



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2020 URBAN AGENDA GRANT PROGRAM

Posted: 10/21/2019

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

ELIGIBILITY

Q: Can a previous or current Urban Agenda grantee apply in this round?

A: Yes, any of the 53 eligible communities may apply to this 2020 opportunity, regardless of whether or not they received an award in a previous round.

Q: Is my type of organization eligible to be the lead applicant?

A: While we are not able to provide a specific verification for every type of organization (CDCs, REDOs, EDICs, Chambers of Commerce, health centers, etc.), we believe that we have the ability to fund any duly-established charitable, public, and/or non-profit organization. Ineligible entities would include for-profit groups, private businesses, or any other type that might otherwise be prohibited by law to receive state grant funds. The eligibility issue really only applies to the lead applicant, which would be the direct recipient of the grant. Different types of organizations in each community may carry out components of a project through subcontract arrangements, and their eligibility should be determined and agreed upon at the local level based on any applicable rules/regulations.

The choice of who should be the lead applicant (municipality or community organization) is also to be decided locally. The lead applicant must be able to execute a contract with the Commonwealth, which municipalities are already eligible to do. A community agency applying as lead, would ideally also be confirmed as a state vendor. However that is not required at the time of application. If awarded, new entities would just need to complete additional paperwork to be set up as a vendor, at the time of contracting.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of application my community can submit?

A: Yes, the Urban Agenda program will only accept one application from each eligible community, except in the case of large cities, as outlined in the RFP. Please note the following guidance:

Eligible Municipalities with a population under 150,000 may submit only one application for a project(s) located within the municipality (project can be in a particular area or community-wide).

Eligible Municipalities with population of 150K or more (*based on 2010 US Census*), may either:

- a. Submit one application for a project that is city-wide in scope,
- or
- b. Submit multiple applications – but no more than one per clearly-defined neighborhood.

Please note that every application will be evaluated individually and will be competing with all other applicants, including any from the same city.

NOTE: *In the event that more than the allowable number of official applications are submitted from an eligible municipality, all applications from that municipality (or neighborhood) shall be deemed disqualified.*

Q: Would an organization with offices in several eligible cities be able to be the lead on multiple applications from different cities or is the restriction that the organization can only submit one application as a whole?

A: The requirement is that each eligible community/neighborhood submit one application. It would be allowable for the same organization to be selected by multiple community coalitions to serve as their community's lead applicant. However, each application will be considered individually, and be evaluated in direct competition with all other applications, even if the lead applicant is the same. Also, if awarded multiple grants, a lead applicant will be expected to manage each contract separately.

Q: Can my organization submit an application that proposes to implement a project in multiple cities or neighborhoods?

A: No. The program is accepting applications from the community, not from individual organizations, per se. The Urban Agenda is focused on building the capacity of local coalitions or groups to carry out a project together, regardless of who they select as their fiscal agent. It is meant to support and/or expand the reach and impact of the community partnership, not just of a single organization. The lead applicant is expected to demonstrate their role and/or history with the local collaborative work.

PROGRAMMATIC / BUDGET

Q: If our community's project does not directly address the recommendations of the Black Advisory Commission or the Latino Advisory Commission, is it still eligible to apply?

A: Yes. The main focus of the program is to support the work of local collaborations that are addressing locally defined economic development opportunities, and EOHED considers any efforts to build local capacity in urban centers as having a positive effect on all of its diverse residents, even if indirect. However, given the specific guidance in the BAC/LAC recommendations, and their direct relevance to addressing challenges in mostly urban centers, applications that are responding to those recommendations will be more competitive.

Q: We have identified a workforce development/training opportunity for jobs in a sector that is not a "priority" in the regional blueprint, but is listed as "critical to our region". Also, the project would target Latino residents but the sector does not typically require credential attainment, which is a priority in both the BAC and LAC reports. Given these issues, would our proposal be competitive?

A: The Urban Agenda program is seeking creative project proposals that address specific opportunities that are identified collectively by the community. While we do expect that any workforce training program be aligned with the respective regional blueprint as well as with BAC/LAC recommendations, if applicable, what is most important is for the reviewers to understand the context and justification for your community's proposed project, even if it does not align. However, to be sure, projects that do have that alignment will definitely score better. In all cases, we expect coordination with the MassHire and/or regional teams.

Q: If we already has an existing coalition, such as a Working Cities partnership, will the application be given more weight and is it more likely to be successful in getting a grant?

A: Generally, yes. However, this will be based on the strength of the application narrative and not simply on a particular designation that the community might have. The application has several questions related to the work of the coalition, its history, and past successes. The "Economic Opportunity – Project Plan" section of the application, in particular, gives the applicant the chance to highlight the previous work that led to the proposed project. We certainly expect that communities with well-established partnerships will score best, given their history, as long as that history and relevance to the current project is clearly articulated.

Q: For large cities that are submitting multiple neighborhood applications, is the maximum request amount a cap for the whole city or for each neighborhood?

A: The cap on the grant request amount applies to each application, regardless of whether the application is city-wide or from a neighborhood. Each application may request a grant of up to \$200,000.

Q: Are these funds intended for direct services?

A: Generally, no. As outlined above, the funds are intended to support the community coalition and its work. Funds can be used for direct and/or indirect expenses, as long as they are clearly related to the project.

Q: Will EOHED consider making partial awards?

A: Yes. All applications will first be reviewed, scored, and ranked based on the program proposal. Staff will then review the project budget and request amount in relation to the project. Top ranked applicants may be contacted to discuss their budget proposal and possible adjustments, as deemed necessary. EOHED will then make final award decisions, including partial award recommendations, based on the available funds.

Q: If there are partnerships in place, where organizations are already willing to contribute their own ongoing support and in-kind expenses, can the grant be used towards other specific project concepts, such as one-off activities, events, small business incentives, etc.?

A: Generally, yes. These grant funds are meant to be flexible in supporting the proposed community project, and the proposed budget should outline how the funding can best support those efforts. Funds may be used for direct costs of the coalition (such as personnel, stipends, meeting expenses, etc.), direct costs of services (instructors, training materials, land-use analysis, etc.), and consultant costs (accountant for small business or entrepreneurship coaching, feasibility studies, etc.). On the budget page, applicants should outline the amount requested in each spending category and use the space provided to provide information about any one-time or unique expenses. If the project is awarded, the applicant will have the opportunity to revise and/or update the budget, and EOHED will need to approve the final version before contracting.

GENERAL

Q: I missed the bidder's conference call. Are there notes from the call or a transcript?

A: Yes, a link to the audio recording of the conference call is available on the EOHED webpage.

Q: How will I be notified about the decision made on my application?

A: Applicants that are approved for Urban Agenda funding will be notified in writing. Awardees may be contacted to attend an announcement event. EOHED staff will follow up about contracting. Applicants that are not recommended will also be notified in writing. After the round closes, upon request, EOHED staff will be available to debrief and discuss individual proposal decisions.

Due Date: Friday, November 8, 2019 – 5:00 p.m.

Questions: ehedgrants@mass.gov