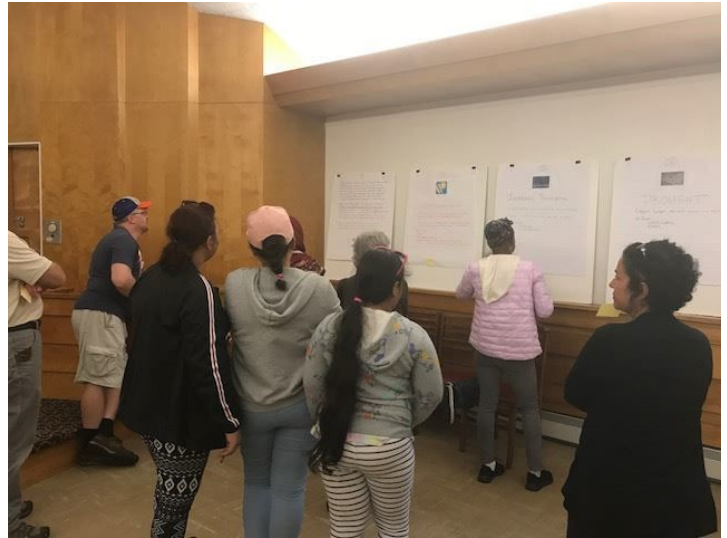


Case Study #1: Amherst MVP Planning Grant

FY18 MVP Planning Grant

Best Practices Utilized:

1. Compensating or sub-contracting designated Community Liaisons as part of the project team who can conduct targeted outreach in places where EJ communities live and work via existing social networks
2. Partnering with a trusted community-based organization or institution, regardless of their previous experience with climate change topics
3. Allocating time and attention towards listening and responding to community concerns
4. Budgeting for food, childcare, translation, and interpretation services for the most common languages spoken in your jurisdiction
5. Holding meetings in central, convenient, and familiar locations at hours that allow working individuals to join



Community Gathering Session in Amherst during the MVP Planning Grant process

The Town of Amherst received funding for its MVP Planning

Grant in 2018. At the outset, Amherst sought guidance from community organizations and community members regarding how to best to reach out to those members of the community often typically left out of town decision making and governance. During the Town's Community Resilience Building workshop planning process, however, one of the invited stakeholders expressed misgivings that working parents would not be heard during the planning process due to structural barriers to participation, such as time and location of meetings, lack of childcare, and lack of compensation for their time. The concerns that stakeholders raised were taken seriously, and the Town opted to use Planning Grant funds to enhance outreach to marginalized communities.

At the Town's request, their contractor, Linnean Solutions, hired a sub-contracted Community Liaison to conduct targeted outreach work in marginalized communities. Town staff had participated in efforts by a local educational non-profit working to address food insecurity among working families with children enrolled in the Amherst public school system. The work of the community liaison with input from the non-profit Healthy Hampshire Food Justice Initiative resulted in a combined series of "Community Gathering Sessions" which served as a supplemental outreach effort designed to augment the broader MVP planning process.

These "Community Gathering Sessions" were scheduled to occur at centrally located facilities and included translation services and food, both of which were funded out of the Town's planning grant. In order to generate interest amongst marginalized populations, the Community Liaison went door-to-door to connect with neighbors in public housing complexes and recruited stakeholders to participate in the Town's resiliency planning efforts. This Community Liaison identified neighbors who were bilingual and sought their services for in-meeting translation as well as the translation of flyers and posters. Individuals who were engaged for the purpose of translation were not asked to volunteer their time, but rather, were compensated for their work.

Municipal staff indicated that families that attended these events were entirely new to Amherst's planning efforts and their presence underscored the extent to which traditional models of engagement can render marginalized individuals "invisible" during planning exercises. These Community Gathering Sessions attracted 60 individuals and only Spanish translation services were used, although Portuguese and Mandarin speakers were available.

The impact of these Community Gathering Sessions caused municipal staff to undergo a paradigm shift in how they understood outreach and engaging the broader community. Moreover, this initial experience with the Community Liaison model caused municipal staff to better understand the need to create inclusive, welcoming models of engagement that establish pathways that allow marginalized voices to become active participants in the mechanisms of local government. Food, childcare, and translational services were instrumental in creating a welcoming and inclusive experience for community members. The process of hearing from a cross-section of the population that was more representative of the Town, where 40% of the community lives beneath the poverty line, provided information that was not exclusively from individuals and community members that were committee members or regular attendees of public meetings and hearings. The Town decided to make Community Liaison-driven outreach a central component of its Climate Action Plan, which was awarded an MVP Action Grant in FY20.



Case Study #2: Malden River Works

FY21 MVP Action Grant

Best Practices Utilized:

1. Creating a community coalition to steer the planning and design process and building these relationships before applying for an MVP grant
2. Compensating Community Liaisons as part of the project team
3. Restoring a vacant, rundown, or polluted parcel
4. Creating EJ community co-benefits such as open space access



Malden River Works project conceptual design

Malden applied for and received an MVP Action Grant in our FY21 round for their project entitled “Malden River Works,” stating in their application that “the project goal is to transform the City’s Department of Public Works (DPW) yard on the Malden River for better climate change preparedness (as a key responder for the city), and to create a vibrant, resilient public riverfront park. The application goes on to say: “Malden was a historic industrial employment center, and after decades of industrial development and subsequent decline, the Malden River is lined with a sea of parking lots and light industrial businesses. These offer little to no river access, and exacerbate water quality and surface flooding risks through poor site design and stormwater management. Climate threats at the DPW pose extra risk to the community because the DPW is a key second responder in the city after a disaster. Because of this “The Community Resilience Building Workshop in November, 2019 identified the DPW as the top action priority for reducing vulnerability in Malden.”

Almost the entirety of Malden is classified as an EJ community. From the grant application: “Malden’s increasing racial and ethnic diversity is often cited as a source of civic pride, as it is home to the most diverse public high school in the Commonwealth, and growing Asian, Black, and Latinx populations. Malden has also been cited as a city with increasing upward mobility, particularly for its Latinx and Black populations. However, Malden residents lack access to green spaces and particularly to the Malden River. Many residents, including municipal staff, have remarked at the first public meeting that they did not know they have a river to begin with.”

Before applying for an MVP Action Grant, the City leveraged another grant from MIT to conduct visioning and preliminary concept planning. They put in place a community-led planning and design process, led by a new coalition of community leaders of color, youth, environmental advocates, and government stakeholders. This group formed the Malden River Works Steering Committee, which had several seats for compensated Community Liaisons and has taken creative approaches to community engagement: for example, they surveyed at the end of each community meeting to ask the public how well they feel they were heard during the meeting. Members of Malden’s EJ populations, including African-American, Arab, Haitian, Latinx, Vietnamese, and high school youth communities are represented on the Steering Committee.

The Committee settled on a design that includes bioswales, bioretention features, 80 new trees, invasive species removal, and riparian habitat restoration. This design focuses on Nature-Based Solutions and is intended to be a prototype project for future projects along the Malden River. It will connect with future trails north and south of the DPW site as part of the Mystic Greenways initiative, which aims to “connect 25 miles of paths [and] improve hundreds of acres of parklands.” The Steering Committee will continue to guide the process during the MVP-funded design and engineering development phase.

For more information visit the [project website](#).

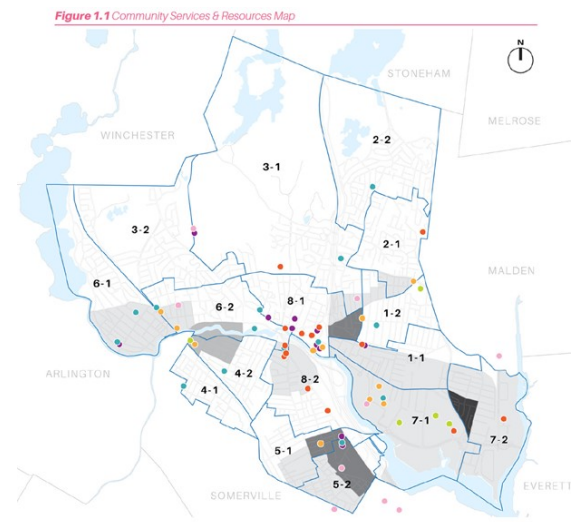


Case Study #3: Medford Resilience Hub Study

FY20 & FY21 MVP Action Grant

Best Practices Utilized:

1. Surveying underserved and climate vulnerable local people for input about their needs and adaptive capacity, rather than assuming those needs to be known
2. Bringing community members to the table to evaluate the feasibility of potential sites for new environmental amenities (in this case, a [Resilience Hub](#))
3. Analyzing the geographic distribution of neighborhood resources, sensitivity to climate change, and adaptive capacity
4. Compensating or sub-contracting designated Community Liaisons as part of the project team who can conduct targeted outreach in places where Environmental Justice communities live and work via existing social networks
5. Hold anti-racism trainings for municipal offices and departments



LEGEND

Community Services & Resources	Environmental Justice Criteria
● Affordable Childcare	■ Minority
● Mass Health	■ Income
● Affordable Housing	■ Minority + Income
● Supermarkets	■ Minority + English Isolation
● Food Resources	
● Community Resources	

A map generated to help prioritize potential resilience hub sites

Through an MVP Action Grant, Medford's Department of Public Health worked with the Office of Energy and Environment to investigate the suitability of a Resilience Hub for the city. According to the [USDN](#), "Resilience Hubs are community-serving facilities augmented to support residents, coordinate communication, distribute resources, and reduce carbon pollution while enhancing quality of life." According to Medford's case study on the first phase of the project, the goal for its Resilience Hub is to "intentionally build a more just and inclusive space for all of Medford's residents, with the ambition of opposing the structural inequities of society." The team envisions "enhanced multi-use spaces with a variety of programs that build relationships, promote community preparedness, and improve residents' health and well-being." The team approached this project by aiming to assess Medford's ability to withstand climate events from a public health perspective by 3 main tasks:

- Task 1 - Where? Identify priority service areas for a pilot Resilience Hub based on neighborhood resources, sensitivity to climate change, and adaptive capacity.
- Task 2 - What? A) Evaluate adaptability of vulnerable residents and gauge community provider's readiness to climate impacts. B) Listen to residents on resilience concerns to amplify the voices of those facing social inequities. Engage providers in discussions to understand resilient programming that would support their constituents.
- Task 3 - How? Explore areas within the identified service areas that may accommodate resilient programming. Share the requirements of a Resilience Hub site and recommendations to advance equitable community resilience.

The assessment revealed that residents were intrigued by Resilience Hubs but were skeptical of reliable community engagement and questioned for whom Hubs would truly serve. Similarly, local providers were interested in Resilience Hubs, but would like to further understand how a physical space would be attained and how a multi-use, co-located space would operate. Despite interest in Resilience Hubs, it was clear that next steps must first lay a foundation of trust between community and City Hall.

To that end, Medford was awarded a subsequent FY21 MVP Action Grant to pursue the following activities, as cited in their application:

1. Invest in community engagement by hiring a team of local organizers of color who are already well established within their Medford communities to engage and build relationships with the diverse residents of Medford and to spearhead a Climate Resilience Task Force involved in designing community-driven resilient programs and policies.
2. Further engage community-based organizations to develop a coalition of providers within the Climate Resilience Task Force to devise a process to enhance organizational partnerships and communication and to strategize a co-location system to co-host services in the manner of Resilience Hubs.
3. Involve City of Medford offices and departments in coordinating city-run social services and promoting equitable community resilience, which requires the commitment of Medford Public Schools and the Medford Police Department in anti-racist trainings and implementing anti-racist policies.

You can read more about the results of the first stage of the project and access the final report in six languages on the [project webpage](#) and the MVP Action Grant [project deliverables webpage](#).