

Commonwealth Places

COVID-19 Response: Resurgent Places

Request for Proposals

Massachusetts Development Finance Agency

Real Estate Division

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For more information please contact:

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Program Description

MassDevelopment's "Commonwealth Places" is a competitive opportunity to advance locally driven placemaking in downtown and neighborhood commercial districts in eligible communities (see Attachment A) throughout Massachusetts. Placemaking is a collaborative process through which people in communities work together to improve public spaces and maximize their shared value. The process facilitates creative patterns of use, and leverages the local physical, cultural, and social assets that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

The aim of **Commonwealth Places COVID-19 Response: Resurgent Places** is to help community partners prepare public spaces and commercial districts to best serve their population during COVID-19 social distancing and the phased reopening of the economy.

MassDevelopment will award up to \$390,000 of Agency funds prior to June 30, 2021. Applications to the Commonwealth Places program will be considered on a rolling basis. Pending available budget, MassDevelopment anticipates releasing additional Commonwealth Places funding after July 1, 2021.

Commonwealth Places COVID-19 Response Round: Resurgent Places complements the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) [Shared Streets & Spaces](#), a grant program that will provide grants as small as \$5,000 and as large as \$300,000 for municipalities to quickly launch or expand improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce in their communities.

Please note: municipalities should apply for MassDOT funding through "Shared Streets and Spaces." Nonprofits and community groups are not eligible to apply for "Shared Streets and Spaces" and should apply for MassDevelopment funding through "Resurgent Places."

Funding Categories

Awards will be made in two funding categories: "Implementation Grants" and "Seed Grants."

Category 1: Seed Grants

Great placemaking is a community-driven process. Seed grants should be used to fund inclusive community engagement, visioning, and local capacity building that will support future placemaking efforts. MassDevelopment will award individual grants of between approximately \$250 - \$7,500 to projects within this funding category.

Category 2: Implementation Grants

MassDevelopment will award individual grants of up to \$50,000 for the implementation of locally led placemaking projects. Up to \$10,000 per project may be awarded as an unmatched grant. Any amount of grant funding over and above that \$10,000 (not to exceed \$50,000) must be matched on a 1:1 basis with crowdfunding.

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Example Category 2 Awards:

- Project Team X is seeking \$7,500 in Commonwealth Places grant funding. If their application is approved, no match is required.
- Project Team Y is seeking \$25,000 in Commonwealth Places grant funding. If their application is approved, they will receive \$10,000 in unmatched funds and be required to crowdfund \$15,000 in order to receive \$15,000 in dollar-for-dollar matching funds.

Please see **Crowdfunding Requirements** on page 6 of this document for more information.

Funding Round Timeline

December 21, 2020	Request for Proposals Released
January 12, 2021	Informational Webinar
January 12, 2021	Expressions of Interest and Applications Reviewed on a Rolling Basis Grant Awards made on a rolling basis
June 30, 2021	Deadline for Completion of Crowdfunding in order to receive FY21 funds

Applications to the Commonwealth Places program will be considered on a rolling basis. Pending available budget, MassDevelopment anticipates releasing additional Commonwealth Places funding after July 1, 2021.

Please see **Grant Participation Process** on page 7 of this document for more information.

How to Get Started

Your first step in applying for Resurgent Places funding is to complete an Expression of Interest online: <https://www.cognitofrms.com/MassDevelopment/ResurgentPlacesFY21>. This form is the first part of a two-part application process. Projects that meet program requirements will be invited to submit a full application. Applicants may be contacted by program staff with requests to refine or clarify portions of their proposals in order to meet program intent and guidelines.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Nonprofits and community groups are eligible to apply. Grant funds for projects providing benefits to communities will be available to nonprofit organizations, as well as to for-profit organizations under appropriate circumstances.

Eligible locations

Projects must be sited within “eligible communities,” defined as municipalities with a Median Household Income (MHHI) equal to or below 120% of the statewide MHHI. Please see **Attachment A** for a list of eligible communities.

Strong preference will be given to projects sited within downtowns or commercial districts. In rural communities or other communities without a significant commercial corridor, the project must demonstrate a direct relationship to local economic development.

Projects may be located in either the public realm or on private commercial property. Projects located on private property must demonstrate a clear public economic benefit.

Eligible project timelines

In order to be eligible for funding through this round, proposed timelines must include an implementation start date within ninety (90) days of grant disbursement by MassDevelopment to the fiscal agent. Implementation start is defined as beginning to spend grant funding. All funding and project implementation is subject to the Commonwealth’s *Reopening Massachusetts* framework as it is updated periodically, available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts>.

Eligible Uses of Funds

A detailed budget must be included in the application. Budgets should identify total project costs, the requested grant dollars, and any funding sources outside of the Commonwealth Places grant. Grant funding may be used to reimburse project spending that occurs after the project is approved by MassDevelopment.

Category 2: Implementation Project teams must allocate at least 25% of the total project budget (crowdfunding plus MassDevelopment funds) to capital costs such as material and construction. Up to 75% of the project budget may be allocated to non-capital costs such as marketing, design services, or operational support including managing safety and cleaning protocols and/or setting up and securing movable furniture. Administrative costs will be capped at 5% of the total project budget.

Types of Projects Allowed

Projects should be contextual to their city, town, and neighborhood, and should highlight unique aspects of the community and built environment. Projects must relate to local economic recovery efforts that enhance compliance with COVID-19-related public health standards and guidance. Community projects that provide benefits to the private sector must benefit two or more unaffiliated private businesses. Projects must demonstrate an ability to advance at least one of the following objectives providing benefits to their community:

- Support downtowns, main streets, and small businesses through the reopening of our economy
- Increase social cohesion, defined here as “the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community.”

Projects must comply with the Commonwealth’s *Reopening Massachusetts* framework. Communities with questions about the framework can contact the Executive Office of Housing and Economic

Development using an online form, available at: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/submit-questions-and-comments-about-reopening-massachusetts>

Category 1: Seed Grant Projects may include the following project elements:

- Placemaking workshop series facilitation paired with design services
- Facilitation training for community members who then lead local engagement efforts
- Compensation for community leaders' time during planning and engagement
- Participatory displays, in-person and remote engagement infrastructure and events, and educational activities around topics relevant to placemaking and local economic development
- Activities that remove barriers to participation within the placemaking process

Projects awarded seed grants must produce one or more of the following deliverables: a placemaking project proposal; a strategy for community engagement and action around the topic of placemaking, activation and public space improvements; a proposal for the sustainable management and funding of local placemaking efforts; or another document that represents a specific milestone in community engagement as approved by MassDevelopment within the application process.

Category 2: Implementation Grant Project may include the following project elements:

- Creation of outdoor seating spaces including spaces intended to support outdoor dining (either centralized or outside of individual establishment).

Subject to local approval, these spaces may be created on sidewalks, lots adjacent to dining establishments, or as parklets constructed within parking spaces. Outdoor seating project elements may include tables and chairs, pop-up patios, tents, and—as needed—barriers to vehicular traffic.

- Queueing control: signage, floor markings, visual cues (planters, stanchions etc.) & the incorporation of public art (small murals, unique text, etc.)
- Creating smaller spaces within existing gathering spaces: physical barriers, partitions, or delineations intended to support social distancing within restaurants and bars and/or within existing public spaces.
- Sidewalk retail solutions: tents, booths for point of sale, display cases, etc.
- Tactical urbanism techniques to reclaim roadway or parts of roadways (effectively widening sidewalks) for pedestrian and/or bicycle traffic.
- Program/event related projects such as pop-up drive-in or socially distanced “walk-in” movie theatres.

Proposals may support a central project to be implemented by the lead applicant and/or may support a local “re-granting” program. Within a local re-granting program, the fiscal agent would award portions of the grant to local applicants (such as businesses and property owners) to support multiple implementation projects led by the recipients of the re-granting process. Re-granted awards may take the form of flexible implementation funds, subsidized support for design services (likely through an on-call consultant, architect, or engineer), or some combination of the two.

Please reach out to program manager Laura Christopher at lchristopher@massdevelopment.com to request more information about project eligibility or to see relevant project examples.

Evaluation Criteria

Successful applications must meet all of the eligibility requirements listed above. Applications for both funding categories will be competitive and priority will be given based on:

- Project's ability to catalyze economic development
- Project's ability to support social cohesion
- Ability to provide identifiable public health, safety, and economic development benefits (note: a letter of support from the relevant municipality will be required for all Category 2: Implementation Grants)
- Relevance to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts
- Implementation feasibility
- Demonstrated support from local stakeholders
- Ability to leverage additional funding and/or in-kind support
- Ability to improve outcomes for minority and ethnic populations, as well as minority- and women-owned businesses, and/or work toward building leadership pipelines among minority populations.

Competitive projects should focus on promoting an inclusive participation process, bringing new voices and perspectives into planning and economic development, and empowering diverse actors, especially: youth; Black, Indigenous, and people of color; LGBTQ populations; people with disabilities; and women.

Priority will be given to projects that address pervasive current and historical trauma caused by systemic racism, violence, isolation, poverty, and substance abuse.

Crowdfunding Requirements

Category 2: Implementation Grant Project teams requesting over \$10,000 in unmatched MassDevelopment funds will be required to crowdfund in order to unlock additional funds. Funding awards over \$10,000 will be made on a 1:1 matching basis—for each dollar raised, MassDevelopment will award one dollar for up to an additional \$15,000 in matching MassDevelopment funds (totaling up to \$25,000 in MassDevelopment funding).

Within the application, projects requesting over \$10,000 must specify their matching grant request and crowdfunding goal. Project teams may crowdfund on the platform of their choosing and will be required to submit documentation certifying that the crowdfunding has been completed.

In recognition of the difficult fundraising climate and of the need for available implementation funding this summer, the following crowdfunding requirements will apply.

- There are no restrictions on the amount of funding that can be contributed from an individual source towards the crowdfunding goal.

- To the degree that local fundraising conditions allow, teams are recommended to follow best practices, which include time-limited campaigns of between 30-60 days. However, teams will have through June 30, 2021 to raise all required local funding.
- As crowdfunding campaigns and implementation work progresses, project teams may request partial matching grant disbursement as frequently as once per month. For example:
 - Project Z applied for a \$25,000 grant to support outdoor dining in their community;
 - Project Z receives \$10,000 up front to begin implementation. At this time, Project Z also launches a crowdfunding campaign to raise \$15,000;
 - One month after launch of the campaign, \$5,000 has been raised. At this time, Project Z may request that \$5,000 of the \$15,000 matching grant be disbursed so that the project team can use that additional \$10,000 (match and crowdfunding) to support more outdoor dining improvements immediately; and
 - Sometime after the campaign is launched, the full \$15,000 is crowdfunded. The remaining \$10,000 of matching grant funding is disbursed.

Grant Terms and Conditions

- All projects must begin implementation within ninety (90) days of receiving the grant funds. Project implementation must be complete within twelve (12) months of receipt of final grant disbursement.
- Project fiscal agents/applicants must execute a form of agreement provided by MassDevelopment in order to receive grant funds.
- Project applicants will be required to provide data about the project at key project milestones to be detailed within project specific grant agreements and as requested by MassDevelopment.

Grant Participation Process

- **STEP 1 - Tell Us About Your Project**
Applicants will complete a one-page expression of interest sharing their general intention, the site of any location-based projects, and the intended economic and social impacts of the project.
- **STEP 2 - Initial Feedback**
MassDevelopment's staff will perform an initial screening of the project and profile to determine program eligibility and fit. Staff may request that applicants refine or clarify portions of their proposals in order to meet program intent and guidelines.
- **STEP 3 - Submit Full Application**
At this stage, applicants will be required to complete an online application that will ask them to describe the project, provide a detailed budget, identify a fiscal sponsor to receive the funds, demonstrate community participation, and provide a letter of support from the municipality.

- **STEP 4 - Award Decision**

Projects will be reviewed by MassDevelopment staff based on the evaluation criteria noted in this document. Some projects may be approved with a smaller amount of funding than requested. MassDevelopment staff may contact the applicant for more information.

- **STEP 4 - Grant Disbursement, unmatched funds**

If the project is selected to receive a grant, MassDevelopment will provide 100% of the approved unmatched project funds up front to the fiscal agent. Up to \$10,000 per project may be awarded as an unmatched grant. If applicable, funds over and above \$10,000 will be awarded as matching grants (see step 7).

- **STEP 5 - Implementation [must begin within 90 days after receipt of funds]**

Project implementation must begin within ninety (90) days after initial funds are received and complete within twelve (12) months after receipt of final grant disbursement.

- **STEP 6 - Crowdfunding—if applicable [must be complete by June 30, 2021]**

If the project applies for an amount greater than \$10,000, in order to unlock MassDevelopment matching funds, the team must crowd fund to reach or exceed their approved crowdfunding goal.

Project teams may crowd fund on the platform of their choosing and will be required to submit documentation certifying that the crowdfunding has been completed.

- **STEP 7 - Project Close Out**

At this time, project teams will be asked to share photographs, testimonials from at least three (3) participating community members, and a summary of completed activities supported by the grant.

- **STEP 8 - Grant Disbursement, matching funds—if applicable**

As crowdfunding campaigns and implementation work progresses, project teams may request partial matching grant disbursement as frequently as once per month.

- **STEP 9- Learning and sharing lessons learned**

Projects will be required to provide initial data and ongoing metrics as detailed within the project grant agreements. Project teams may be asked to present to and advise other communities working to implement similar projects.

Attachment A

Eligible Communities

Eligible Communities

Funding of up to \$50,000 is available to projects located in Massachusetts communities where the median household income is equal to or less than 120% of the state median household income.

- | | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| - Abington | - Belcher | - Chelsea | - Dracut | - Gardner |
| - Acushnet | - Bernardston | - Cheshire | - Dudley | - Gill |
| - Adams | - Beverly | - Chester | - East
Bridgewater | - Gloucester |
| - Agawam | - Blackstone | - Chesterfield | - East Brookfield | - Goshen |
| - Amesbury | - Blandford | - Chicopee | - East
Longmeadow | - Gosnold |
| - Amherst | - Boston | - Chilmark | - Eastham | - Granby |
| - Aquinnah | - Bourne | - Clarksburg | - Easthampton | - Granville |
| - Ashburnham | - Braintree | - Clinton | - Edgartown | - Great
Barrington |
| - Ashby | - Brewster | - Colrain | - Egremont | - Greenfield |
| - Ashfield | - Bridgewater | - Conway | - Erving | - Hadley |
| - Athol | - Brimfield | - Cummington | - Everett | - Halifax |
| - Attleboro | - Brockton | - Dalton | - Fairhaven | - Hampden |
| - Auburn | - Brookfield | - Danvers | - Fall River | - Hancock |
| - Avon | - Buckland | - Dartmouth | - Falmouth | - Hardwick |
| - Ayer | - Cambridge | - Dedham | - Fitchburg | - Harwich |
| - Barnstable | - Carver | - Deerfield | - Florida | - Hatfield |
| - Barre | - Charlemont | - Dennis | - Framingham | - Haverhill |
| - Becket | - Chatham | - Douglas | | - Hawley |

**Commonwealth Places COVID-19 Response Round: Resurgent Places
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- Heath
- Hinsdale
- Holbrook
- Holland
- Holyoke
- Hubbardston
- Hudson
- Hull
- Huntington
- Ipswich
- Kingston
- Lanesborough
- Lawrence
- Lee
- Leicester
- Lenox
- Leominster
- Leverett
- Leyden
- Lowell
- Ludlow
- Lunenburg
- Lynn
- Malden
- Marion
- Marlborough
- Marshfield
- Mashpee
- Mattapoisett
- Maynard
- Medford
- Melrose
- Merrimac
- Methuen
- Middleborough
- Middlefield
- Milford
- Millbury
- Monroe
- Monson
- Montague
- Monterey
- Montgomery
- Mount Washington
- Nahant
- Nantucket
- New Ashford
- New Bedford
- New Braintree
- New Marlborough
- New Salem
- Newburyport
- North Adams
- North Attleborough
- North Brookfield
- Northampton
- Northbridge
- Northfield
- Norwood
- Oak Bluffs
- Oakham
- Orange
- Orleans
- Otis
- Oxford
- Palmer
- Peabody
- Pepperell
- Peru
- Petersham
- Phillipston
- Pittsfield
- Plainfield
- Plymouth
- Plympton
- Provincetown
- Quincy
- Randolph
- Raynham
- Revere
- Rockland
- Rockport
- Rowe
- Rowley
- Royalston
- Russell
- Salem
- Salisbury
- Sandisfield
- Sandwich
- Saugus
- Savoy
- Seekonk
- Sheffield
- Shelburne
- Shirley
- Shutesbury
- Somerset
- Somerville
- South Hadley
- Southbridge
- Southwick
- Spencer
- Springfield
- Stockbridge
- Stoneham
- Stoughton
- Sturbridge
- Sunderland
- Swansea
- Taunton
- Templeton
- Tisbury
- Tolland
- Townsend
- Truro
- Tyringham
- Uxbridge
- Wales
- Waltham
- Ware
- Wareham
- Warren
- Warwick
- Washington
- Webster
- Wellfleet
- Wendell
- West Boylston
- West Bridgewater
- West Brookfield
- West Springfield
- West Stockbridge
- West Tisbury
- Westfield
- Westhampton
- Westport
- Weymouth
- Whately
- Whitman
- Williamsburg
- Williamstown
- Winchendon
- Windsor

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- Winthrop

- Woburn

- Worcester

- Worthington

- Yarmouth