**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Provider Technology Improvement Grant**

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# Application

1. **Q: What is the source of funding for the Provider Technology Improvement Grant Program?**

**A:** This grant draws on funding from Section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) which focuses on strengthening, enhancing, and expanding Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS).

1. **Q:** **What is the Provider Technology Improvement Grant Program?**

**A**: The goal of the Provider Technology Improvement Grant Program is to strengthen, enhance, and expand Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) by enabling providers and contractors to upgrade and modernize their existing IT hardware and software, as well as implement innovative technologies that will contribute to future sustainability. This grant program was developed to help HCBS providers advance and achieve their highest potential by removing barriers created by a lack of technology or outdated technology. Grant funds must be used to improve the delivery of HCBS services for MassHealth members, but non-members may also benefit.

1. Q: **Is there a maximum of funding I can request?**

A: Using Section 9817 ARPA funds, EOHHS plans to make $12,000,000 available. EOHHS will issue technology improvement grants in denominations of up to $500,000 each to qualified applicants selected by EOHHS. Recipients will have until March 30, 2025 to spend the funding.

1. Q: **How do I submit an application?**

A: As described in **Section 8.1** of the RFA, Applicants must complete and submit an Application Form through the online Grant Portal established by EOHHS (the “Grant Portal”). Applicants can access the Grant Portal at: [https://maanfgrants.force.com/s/loginpage](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/maanfgrants.force.com/s/loginpage__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!jn2XqqMUKPfeFZADQ4SrlmkUyLPr9bOaIyDNDfeZlZSnZxIHaAB3cpSKdKArwGabUBx1D2uxYaLvjEjDVxlbLdS6RRQg9dw$)

For additional details and step-by-step instructions, please see the MASS Grants Portal User Guide, posted on COMMBUYS as **Attachment D**.

1. Q: **What is the deadline to submit the grant application?**

A: Grant applications will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on September 22, 2023.

1. Q: **Will there be another opportunity to apply in the future?**

A: If all funds are not allocated, the RFA may be opened again for additional applicants. EOHHS expects all funds to be distributed once the bid is opened and does not anticipate further rounds of funding.

1. Q: **How will I know if my application was received?**

A: The persons designated as the primary and secondary points of contact should receive a confirmation email stating that your application was received. If you do not receive a confirmation email, please contact [MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com](mailto:MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com) or (866) 406-2170.

1. Q: **Does my organization have to be registered with** **Massachusetts Management Accounting & Reporting System (MMARS) before I can submit my application?**

A:Your organization can submit its application without being registered with MMARS, but your organization will need to have an *active* MMARS account to receive program funds. MMARS requires a SAM.gov ID (Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number).

1. Q: **How do I find my MMARS vendor code?**

A: Vendor codes begin with “VC” followed by 10 digits. Your vendor code is the same code that you use to login to [VendorWeb-Office of the Comptroller (state.ma.us)](https://massfinance.state.ma.us/VendorWeb/vendor.asp) If you do not know or are unable to remember your vendor code, please contact the Commonwealth agency you are currently doing business with and ask them for your VC (vendor code) number. The department will ask for your tax identification number (TIN) which was provided on the business’ W9 form or 1099 form.

1. Q: **Can my organization apply for more than one grant?**

A: No. You may submit an application for only one program. The program may span multiple sites.

1. Q: **Can my organization partner with another organization?**

A: Yes, your organization can partner with another organization. On the application, you will be asked to identify and describe any partnerships or working relationships with other organizations and to identify points of contact at the partner institution(s). The submitting organization will be the organization to receive all program funds and will be required to submit all required reporting information. Any partnerships will need to submit, as part of the application, a corresponding letter of intent signed by all parties of the respective leadership teams.

# Eligibility Requirements

1. Q: **Who is eligible to submit an application?**

A: An eligible applicant must be a Massachusetts organization with experience providing home and community-based services, or has experience serving individuals receiving HCBS.

Applicants can be community-based organizations, municipal government agencies, or organizations who collaborate with or are funded by any of the following state agencies to provide home and community-based services.

* Executive Office of Elder Affairs
* Department of Children and Families
* Department of Developmental Services
* Department of Mental Health
* Department of Public Health
* Department of Youth Services
* Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
* MassHealth
* Office of Race Equity and Inclusion
* Office for Refugees and Immigrants
* Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
* Department of Transition Assistance
* Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

If there are more qualified Applicants than available funds, Applicants that serve a high ratio of Medicaid-eligible individuals or Applicants that have not previously received ARPA grant funding will be prioritized.

1. Q: **What are the minimum qualification requirements?**

A: An eligible Applicant must be a Massachusetts organization with experience providing home and community-based services (HCBS) or has experience serving individuals receiving HCBS.

Applicants can be community-based organizations, municipal government agencies, or organizations who collaborate with or are funded by any of the following state agencies to provide home and community-based services:

* Executive Office of Elder Affairs
* Department of Children and Families
* Department of Developmental Services
* Department of Mental Health
* Department of Public Health
* Department of Youth Services
* Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
* MassHealth
* Office of Race Equity and Inclusion
* Office for Refugees and Immigrants
* Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
* Department of Transition Assistance
* Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

1. Q: **What can be defined as Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)?**

A: HCBS can be defined as medical and non-medical services and supports that provide opportunities for individuals to receive services in their own home or community rather than institutions or other isolated settings.

1. **Q: Is an agency that works with people who are experiencing homelessness and do not have a consistent “home” considered an HCBS provider for the purpose of this grant?**

A: Those agencies that provide services to people experiencing homelessness as well as people who are formerly homeless and are now housed would be considered an HCBS provider for the purpose of this grant.

If there are more qualified Applicants than available funds, Applicants that serve a high ratio of Medicaid-eligible individuals or Applicants that have not previously received ARPA grant funding will be prioritized.

1. **Q:** **What activities are grant eligible?**

A: All reimbursable efforts must support the provider’s ability to expand, enhance, or innovate home and community-based services at the organizational level.

The following is a list of eligible activities:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Description** | **Examples** | **Exclusions** |
| New or Enhanced Electronic Systems | Systems used to record and manage client care and/or bill for care provided. Can be an installed or cloud-based system. | - Electronic medical record system (EMR)  - Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS)  - Electronic Health Records (EHR)  - Emergency Notification Systems (ENS)  - Applications to enhance closed-loop referrals  - Enterprise-wide medication management system  - Enterprise-wide innovation enabling technology platforms to support individuals to be involved in the process across the healthcare continuum | License or subscription costs past the end of the grant program |
| Telehealth Systems | Systems used by providers to communicate with or monitor the health of clients | - Teladoc, Kareo, and other similar platforms | License or subscription costs past the end of the grant program |
| Applications or Subscriptions | Systems used by providers to enhance communication and accessibility | - Zoom  - Teleconference software  - Microsoft Office | License or subscription costs past the end of the grant program |
| Devices or Equipment | Electronic devices used by providers or clients to interact with electronic and telehealth systems | - Laptops  - Tablets  - Televisions  - Modems  - Hard drives | Devices or Equipment cannot be permanently given to Individuals served by HCBS organizations |
| Technical Support/  Assistance | Assistance with new digital software, hardware, or electronic systems | - Implementation consultants  - Training on new technologies | Hiring of new staff; training not directly related to technology improvements |
| Capital Expenditures | Funds for subcontractor to implement physical changes to an organization’s space to accommodate new or upgraded technology | - Installation of new servers  - Installation of new televisions  - Modifications to circuit breakers | Capital Expenditures not directly related to the implementation, accommodation or construction of technology improvements |

1. **Q:** **What activities are ineligible?**

A: As described in Section 4B of the RFA, grant funds cannot be used for:

* Ongoing costs of the grant program after it ends on March 30, 20254
* Loan repayment, retention bonuses, referral bonuses, or recruitment bonuses
* Temporary wage increases
* Audio books
* Internet, hot spot, or utility payments
* Capital expenses not related to technology improvement or implementation
* Any pet related technology fee or fees
* Robotic or electronic comfort pets
* Devices for the permanent use of individuals served by the provider’s organization
* Television streaming services

# Grant Priorities

1. Q: **Are any of the grant eligible activities prioritized?**

A: Grants that address the following areas will be prioritized:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Priority Areas** | **Examples** |
| Applicants who are providing services to people experiencing homelessness or who were formerly homeless | Need for Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) software upgrades and enhancements to be able to automatically upload data to the statewide HMIS data warehouse. |
| Applicants who have deferred maintenance of their technology needs due to barriers in purchasing or updating | Need for new computers and hard drives to run newer versions of software. |
| Technologies that support the improved service delivery of culturally, linguistically, or ethnically diverse and gender inclusive care | Smartphone or laptop to support front line worker’s ability to communicate with the organization and people served.  Support hybrid services like zoom, translation, interpretation, or ASL services. |
| Technologies that will elevate the organization’s ability to deliver higher quality services | Comprehensive documentation and information management system that creates efficiencies, streamlines processes, securely connects people, exchanges information, and integrates all aspects of service delivery. |

If there are more qualified Applicants than available funds, Applicants that serve a high ratio of Medicaid-eligible individuals or Applicant that have not previously received ARPA grant funding will be prioritized.

# Grant Award

1. Q: **How will I know if my grant program is chosen?**

A: Selected Applicants will be notified via email that their project has been chosen to be funded. The selected Applicant must complete, sign, and return any attached required forms and comply with any conditions for receipt of award included in the notice. Upon completion of all required forms and conditions, EOHHS and the selected Applicant will execute a grant agreement which, accompanied by the Commonwealth Standard Contract Form, will serve as a Contract between EOHHS and the selected Applicant. The Contract will specify the amount of funds that support the project, as well as any proposed and approved reasonable direct costs associated with the program(s) and activities.

1. Q: **How soon can I expect award funding to arrive?**

A: Provided you have approved spending and metrics plans, funds will be released after your organization completes all required documentation, including an executed Contract. ;

1. Q: **Will our organization receive all funding up front?**

A: Yes, your organization will receive all obligated funding for your project up front. All funds must be spent by March 30, 2025.

1. Q: **How will my organization receive funding from this grant?**

A: Your program must have established a vendor code registered through MMARS. Upon receipt of all required documentation, including the signed and completed grant agreement, funds will be electronically transferred into the provided account.

By responding to this RFA, Applicants agree to participate in the Commonwealth Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) program for receiving payments, unless the Applicant can provide compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. EFT is a benefit to both Awardees and the Commonwealth because it ensures fast, safe, and reliable payment directly to Awardees and saves both parties the cost of processing checks. Awardees can track and verify payments made electronically through the Comptroller’s VendorWeb application. Additional information about EFT and VendorWeb is available on the [VendorWeb](https://massfinance.state.ma.us/VendorWeb/vendor.asp) site. Any successful Applicant must enroll in EFT.

# Reporting

1. Q: **What are the reporting requirements?**

A: Grantees will be required to provide interim and final reports across an established set of metrics.

*Interim report:* An interim report covering the first six months of the funding period.

*Final report:* A final report will be required within 60 days of the end of the grant period.

1. Q: **How long does our organization have to retain program documents?**

A: Per the Commonwealth Terms and Conditions, grant recipients are required to retain program documents and records for six years from the date they submit the final expenditure report.

# Who to Contact?

1. Q: **Who should I contact if I need technical assistance with the Grant Portal?**

A: For technical assistance, please email: [MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com](mailto:MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com)

# **Additional Questions Received through August 11, 2023**

General Questions

1. Q: **Do beneficiaries of the grant need to be MassHealth Medicaid or Medicare members?**

A: Grant funds must be used to improve the delivery of HCBS services for MassHealth members, but non-members may also benefit.

1. Q: **Will partial awards be made?**

A: EOHHS may grant full or partial funding for a grant request.

1. Q: **Are grants are first come basis, or are all grants reviewed before awarding grants?**

A: This is a competitive grant process. All grants are reviewed at least twice following the deadline for grant submissions. You can learn more about the review process in **Section 9.1** of the RFA.

# Applicant Eligibility

1. **Q: Is my organization eligible to partake in the grant opportunity?**

A: An eligible Applicant must be a Massachusetts organization with experience providing home and community-based services (HCBS) or has experience serving individuals receiving HCBS.

Applicants can be community-based organizations, municipal government agencies, or organizations who collaborate with or are funded by any of the state agencies listed in **Section 3** of the RFA to provide home and community-based services.

If there are more qualified Applicants than available funds, Applicants that serve a high ratio of Medicaid-eligible individuals or Applicants that have not previously received ARPA grant funding will be prioritized.

1. **Q: Are institutional settings eligible to apply for the grant opportunity?**

A: No, awards under this grant are not available to institutional settings. An organization is eligible to partake in the grant opportunity if they provide HCBS services as defined in the RFA.

1. Q: **Can affiliates under one umbrella organization with its own EIN and providing different HCBS services apply for funding?**

A: If affiliate organizations have separate MMARS vendor codes, they can apply separately.

1. **Q: Can an individual be considered an organization to apply for the grant opportunity?**

A: Individuals are not considered organizations in the purview of this grant opportunity. Applicants can be community-based organizations, municipal government agencies, or organizations who collaborate with or are funded by any of the following state agencies to provide home and community-based services, as defined in **Section 3** of the RFA.

1. Q: **Is a program eligible to apply for a grant if it is funded by several state agencies administered by a 3rd Party?**

A: Yes, this is eligible, but the applicant must be a representative of the program, and not part of the third-party administrator. As such, funding will not go to the administrator, but to the contracting program.

1. Q: **Our agency receives funding from DPH, DYS, DTA, etc., but we do not bill through the office of Medicaid. Are we an eligible organization?**

A: Organizations that provide HCBS services as defined in the RFA are eligible to apply. HCBS services have different state funding streams including, but not limited to MassHealth.

# Eligible Expenses Questions

1. Q: **Will we be eligible to apply for iPad, computers and smart televisions for our residential group homes, adult day programs?**

A: Devices and equipment are eligible expenses if they are used by the provider organization as defined in **Section 4A** of the RFA. They are ineligible if they will be permanently given to individuals served by the organization.

1. Q: **Can funds be used for home modifications (technology) electric doors, touchless faucets in group homes?**

A: No. Devices for the permanent use of individuals served by the provider’s organization are not eligible.

1. Q: **Can funds be requested to purchase several kinds of eligible expenses?**

A: Yes. If your request includes more than one project, be sure the budget clearly identifies the costs for each.

1. Q: **Can funds be used for purchasing security and remote support cameras?**

A: Security enhancements would be considered capital expenses not related to technology improvement or implementation. Remote support cameras may be eligible if they are implemented organization wide to support telehealth and community programs. See **Section 4A** of the RFA for examples of eligible expenses.

1. Q: **Would ongoing cost of cell phone subscriptions be allowed during the grant period along with the initial purchase of hardware?**

A: Eligible expenses include the initial purchase of the hardware and the subscription costs through the grant period. See **Section 4A** of the RFA for examples of eligible expenses.

1. Q: **Is telehealth/remote support software and equipment eligible under Provider Tech Grant?**

A: Yes. See **Section 4A** of the RFA for examples of eligible expenses.

1. Q: **Would the cost of expanding licenses of an existing EMR system be eligible?**

A: Yes. See **Section 4A** of the RFA for examples of eligible expenses.

1. Q: **Is Project Management Software eligible?**

A: Yes, if it can be shown that this software will support the provider’s ability to expand, enhance, or strengthen Medicaid HCBS at the organizational level. See **Section 4A** of the RFA for examples of eligible expenses.

1. Q: **Is Consulting to assist in the selection of new technology allowed?**

A: Yes, if it can be shown that consulting support for a new technology will support the provider’s ability to expand, enhance, or strengthen Medicaid HCBS at the organizational level. See **Section 4A** of the RFA for examples of eligible expenses.

1. Q: **Is wireless implementation an allowable cost?**

A: No, Internet, hot spot and utility payments are ineligible expenses.

1. Q: **Can funds can be used to develop a new software vs off the shelf/pre-built software?**

A: Funds can be used for either custom built, configured, or off the shelf software. See **Section 4A** of the RFA for examples of eligible expenses.

1. Q: **Does training for the current EMR system qualify for this grant?**

A: Yes, this would meet the grant objective to improve interaction with members through enhanced communication and information sharing between providers, patients, and state and local agencies.

1. **Q: Can the funds be used to cover the cost of current and ongoing subscriptions to services like Zoom, staff training programs, and EMR programs, or do the funds only cover NEW subscriptions?**

A: The funds can only be used to cover new subscriptions and services. Per the RFA, expenses that occurred before the contract start date or after the contract end date will not be reimbursed.

# Budget Questions

1. Q: **Can this grant cover the cost of already planned work during the contract period?**

**A:** these funds cannot be used to supplant existing work.

For entities that have unfunded planned projects, these funds can be used to the extent that the planned project has not begun and meets the eligibility criteria of the RFR.

Expenses that occurred before the contract start date or after the contract end date will not be reimbursed. Awardees must expend funds by no later than March 30, 2025, unless otherwise directed by EOHHS. EOHHS may extend the date by which funds may be expended, in its discretion, by providing notice to the Awardees and without requiring an amendment to the Contract.

1. Q: **Please confirm that organizations can apply a 10% Indirect Cost rate.**

A: Yes, indirect costs are eligible expenses as defined in **Section 2** of the RFA. They must be listed separately in the budget form.

1. Q: **Can you clarify the details that should be included in the budget narrative. Will you be releasing a budget template?**

A: The budget template is part of the application. Please see the MassGRANTS Application Screenshot listed in COMMBuys for more information.

1. Q: **Is the list of priority areas listed in Section 5.3 the full list of Qualifying Programs referring to Section 3A?**

A: No. The list of priority areas in **Section 5.3** lists the projects that will be given preference and is not a complete list of qualifying projects.

1. Q: **For budgeting purposes, should we assume the timeframe for calculating allowable costs for systems licenses should be December 1, 2023-March 30, 2025?**

A: Yes.

1. Q: **If an organization is already in the process of upgrading its electronic health records system, can funds be used for license and/or subscription costs during the grant period?**

A: No. This would be considered an ongoing project, and funds cannot be used to supplant any existing Medicaid HCBS of state-funded initiatives.

1. Q: **Is staff time and training covered (Indirect Cost)?**

A: Staff time dedicated to training and implementation would be considered a direct cost. However, funds cannot be used to supplant existing HCBS or state-funded initiatives.

1. Q: **What is allowed for Indirect Cost?**

A: Indirect Costs may include the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, and general administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting.

# Application Questions

1. Q: **Should we apply only through MassGRANTS? Does any information need to be submitted through COMMBUYS?**

**A:** The full application process is managed through MassGrants. No information needs to be submitted through COMMBuys.

1. Q: **HR does not ask primary language - how should we answer the demographic questions?**

A: To answer this question, you could distribute an anonymous survey to staff. If you cannot provide an estimate, please enter "0".

1. Q: **Are there character/word limit in the Project Description section?**

A: Yes. There is a limit of 7,500 characters.

1. Q: **Can you please provide me with the link where applications are submitted?**

A: Applicants can access the Grant Portal at: [[https://maanfgrants.force.com/s/loginpage](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/maanfgrants.force.com/s/loginpage__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!jn2XqqMUKPfeFZADQ4SrlmkUyLPr9bOaIyDNDfeZlZSnZxIHaAB3cpSKdKArwGabUBx1D2uxYaLvjEjDVxlbLdS6RRQg9dw$)](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/maanfgrants.force.com/s/loginpage__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!jn2XqqMUKPfeFZADQ4SrlmkUyLPr9bOaIyDNDfeZlZSnZxIHaAB3cpSKdKArwGabUBx1D2uxYaLvjEjDVxlbLdS6RRQg9dw$)

1. **Q: Are there page or character limits for the application?**

A: Different parts of the application have different character limits. For example:

Numeric fields are 10

Short answers are 200

Large text fields are 7500 characters

There are no limits on pages

1. **Q: Will the state accept late applications?**

A: No, however, the state has extended the bid opening date (application due date) from Sept. 8th to September 22nd.

1. **Q: My application will not save. What can I do?**

A: The application works best in a Google Chrome browser. You can also contact the grant support team, at [[MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com](mailto:MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com)](mailto:MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com)