



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2018 MASSWORKS INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

GENERAL

What is the MassWorks Infrastructure Program?

The MassWorks Infrastructure Program is a competitive grant program that provides a flexible source of capital funds to municipalities and other eligible public entities to support and accelerate job growth and economic development throughout the Commonwealth. MassWorks is authorized by MGL, Chapter 23A, Section 63 and administered by the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development (EOHED).

What is new with the 2018 MassWorks round?

In 2018, EOHED is introducing a more streamlined application form to assist all applicants in preparing the strongest possible proposal. **An updated grant guidelines booklet outlines all of the program requirements and application instructions.** While there are some new sections and inquiries, the majority of the questions are the same from previous years, just reorganized into more topical sections. Key changes include:

1. Expanded section on the public infrastructure project, by grouping together related questions and providing opportunity for applicants to more effectively demonstrate shovel-readiness.
2. Expanded Preparing for Success section where applicants can demonstrate strategies and planning tools that they have employed to attract private investment and development.
3. A new series of questions related to the applicability of MEPA review.

Who can apply for a MassWorks grant?

Any Massachusetts city, town, or public entity, directly or through another public agency, may submit an application to MassWorks requesting a grant. Two or more municipalities may apply jointly, with one municipality or another public entity acting as fiscal agent. MassWorks grants can be in addition to other forms of secured local, state, and federal assistance that the applicant will receive.

What can MassWorks funds be used for?

The MassWorks Program provides capital grant funds to eligible communities to pay for improvements to and/or construction of public infrastructure that helps spur economic and housing development and/or address roadway safety concerns. Eligible projects must be located on public land or on public leasehold, right-of-way or easement. Funds can be used to pay for infrastructure work including, but not limited to, sewers, utility extensions, streets, roads, traffic signalization, curb-cuts, parking facilities, site preparation and improvements on publicly owned land, demolition, pedestrian walkways, and water treatment systems.

Is there a maximum grant amount that can be requested?

No. There is no set minimum or maximum amount that can be requested for a MassWorks grant, except in the case of small communities (pop. under 7,000) seeking funds for roadway safety projects. (*See rural community section below for more information.*) Applications under the economic development or housing categories are encouraged to submit a proposal for the full scope of a project (or full project phase) and provide clear justification for the amount requested. The grant amount requested should realistically align with the proposed project. While the program is not always able to award the full amount requested, if a project is determined to be strong and is recommended for funding, EOHEd will work with the municipality to prioritize the portion of the project that can be funded by MassWorks.

How will my application be evaluated?

Generally, EOHEd and external reviewers use various criteria to assess proposals. The main review includes: a) ensuring completeness of the application, b) confirming alignment with the Sustainable Development Principles, c) verifying feasibility of the proposed infrastructure work and rationality of the amount requested, d) confirming the extent to which the project unlocks major development and the amount of private investment leveraged, e) the amount of local funding for the project, if any; and, most significantly, f) determining whether or not the project is “shovel-ready” meaning prepared to begin in the upcoming construction season. Applications are scored and ranked based on these criteria. As outlined in the program guidelines, the strongest proposals are then measured against the state’s spending targets to ensure appropriate geographic distribution and consistency with the program’s goals.

What is the program looking for in terms of unlocking major development?

As outlined in the guidelines, the MassWorks Program provides capital funds to eligible communities for the improvements to and/or construction of public infrastructure that helps spur economic activity. The program is highly competitive; each year receiving a large number of great application, but having a limited pool of funding available to distribute. The highest rankings will be given to proposed projects that are likely to lead to private investment, economic growth and/or revitalization of an economically distressed area.

Who will review and approve the applications?

All applications are reviewed by the MassWorks team at EOHEd in consultation with various state agency partners, including representatives from the Executive Office of Administration and Finance (ANF), Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and the Department of Transportation (MassDOT). In addition, EOHEd solicits feedback from MassDOT Regional Directors, Regional Planning Agencies, and the Smart Growth Alliance. All feedback and review notes are gathered and evaluated to determine and rank the strongest applications. MassWorks staff presents the strongest proposals to the EOHEd Secretary for further review and approval. Final decision are confirmed by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

Do I need an account to submit an application through the online system?

Yes. All applications to the MassWorks Program must be submitted electronically through the online portal, *Intelligent*. To access the system, users must have a login and password. If you have submitted an application during a previous MassWorks round, your login credentials remain the same and are saved in the system. If you are a new user, you will be required to set up an account. See Appendix 3 in the Grant Guidelines document for assistance with accessing the online application system. A link to the online portal is available at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massworks>.

PROJECT AND BUDGET QUESTIONS

If my project was not funded in a previous MassWorks round, and I want to submit the same project again, will I need to reapply to be considered in the 2018 MassWorks round?

Yes. If you wish to resubmit a previously unfunded project for consideration in the 2018 funding round, you are required to start a brand new application. The information from the previous application is saved in the system. Therefore, you should be able to copy information from the old application in the system and put it into the new application.

Can I apply for more than one project during a round?

Yes. Eligible applicants may submit funding requests for more than one project in the same round. However, a separate application is required for each project. Each proposal will be evaluated independently against the criteria.

Are there new MEPA rules affecting the program this year?

No. The updated section in the application on MEPA applicability does not indicate any new rules. It seeks to outline more clearly the existing guidelines and expectations related to MEPA. The goal is to identify, during the application evaluation, if the project might need MEPA review and, if so, how that review affects the project schedule. The fact that a project may be subject to MEPA review will not disqualify an application. For projects that are strong and likely to be recommended, the intention is, if needed, to have the MEPA office begin its review earlier to ensure that the project is able to start construction on time.

Do I need to get a MEPA review completed before I can apply to MassWorks?

No. A completed MEPA review is not required to apply to MassWorks. However, the awarding of MassWorks funding is a form of state action that creates jurisdiction under the MEPA regulations, and requires a further analysis of projected environmental impacts. If those impacts exceed certain thresholds, MEPA review is required before EOHEd can disburse MassWorks funds. Therefore, all projects that are selected for MassWorks awards are expected to follow and comply with any applicable MEPA rules and/or requirements.

Is a local or private match required?

No. However, applications that include funding support from other government or private sources (particularly local funds), will be more competitive.

Are pre-construction costs, such as design and engineering, eligible grant expenses?

Yes. However, no more than 10% of the total grant requested can be used for pre-construction costs. EOHEd expects communities to have plans for covering the cost of pre-construction activities, such as surveying, permitting, and design/engineering, as these items would need to start prior to MassWorks contracting, for projects to be able to advance to construction in the upcoming construction season. The only exception to the 10% cap is for communities applying for a roadway safety in small towns grant. Communities with a population of 7,000 or less seeking funding for transportation improvements to enhance safety are eligible to include all pre-construction along with construction costs in their request. Nevertheless, these projects are also expected to complete design/engineering in time to advance to construction in the upcoming season.

Do I need to submit project designs with my application?

No. In most cases design specifications will not be required. However, for road improvement projects that impacts a state-owned roadway, specifications may be required to evaluate the project and may be requested during the review period. Any project which impacts a state owned roadway should consult with the MassDOT District Office about the project prior to submitting a MassWorks application.

What is the Commonwealth's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program?

In 2016, Governor Charlie Baker signed Executive Order 569, instructing state government to provide assistance to cities and towns to complete climate change vulnerability assessments and resiliency planning. Massworks does not generally provide funding for resiliency planning or infrastructure. However, MVP provides support for Massachusetts cities and towns to plan for completing vulnerability assessments and developing action-oriented resiliency plans. For information on the MVP Program, please visit: <https://www.mass.gov/municipal-vulnerability-preparedness-program>

Can I apply for a dredging project through the 2018 MassWorks competitive grant round?

No. Grants for dredging projects will be available through a separate RFP process later this year. EOHEd will be soliciting applications for capital grants to support saltwater dredging of public waterways. Program information and guidelines will be available on EOHEd's website.

GRANTS FOR SMALL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Who is eligible for funding under the roadway safety improvements category?

Communities with a population of under 7,000 are eligible to apply under the category for roadway safety in small towns, formally known as the STRAP program. Grant funding in this category does not exceed \$1 million per award. If awarded, towns are eligible to receive 1 grant every three fiscal years.

Can a joint application be submitted under the roadway safety category?

Yes. Two or more eligible communities may submit a joint application and are eligible for up to \$1 million per community. If awarded, one municipality will serve as the fiscal agent/grant administrator and will be responsible for overseeing the distributions of funds. Any required inter-municipal agreements should be in place prior to submitting an application.

Can rural communities apply in the housing and economic development categories?

Yes. The housing and economic development categories are open to any eligible public entity. Rural communities that have housing or mixed-use projects can submit application(s) that support those projects by completing all of the economic development sections. These applications are evaluated and are competing with all other general proposals. (Applications submitted by rural communities in the economic development round are not subject to a grant maximum or three year award restriction.)

Are rural communities allowed to submit more than one application?

Communities submitting an application for roadway safety improvements may also submit additional applications so long as those are under the economic development and/or housing categories.

AWARD NOTIFICATIONS

How will I be notified if my community is awarded a MassWorks grant?

Applicants that are approved for MassWorks funding will be notified in writing. The applicant will receive a Letter of Intent (LOI) outlining the award amount and any specific conditions and/or instructions for confirming shovel-readiness of the project. Awardees will be contacted by MassWorks staff to coordinate next steps toward contracting once all award announcements are made.

Occasionally, there are strong applications that do not receive an award because the program does not have sufficient funds available at the time. In those cases, the applicant may receive a letter informing them that the proposal may be reconsidered later in the fiscal year if/when funds become available, before the next round.

How will I be notified if my community is denied a MassWorks grant?

Applicants that are not recommended for MassWorks funding in this round, will also be notified in writing. These letters are usually sent after all award announcements have been made in late fall. After the round closes, MassWorks Infrastructure Program staff will be available to discuss individual proposal decisions upon request.

Additional questions may be submitted to massworks@mass.gov.