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EMPOWERING CITIES AND TOWNS: THE BAKER-POLITO APPROACH TO LOCAL COLLABORATION AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

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Author Bio

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About the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston

The [Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston](#) at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government strives to improve the region's governance by attracting young people to serve the region, working with scholars to produce new ideas about important issues, and stimulating informed discussions that bring together scholars, policymakers, and civic leaders. The Rappaport Institute was founded and funded by the Phyllis and Jerome Lyle Rappaport Foundation, which promotes emerging leaders in Greater Boston.

About the Taubman Center for State and Local Government

The [Taubman Center for State and Local Government](#) and its affiliated institutes are the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's focal points for activities that address state and local governance. The Center's mission is to develop the next generation of state and local government leaders, generate big ideas and solutions to state and local government challenges, and help state and local government implement and scale solutions. The Taubman Center focuses on urban policy issues such as economic development, transportation, education, public infrastructure, land use, social services, public sector technology and data utilization, procurement, and performance management.

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Executive Summary

Cities and towns are at the frontline of delivering services that impact residents' lives every day – but to deliver such services successfully, local leaders must often navigate complex funding opportunities, rules, and regulations set by the state. Having served as local selectmen, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito understood firsthand how critical – and challenging – the state-local relationship can be and promised to make the state's partnership with cities and towns a top priority of their administration. As one of his first acts in office, Governor Baker named the Lieutenant Governor as champion for municipal issues across state government, thereby kicking off an innovative approach to strengthening and empowering the state's 351 cities and towns. By the end of two terms, the Baker-Polito administration's new approach both improved localities' abilities to deliver for their residents and built strong relationships and trust that enabled rapid state-local collaboration in response to crises such as COVID-19.

Whether local government is organized at the municipal level, like in Massachusetts, or the county level, as in many other states, finding ways to maximize the benefits of local service delivery and governance is a key function of state policy toward local governments. This policy brief explores four core components of the Baker-Polito approach to strengthening state-local partnership and improving local government's ability to deliver for residents:

- **Relentlessly Demonstrating Top-Down Support (page 9):** The administration took early steps to signal and operationalize its commitment to working with localities, including naming the Lieutenant Governor as the senior administration official responsible for "championing" municipal interests across state government, creating a Community Compact Cabinet that focused members of the Governor's Cabinet on local issues to enable a "whole of government" approach to supporting localities, and strengthening an existing department responsible for assisting local officials.

- **Hearing What Localities Need and Following Through on Feedback (page 11)**: Next, the administration developed new ways to engage local leaders and solicit their input on how the state could better support cities and towns. These engagement methods included a survey distributed to municipal leaders, direct outreach to communities, and Community Compact Cabinet engagement with an advisory group of local officials. The administration then translated local inputs into action by establishing cabinet-level expectations about, and structures to support, follow-through on identified local needs. The administration also took early, visible steps to show responsiveness to feedback, including development and ultimate passage of an omnibus municipal reform bill that reflected local input.

- **Strengthening Localities' Abilities to Perform and Delivery Services (page 16):** To improve localities' abilities to manage themselves, the administration developed the Community Compact Program, a flexible program that allowed localities to select and implement "best practices" designed to strengthen local governance and service delivery systems. To encourage and support uptake, the program utilized incentives and rewards, including awarding bonus points on certain grants for participating communities and providing financial and technical assistance to help with best practice implementation. The program's small dollar grants helped municipalities pursue "best practice" improvements they had long prioritized but for which they had not previously had funding.

- **Making it Easier for Localities to Identify, and Connect with, the Right Funding Opportunities (page 21):** The state also took steps to streamline information about funding opportunities and deadlines to make it easier for localities to unlock state resources. The state created, for example, a new centralized website that consolidated local funding opportunities in one place regardless of issuing agency. The state also created a unified application submission calendar that sent proactive push notices to localities about funding opportunities and deadlines. For economic development grants, the administration went one step further and made it the state's responsibility to advise municipalities on which grants they should apply for based on stated needs and goals – thereby leveraging the state's holistic understanding of available funding and helping level the playing field for smaller, less-resourced communities that were historically disadvantaged in state grant competitions.

This brief also includes **toolboxes of programs, structures and strategies** utilized by the Baker-Polito administration to strengthen local collaboration; and identifies **several underlying principles from the Baker-Polito experience that other state leaders can apply** to build strong local relationships and strengthen local government capacity (page 25):

- **Make cities and towns a priority from the top down**: Building strong relationships between a state and its localities requires a clear, senior-level leader as well as system-wide engagement of funding partners, capacity-building supports, and decision-making and implementation entities to unlock the holistic resources, approvals, and assistance that localities need to succeed.

- **If you're going to ask, listen and act**: If executives are going to engage local leaders about how state government can change, they need to be prepared to follow through on at least some of the feedback they receive, otherwise outreach can be counterproductive.

- **Small dollars can have a big impact:** Modest investments in local capacity building can lead to significant improvements – this is especially true in smaller communities where resources are often most constrained.

- **Leverage state capacity to unlock local potential**: States should strive to consolidate and simplify funding opportunities and to establish dedicated teams responsible for helping localities identify and apply for best-fit state supports. Such steps leverage state officials' comprehensive view of available supports and let localities have more time and money to focus on what they're good at – responding to local need.

The Importance of State-Local Collaboration

The relationship between state and local governments can mean the difference between functioning services and successful projects or stymied efforts and frustrated residents. While cities and towns are at the frontline of delivering services that impact residents' lives every day – from the roads they drive on, to the parks they play in, to the public safety they rely on – successful delivery of such services often depends on complex funding opportunities, rules, and regulations set by the state. The reverse is also true: many state-level programs can only succeed with local approval and implementation.

When it works well, the state-local relationship is symbiotic: state resources flow down to maximize the benefits of local service delivery, and information about local needs flows up to inform state-level planning and programming. This interplay reflects cities' and towns' close nexus to the residents they serve, which often better positions local, rather than state, government to develop programs and amenities that reflect residents' needs and preferences. It also recognizes that small scales of service delivery can lead to unnecessary duplication of personnel and capacity across community lines, and that there are economies of scale from designing and delivering some programming at the state level.

All too often, however, the relationship between states and localities is weak or – at its worst – adversarial. In such cases, local leaders are left on their own to identify and apply for state supports. It is, however, usually inefficient, and unrealistic, for every local jurisdiction to maintain the staffing levels and expertise necessary to navigate the complex state bureaucracy. As a result, larger and wealthier jurisdictions are often better able to compete for limited state funding, thereby exacerbating resource inequities among communities. At the same time, without strong communication, and an appreciation for varying local governance processes and resource levels, state officials can easily misjudge localities' ability and willingness to implement state-level agendas and are less likely to develop supports that reflect – and leverage – communities' diverse priorities and assets.

"A strong Commonwealth is built on a foundation of strong communities."
Having served as local selectmen, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito understood firsthand how critical – and challenging – the state-local relationship can be. "A municipality on its own is just a geographic location – what takes that city or town and turns it into a strong community is when there are affordable and accessible housing options, safe and vibrant downtowns and main streets, quality and equitable education opportunities and places where businesses can thrive," Lieutenant Governor Polito explained. "Access to resources and working together at all levels of government to help develop those qualities creates a place where people choose to live and work" and raise families.

"A strong Commonwealth is built on a foundation of strong communities," as Governor Baker often said.[1]

As candidates, Baker and Polito campaigned on a promise of making the state's partnership with cities and towns a top priority of their administration. Upon entering office, the team took immediate steps to translate their promise into action, naming Lieutenant Governor Polito as the administration's champion for local issues across state government, thereby kicking off an innovative approach to strengthening and empowering the state's 351 cities and towns. By the end of their two terms, the Baker-Polito administration's new approach both improved localities' abilities to deliver for their residents and built strong relationships and trust that enabled rapid state-local collaboration in response to crises such as COVID-19.

Whether local government is organized at the municipal level, like in Massachusetts, or the county level, as in many other states, finding ways to maximize the benefits of local service delivery and governance is a key function of state policy toward local governments. This policy brief explores four core components of the Baker-Polito approach to state-local partnership and identifies several underlying principles other state leaders can apply to build strong local relationships and strengthen localities' capacity to deliver.

Core Components and Underlying Principles of the Baker-Polito Approach to State-Local Partnership

- Make cities and towns a priority from the top down
- If you're going to ask, listen and act
- Small dollars can have a big impact
- Leverage state capacity to unlock local potential

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1. See for example: Baker, Charlie. "State of the Commonwealth Address" (speech, Boston, MA, January 23, 2018), https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-baker-delivers-third-state-of-the-commonwealth-address.

Executive Commitment:
Relentlessly Demonstrating Top-Down Support

"From the top down, we knew we had the support of the administration."
Baker and Polito weren't the first candidates to promise a more collaborative relationship between the state and its cities and towns. Along the campaign trail, the pair heard from local officials who agreed with the need for a new approach but who were also skeptical that anything would change. This was especially true in smaller and western communities, which had historically received less attention and support from the state. "I remember going to Western Mass as a candidate," Lieutenant Governor Polito recalled, "and people would say, 'thanks for campaigning here. We'll never see you again.' We knew we needed a plan that combatted that and that recognized that making every part [of the state] better made the whole better." [2]

To begin, Governor Baker intentionally used his first Executive Order to declare the new administration's commitment "to strong partnership with cities and towns."[3] Signed roughly two weeks after taking office, the Order focused on developing a "new compact between the state and communities to create more effective, efficient and accountable government." [4]

To implement this commitment, the Executive Order made three important structural changes. First, the Order named the Lieutenant Governor as a "champion for municipal issues across state government."[5] This assignment expanded and elevated the traditional role of the Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor and established senior-level accountability for strengthened state-local relations. "It was clear from day one that the Lieutenant Governor was the face, eyes and ears of all things municipal," explained Julie Jacobson, the town manager of Auburn, a central Massachusetts town with a population of roughly 16,000. "She was the one to go to and we all knew that." In this role, the Lieutenant Governor led "relentless" outreach to municipal leaders to check in, ask what state-level support was needed, and actively connect municipalities to appropriate resources. "It was an incredible asset to have someone not just advocating for you, but saying here's a funding option or a program that could help," Town Manager Jacobson explained. "From the top down, we knew we had the support of the administration. We could reach out to anyone and get responses and help."[6]

Second, to support system-wide engagement, the Executive Order established a new Community Compact Cabinet within the Executive Office responsible for "champion[ing] municipal interests across all executive secretariats and agencies,' "empower[ing] cities and towns and school districts by finding new ways for local governments to leverage

2. Polito, Karyn. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Personal Interview. Boston, August 31, 2022.
3. Baker, Charlie. "Executive Order No. 554: Creating the Community Compact Cabinet." January 23, 2015. https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-554-creating-the-community-compact-cabinet.
4. Ibid.
5. Baker, Charlie. "Executive Order No. 554: Creating the Community Compact Cabinet." January 23, 2015. https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-554-creating-the-community-compact-cabinet.
6. Jacobson, Julie. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 8, 2022.

state resources and capacity" and working with localities to resolve issues and implement new strategies.[7] The Order established the Lieutenant Governor as Chair of the new body and named several members of the Governor's Cabinet among its standing members.[8] The Community Compact "Cabinet helped create a 'whole of government' approach to supporting localities," the administration's first Secretary of Housing and Economic Development (HED), Jay Ash, recalled. "We all knew our charge was to enable local government to solve problems on the local level. The more information we gathered and shared with each other, the more competent we became" at advancing that goal and designing programs that empowered localities and emphasized local choice.[9]

Third, the Executive Order made structural changes to strengthen the Division of Local Services (DLS) – a department responsible for promoting "sound municipal finance management practices and support[ing] local officials."[10] From his days as Secretary of Administration and Finance, Governor Baker knew that DLS was an underutilized resource, buried, as the Lieutenant Governor would later describe it, in the "bowels" of the finance agency.[11] The Governor's Executive Order elevated DLS by creating a new Senior Commissioner for the division who would report directly to the Commissioner of the Department of Revenue.

Just as important as these structural changes, Governor Baker recruited numerous individuals with local government experience to join the new administration, including former mayors, city councilors, selectmen, and town managers – intentional hires meant to improve the state's capacity to understand, and respond to, municipal needs. One such hire was Sean Cronin, who Baker hired as Senior Commissioner of DLS. Having served for over a decade as a Deputy Town Administrator, Cronin brought a deep knowledge and appreciation for municipal finance and local government to the newly created role. Cronin viewed it as his responsibility to make DLS a more transparent and proactive agency "where municipalities could go for help and support."[12] Taken together, these structural changes and hiring decisions sent an early signal that the Baker-Polito administration was serious about working with localities.[13]

7. Baker, Charlie. "Executive Order No. 554: Creating the Community Compact Cabinet." January 23, 2015. https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-554-creating-the-community-compact-cabinet.
8. In Massachusetts, the Governor's Cabinet is comprised of all the appointed secretaries who supervise the state's agencies.
9. Ash, Jay. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Phone. September 13, 2022.
10. "DLS Senior Deputy Commissioner and Bureaus." Mass.gov, accessed September 16. 2022. https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dls-senior-deputy-commissioner-and-bureaus.
11. Polito, Karyn. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Boston. September 31, 2022.
12. Cronin, Sean. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 29, 2022.
13. Beckwith, Geoff. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. August 25, 2022.

The Toolbox: Executive Commitment

Goal: Signal executive commitment to a strong partnership with cities and towns and establish the structures and people necessary to deliver on that commitment.

Structures, strategies, and programs developed or adapted by the Baker-Polito administration:

- **Executive Order on Cities and Towns** – Public declaration of commitment "to strong partnership with cities and towns;" made structural changes to implement commitment, including identifying an executive "champion for municipal issues across state government."

- **Community Compact Cabinet** – New body designed to elevate local issues to the Executive Office and enable a "whole of government" approach to supporting localities; comprised of select secretaries from the Governor's Cabinet and chaired by the Lieutenant Governor.

- **Division of Local Services** – Strengthened department responsible for supporting localities; served as primary point of entry for the Community Compact Program and provided technical assistance, when appropriate, for best practice implementation (see Local Capacity Building, page 16).

- **Hiring of State Staff with Local Experience** – Intentional recruitment of individuals with local experience – such as former mayors, city councilors, selectmen, and town managers – to increase the state's capacity to understand, and respond to, local need.

Active Listening: Hearing What Localities Need and Following Through on Feedback

"Giving cities and towns a real seat at the table."
With executive support structures in place, the administration next developed new ways to engage localities and give "cities and towns a real seat at the table."[14] In the past, communication between local and state officials in Massachusetts was often limited, with infrequent opportunities for municipal leaders to connect with the state to learn, ask questions or provide feedback; causing many state-level decisions to feel like one-sided decrees that failed to account for local approval processes or strained municipal[15] budgets.

14. Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. "Governor Baker Signs Executive Order to Strengthen Municipal Partnerships." Press release, January 23, 2015. https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-baker-signs-executive-order-to-strengthen-municipal-partnerships.
15. Beckwith, Geoff. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. August 25, 2022.

As the Executive Office's lead for municipal relations, Lieutenant Governor Polito recognized that to develop a new approach to local support, she needed to "talk to the people who wake up every day thinking about this stuff." To begin, the administration sent a survey to officials in every municipality asking a single open-ended question: "What changes can our Commonwealth make to state regulations, laws and mandates that will improve your ability to deliver quality services to your constituents in a more cost-effective manner?" The administration used DLS's Listserv to push the question to officials from all levels of local government, including finance and planning personnel, mayors and town administrators, school officials, and public safety officers. The administration received 1,300 responses on topics ranging from procurement to liquor licenses, elections to special education, and reassessments of property values to stormwater regulations – feedback that would inform the administration's legislative and programmatic agenda.

In her role as Chair of the Community Compact Cabinet, the Lieutenant Governor also convened an advisory group of current and past mayors and town managers. This group provided additional feedback on how the state could better partner with cities and towns and helped the Compact Cabinet identify priority areas for action from survey responses. The Community Compact Cabinet also leveraged these advisors to provide a "heads up" about upcoming programming and to solicit feedback and suggested tweaks before programs launched. "The call to give feedback was legitimate and refreshing," reflected Shuan Suhoski, town manager of Athol, a north-central Massachusetts town with a population of roughly 12,000.[16] In addition to bringing a deep understanding of local government to the work, these advisors brought a strong network of relationships that helped build credibility and buy-in for the administration's focus on local collaboration.

To increase equitable access to the executive office, and make it as easy as possible to engage, the administration also took its conversations *about* communities *into* communities. The Lieutenant Governor and her staff visited all 351 cities and towns in the state to discuss municipalities' needs and solicit ideas for improving state-local collaboration. The administration also initiated traveling Governor's Cabinet meetings hosted in local facilities during which the administration would share updates on their work with communities, reinforce the message that the administration was there to help, and would give time to local leaders to elevate issues and questions that were pressing to their communities.

Lieutenant Governor Polito also encouraged secretaries in the Governor's Cabinet to get out into the community and make themselves available more generally. "There's no better way to gain trust than to go out to where people live and work," former Secretary Ash explained. A prior city manager of over a decade, Ash understood that being present in the community was critical for not only sharing substantive information,

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16. Suhoski, Shaun. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 13, 2022.

but for making communities feel connected, and that consistency was key: "The first time you show up, people think you're checking a box. After multiple visits from high-up officials, its shows you mean it." At weekly cabinet meetings, Secretary Ash would report out how many communities he'd visited, only to be topped consistently by the Lieutenant Governor. "I stopped trying to beat her," he joked.[17] This type of regular, proactive physical presence became a hallmark of the administration. "Whatever topic was on the agenda for Local Government Advisory Commission meetings, the relevant secretary or agency head would be there and would be genuinely engaged," recalled George Dunham, the town manager of Sandwich, a small coastal town on Cape Cod. "We knew all of the higher ups on a first name basis, which hadn't been the case before."[18] Town Manager Jacobson similarly reflected that, in general, "I don't remember having to reach out to figure out who to talk. The administration always reached out first."[19]

"It's not enough to collect responses. You have to be responsive."
With new modes of communication and engagement in place, the administration needed to show follow-through on the input it received. To do so, the administration created new structures, expectations, and routines to connect local feedback to action. As the executive branch champion for municipal interests, the Lieutenant Governor worked to build broad, cabinet-level focus – and follow-through – on local issues. In weekly meetings of the Governor's Cabinet, Lieutenant Governor Polito was "relentless in asking, 'So what does this mean for the western part of the state? The coast? And so on," Steve Kadish, the Governor's then Chief of Staff recalled.[20] Lieutenant Governor Polito additionally began tracking grant distributions on a map of the state – a tool for checking on geographic diversity. The Lieutenant Governor would also raise issues she was hearing from her travels across the state and assign local issues to relevant secretaries for follow-through. "I can literally never think of a time she didn't follow up" personally or connect us to the right person who could help, reflected Edward Augustus, the former city manager of Worcester, the state's second-largest city after Boston.[21]

As cabinet members learned to anticipate questions from the Lieutenant Governor about regional impact and distribution, they began proactively including local considerations in their program and policy planning and developed systems to ensure follow-through on local items. Each secretariat, for example, created a municipal-level liaison to work on local issues, which had not previously been standard practice.

At the principal level, the secretaries of Housing and Economic Development, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and the Department of Transportation began meeting every three weeks to advance local projects.

17. Ash, Jay. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Phone. September 13, 2022.
18. Dunham, George. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 12, 2022.
19. Jacobson, Julie. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 8, 2022.
20. Kadish, Steve. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. August 31, 2022.
21. Augustus, Edward. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 13, 2022.

These regular gatherings – which came to be known as "get stuff done meetings" – grew out of a recognition that most major economic development projects involved the intersection of housing, environment, and transportation. Rather than bouncing responsibility and decisions between departments, leading to delays and finger pointing, the principals of these departments met consistently to work through issues and move local projects forward. Over time, this type of focus and follow-through on local issues "permeated the work" and became standard practice for the Governor's Cabinet and their staff.[22]

"The Municipal Modernization Act showed early on that the needle was moving."
While such structures helped address municipality-specific needs, the municipal leaders' survey had also identified two opportunities to respond to local feedback that would have broad-reaching impact.

Summary of 2015 Municipal Leaders' Survey Responses

Top 10 Survey Issues	Count	Other Notable Issues	Count
Unfunded Mandates	97	Charter School Tuition	19
Procurement	63	Ethics Law	18
Education Funding Formula	58	Streamline/Revise Regulations	18
Special Education	49	Pension Reform	18
Prevailing Wage	45	Regionalization	17
Increase State Aid	35	Civil Service	12
Water-Related Regulations	31	Early Voting	11
School Transportation	31	Liquor Licenses	9
Elections	21	Broadband Funding	9
Other Post-Employment	20	Veterans' Benefits	8
Total	**450**	**Total**	139
	(35% of 1,300 responses)		(11% of 1,300 responses)

First, the issue that was most frequently cited in the municipal leaders' survey was unfunded mandates, i.e. state actions that increase localities' costs without providing additional state funding. As one response put it, "In the strongest of words, no more unfunded mandates." The administration, therefore, pledged to not propose any unfunded state mandates on cities and towns.[24] To further help strained local budgets, the administration committed to growing Unrestricted General Government Aid, which funds essential municipal services, consistent with growth in consensus tax revenue – a commitment the administration upheld across all the budget proposals it filed. Moreover, due to a strong partnership with the Legislature, and the benefit of a strong economy, every budget Governor Baker signed increased funding for cities and towns by the same rate of growth, or more, as that of tax revenue.

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22. Ash, Jay. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Phone. September 13, 2022.
23. Prevailing wage is a minimum hourly rate the state sets for covered employees on public works projects. For more detail see https://www.mass.gov/service-details/prevailing-wage-for-workers.
24. "Community Compact Best Practice Program FAQ." Mass.gov, accessed September 19, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-compact-best-practice-program-faq#what-is-the-obligation-of-the-commonwealth?-.

The municipal leaders' survey also revealed the need for, and opportunity to, update numerous broad-reaching state laws that impeded effective local governance and service delivery – "all these pesky things that bothered everyone twenty-five times a day and made it harder to do our jobs," City Manager Augustus explained.[25] For years, municipal leaders had sought to elevate the need for state-level reforms that would improve their ability to manage local operations. Though there was little opposition in the Legislature to such changes, omnibus municipal reform legislation had historically lacked a strong executive champion and was consistently crowded out by other legislative priorities.

Based on survey feedback, the Baker-Polito administration began drafting a broad-reaching municipal reform bill, engaging local leaders for input throughout the drafting process. Doing so helped both to demonstrate follow through on local input and to motivate local leaders to advocate for the bill's passage. To keep the bill at the top of the legislative agenda, the Lieutenant Governor was "relentless" in her advocacy, recalled Kadish, raising the bill consistently in weekly meetings with legislative leadership.[26] Championed by the Lieutenant Governor, and supported by an activated base of local leaders, the act passed the Legislature and was signed into law in 2016.

"A major piece of legislation like the Municipal Modernization bill, with hundreds of sections of 'weed whacking' as the Governor has called it, would not have been possible without the high level of local engagement from municipal officials and the cooperation from our colleagues in the Legislature," the Lieutenant Governor wrote in a publication to communities about the reforms.[27] Among the changes included in the bill were the elimination and updating of obsolete laws, like laws preventing police officers from issuing moving violation tickets electronically; removing "unnecessary DLS approval processes"; extending the certification review period for local assessing practices from three years to five; and providing municipalities with "greater flexibility to do their jobs on a day-to-day basis" by, for example, increasing the required threshold for formal competitive bidding processes.[28]

The bill "addressed an enormous amount of the feedback they received," reflected Town Manager Dunham.[29] "It sent an early message," Town Manager Jacobson underscored, "that [the administration] meant what they said. They asked and then actually did something about it. And we felt [the impact] on a day-to-day basis." [30]

25. Augustus, Edward. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 14, 2022.
26. Kadish, Steve. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Boston. August 31, 2022.
27. Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services, City & Town, August 18, 2016. https://www.mass.gov/doc/municipal-modernization-signed-into-law/download.
28. Ibid.
29. Dunham, George. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 12, 2022.
30. Jacobson, Julie. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 8, 2022.

The Toolbox: Active Listening

Goal: Develop meaningful, consistent modes of communication between local and state officials and demonstrate follow-through on input received.

**Structures, strategies, and programs developed or adapted by the Baker-Polito administration:**

- **Regular Visits to Localities** – Consistent, proactive physical presence in communities to build relationships and understand local need; took multiple forms including, visits by the Lieutenant Governor and Governor's Cabinet secretaries as well as traveling Governor's Cabinet meetings.

- **Municipal-Level Liaisons** – Roles established in each secretariat to work on local issues and support follow through.

- **"Get Stuff Done Meetings"** – Regular, cross-secretariat meetings in which the principals of the housing and economic development, energy, and transportation agencies worked through issues to move local projects forward.

- **Mapped Grant Distributions** – Tracking grant distributions on a map of the state to check geographic diversity.

- **Unfunded Mandates and Local Funding Pledges** – Baker-Polito administration's pledge to not propose any unfunded state mandates on cities and towns and to predictably increase state funds for essential municipal services consistent with growth in consensus tax revenue.

- **Omnibus Municipal Reform Legislation** – Legislation developed to update numerous broad-reaching state laws that impeded effective local governance and service delivery; direct outgrowth of local feedback and early, visible demonstration of follow-through.

Local Capacity Building:
Strengthening Localities' Abilities to Perform and Deliver Services

"We needed to get every community to a fundamental, foundational level of governance."
One of the primary goals of the Community Compact Cabinet was to incentivize and help local governments strengthen their governance and service delivery capacity. As is the case in most states, Massachusetts' 351 cities and towns have varying resources, governing structures, and populations. While some localities have ample, dedicated finance and grant teams, others have limited staff juggling multiple responsibilities. In one of the state's

smaller towns, for example, a single person serves as the town administrator, chair of the board, and police chief.

Massachusetts Municipality Populations Distribution
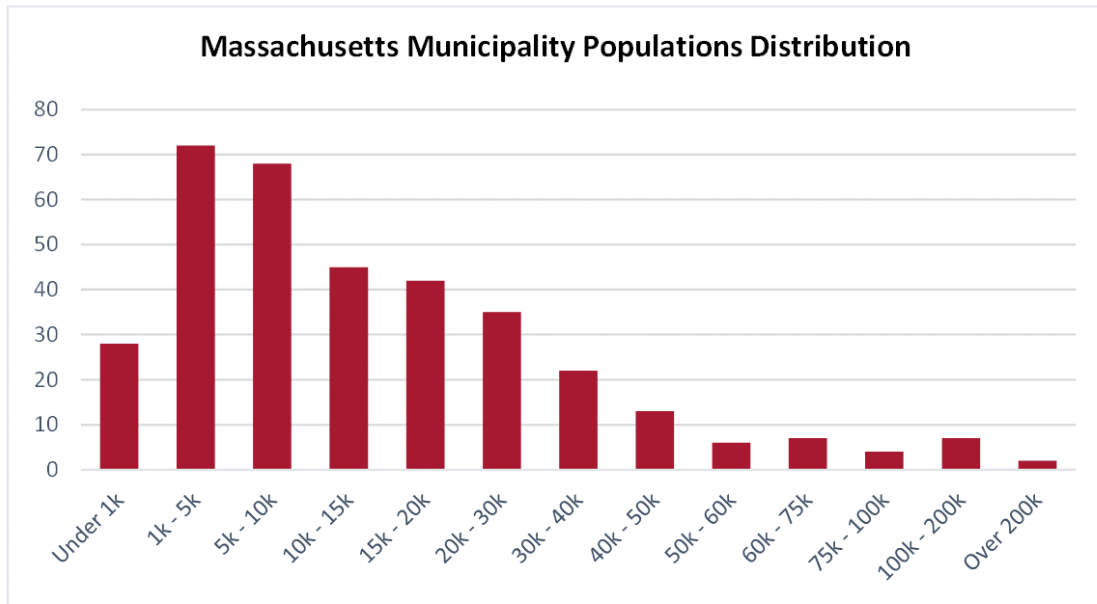
"Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Minor Civil Divisions in Massachusetts: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2021," University of Massachusetts Amherst. https://donahue.umass.edu/business-groups/economic-public-policy-research/massachusetts-population-estimates-program/population-estimates-by-massachusetts-geography/by-city-and-town.

As a result, while municipalities may aspire to create five-year capital plans, strengthen financial management strategies, or develop strategic plans for new road construction, not all communities had the time or resources necessary to do so. This not only impacted those communities' day-to-day operations, it also put them at a disadvantage when competing for state resources – exacerbating resource inequities among communities. "We needed to get every community to a fundamental, foundational level of governance," the Lieutenant Governor explained, "It shouldn't be the case that only already well-resourced communities get resources and make progress."[31]

The Community Compact Cabinet, therefore, developed the Community Compact Program – a "flexible program created to help cities and towns improve themselves in various areas."[32] The program reflected an understanding that "you need to have the basics in order – like financial management, economic development planning, HR policies – before you can launch something bigger," Cronin explained.[33] At the heart of the program were Community Compacts – voluntary agreements between the administration and individual cities and towns focused on "mutual standards of best

31. Polito, Karyn. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Boston. September 31, 2022.
32. "Community Compact Cabinet." PowerPoint. Presentation to Legislative Leadership. January 2018.
33. Cronin, Sean. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. March 15, 2022.

practices for both the state and municipalities."[34] By entering a two-year Community Compact, a locality agreed to implement at least one best practice of their choosing from a comprehensive list covering areas such as housing and economic development, financial management, IT, and energy and the environment.[35]

Chosen Best Practice Areas, Cumulative through September 15, 2022
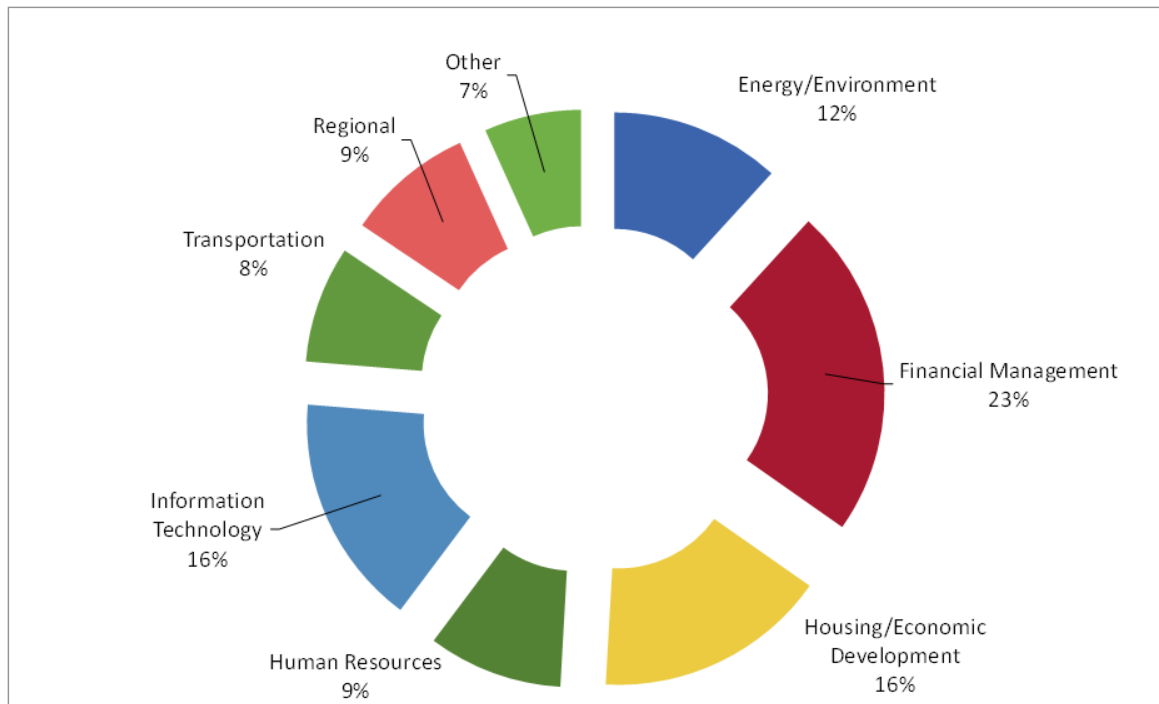
A direct outgrowth of survey responses and conversations with the local leaders, the best practice list addressed improvements localities had "long wanted to make but didn't have local funds for," Town Manager Dunham explained.[36] Town Manager Jacobson similarly reflected: "Rather than a cookie-cutter program we had to fit into, it had a list developed with municipal input and said 'you pick and we'll bring the resources to bear'. The whole program was a game-changer for how municipalities could access supports for local projects."[37]

Upon receiving Compact applications, the Commonwealth would review proposed best practices with municipalities to ensure they reflected needed areas of improvement. In most cases, the requested best practices reflected community needs and the Community Compact was entered into. In limited cases, after a discussion with the municipality, the community modified its best practice choices. For example, there were a few instances where a municipality was exhibiting signs of fiscal stress, but originally

34. "Community Compact Best Practice Program FAQ." Mass.gov, accessed September 19, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-compact-best-practice-program-faq#what-is-the-obligation-of-the-commonwealth?-.
35. For full list of best practices see "Community Compact Best Practice Areas." https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-compact-best-practice-areas.
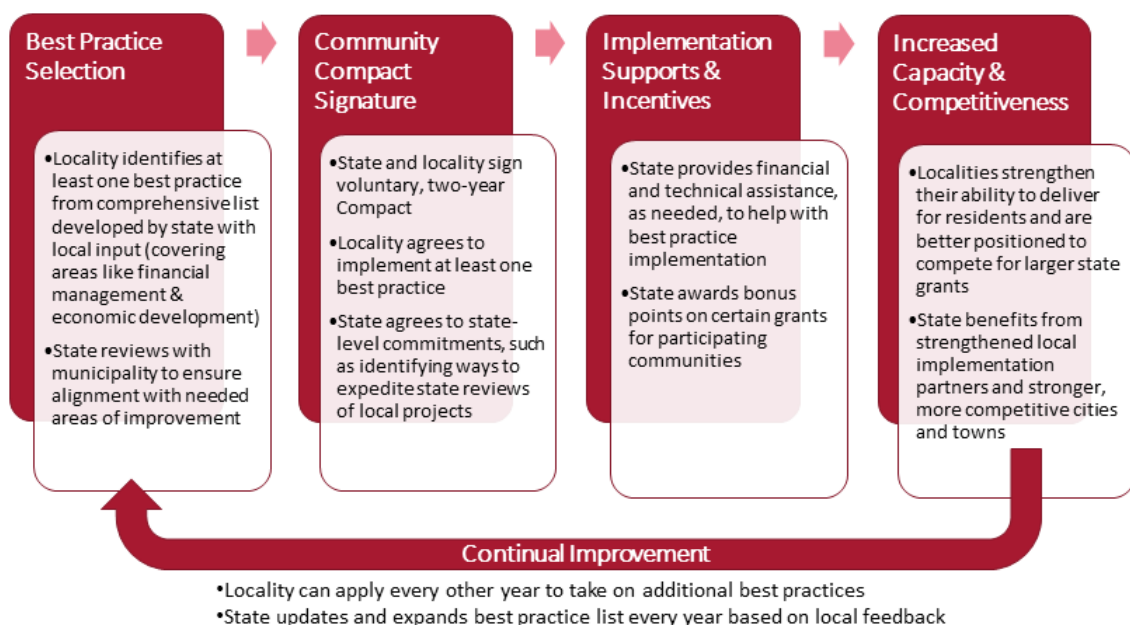36. Dunham, George. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 12, 2022.
37. Jacobson, Julie. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 8, 2022.

chose a best practice outside of the financial management area; after a discussion, the locality refocused their best practices to the financial management area.

"The Community Compact program met communities where they were …. [and] gave the time and resources needed [to make improvements]."

To encourage uptake of these voluntary agreements, the administration utilized incentives and supports, including the award of bonus points on certain grants for participating communities and provision of financial and technical assistance to help with best practice implementation. The Division of Local Services served as "the primary point of entry for communities looking for resources in best practice development and implementation."[38] Based on available resources and the specific expertise needed, DLS helped connect municipalities to appropriate technical assistance, which could range from hands-on help with critical work to strategizing and information sharing with the state. There were several options for how needed assistance was delivered. One option was in-house support from DLS, which had a team of subject matter experts that could help municipalities with tasks such as developing a set of financial policies, creating a long-range financial planning model, and generating a capital improvement plan. In other circumstances, technical assistance came from relevant executive departments or through contracted entities, such as outside consultancies.

Community Compact Program Core Components

Best Practice Selection
- Locality identifies at least one best practice from comprehensive list developed by state with local input (covering areas like financial management & economic development)
- State reviews with municipality to ensure alignment with needed areas of improvement

Community Compact Signature
- State and locality sign voluntary, two-year Compact
- Locality agrees to implement at least one best practice
- State agrees to state-level commitments, such as identifying ways to expedite state reviews of local projects

Implementation Supports & Incentives
- State provides financial and technical assistance, as needed, to help with best practice implementation
- State awards bonus points on certain grants for participating communities

Increased Capacity & Competitiveness
- Localities strengthen their ability to deliver for residents and are better positioned to compete for larger state grants
- State benefits from strengthened local implementation partners and stronger, more competitive cities and towns

Continual Improvement
- Locality can apply every other year to take on additional best practices
- State updates and expands best practice list every year based on local feedback

Funding for best practice implementation averaged $25,000 to $50,000 per best practice, with up to $100,000 awarded for multi-jurisdiction regionalization efforts. These small dollar infusions had a big impact for localities. Rather than just say "you need to make a five-year capital plan to qualify for the next round of grant funding, the Community Compact program

38. "Community Compact Best Practice Program FAQ." Mass.gov, accessed September 19, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-compact-best-practice-program-faq#what-is-the-obligation-of-the-commonwealth?-.

met communities where they were …. [and] gave the time and resources needed" to make improvements, explained Executive Director of the Massachusetts Municipal Association Geoff Beckwith.[39]

To reinforce the administration's emphasis on collaboration and "*mutual* standards, expectations, and accountability," Compacts also outlined state-level commitments, including pledging to work with the Legislature toward earlier local aid formula funding levels; giving special attention in the review of state regulations to those that affect the ability of municipalities to govern themselves; and identifying ways to expedite state reviews that can often slow down economic development opportunities or hinder other municipal needs.[40]

Every year, the Community Compact Cabinet updated and expanded the program's best practice list based on local feedback and unmet demand it identified through program applications, adding, for example, best practices focused on human resources and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The administration also expanded the pool of grants for which communities could receive bonus points for Compact participation. To support continued growth, communities were able to apply every other year to take on more best practices. Additionally, Secretary Ash assigned a top deputy to go out with the Lieutenant Governor to the handful of communities who had not initially applied to help those communities identify useful best practices. "Some of these smaller communities didn't have enough capacity to even think about applying," Ash explained. In such cases, his team helped communities draft their applications to ensure every municipality could participate.[41]

The Toolbox: Building Local Capacity

Goal: Get every community to a fundamental, foundational level of governance and service delivery capacity to improve day-to-day operations and increase localities' competitiveness for larger state grants.

Structures, strategies, and programs developed or adapted by the Baker-Polito administration:

- **Community Compact Program** – A flexible program designed to strengthen local capacity to perform and deliver services; utilized incentives and supports to encourage local uptake, including small dollar grants, bonus points on certain grants for participating communities, and hands-on technical assistance for implementation.

39. Beckwith, Geoff. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. August 25, 2022.
40. "Community Compact Best Practice Program FAQ." Mass.gov, accessed September 19, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-compact-best-practice-program-faq#what-is-the-obligation-of-the-commonwealth?-.
41. Ash, Jay. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Phone. September 13, 2022.

- **Community Compact** – Two-year voluntary agreements between the administration and individual cities and towns; in each compact a locality agreed to implement at least one best practice of their choosing and the Commonwealth agreed to uphold state-level commitments, such as identifying ways to expedite state reviews of local projects.

- **Best Practice List** – Comprehensive list of best practices localities chose from to strengthen their service delivery and/or performance capacity; developed with local input, the list covered areas such as housing and economic development, financial management, IT, and energy and the environment.

- **Implementation Supports** – Resources provided to localities to help with best practice implementation; could range from hands-on help with critical work to strategizing and information sharing with the state. Assistance came in several forms: in-house support from DLS's team of subject matter experts, relevant executive departments, and contracted entities, such as outside consultancies.

Streamlined, Proactive Resources: Making it Easier for Localities to Identify, and Connect with, the Right Funding Opportunities

"[Too many municipalities were] missing the boat on grants because they hadn't known about the opportunity."

While state funding is essential for local governments to succeed, it has historically been challenging for local officials to identify and unlock. With information about state resources posted on scattered websites, at unpredictable intervals, and with little proactive communication from the state, local officials often wasted time searching for, and guessing about, available supports. "I heard all the time about municipalities missing the boat on grants because they hadn't known about the opportunity," Lieutenant Governor Polito recalled. [42] At the same time, localities that most needed funding were often the least likely to have grant-writing resources – disadvantaging smaller, resource-constrained communities.

To address these challenges, in October 2019, Massachusetts unveiled a new, streamlined way for local governments to search and apply for state resources – the Community Compact Connector. The Connector provided a "central location to learn about opportunities for cities and towns, regardless of which state agency manages a grant program." [43] For the first time, cities and towns could use a centralized grant finder and application submission calendar to understand funding opportunities. [44, 45] Moreover, the administration began sending proactive push notices to localities about new funding opportunities on the Connector. These changes helped municipalities avoid wasted time searching multiple agency sites for appropriate grants and reduced the chances that a locality missed out on funding because it didn't know where, or when, to look for help.

42. Polito, Karyn. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Boston. August 31, 2022.
43. "Community Grant Finder." Mass.gov, accessed September 19, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/community-compact-connector.
44. "Community Compact Connector." Mass.gov, accessed September 19, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/community-compact-connector.
45. "Community Compact Connector Calendar." Mass.gov, accessed September 23, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-compact-connector-calendar.

"Municipalities shouldn't be turned away, they should be turned on."
Based on positive feedback about this streamlined repository, in 2021, the administration launched the Community One Stop for Growth – "a single application portal and collaborative review process" that consolidated the state's numerous, historically hard-to-navigate community development grant programs and established a single, once-a-year application timeline for all funding.[46]

The state then went one step further to ensure localities were connected to the most appropriate and impactful economic development supports. Traditionally, municipalities were responsible for identifying and applying for state assistance based on the written descriptions of individual grants. This approach placed the burden on municipalities' limited resources to search for, analyze, and often apply to, multiple grant opportunities in hopes of finding the right fit. Under the Baker-Polito administration's new model, municipalities completed a single "expression of interest" that described the problem they sought to address and what they hoped to accomplish.[47] It then became the state's responsibility to advise municipalities on which grants they should apply for, leveraging the state's holistic understanding of available resources.

The administration also recognized that municipalities may have varying levels of readiness for certain funding opportunities. To address this, Lieutenant Governor Polito made it clear that "municipalities shouldn't be turned away, they should be turned on."[48] Rather than simply deny applications that didn't score well, the Lieutenant Governor advised her team that if localities were not yet ready for larger grants, the state needed to help those communities understand where they needed to improve and connect municipalities to planning grants, technical assistance, or other supports that would position those communities for success with larger grants in the future. "The agency that administered those grants had to change the way it did business," the Lieutenant Governor explained. "Agency staff became consultants. The focus was on getting to yes."[49]

In addition to changing how municipalities were matched to grant opportunities, the state enlarged the suite of programs and grants it offered over the years in response to local feedback, creating, for example, a small bridge and culverts repair grant, an IT grant program to support local investments in technology, and regionalization funding to help neighboring municipalities develop shared services and planning.

46. "Community One Stop For Growth." Mass.gov, accessed September 19, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth.
47. "Community One Stop for Growth Expression of Interest." Mass.gov, accessed September 23, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-one-stop-for-growth-expression-of-interest.
48. Polito, Karyn. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Boston. September 31, 2022.
49. Polito, Karyn. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 21, 2022.

The Toolbox: Streamlined, Proactive Resources

Goal: Make it as easy as possible for all localities – regardless of size and resources – to identify, and be connected to, best-fit state supports.

Structures, strategies, and programs developed or adapted by the Baker-Polito administration:

- **Community Compact Connector** – Central location where local leaders can learn about grant opportunities for cities and towns, regardless of which state agency manages a grant program.

- **Community Compact Connector Calendar** – Single calendar for tracking all application openings and deadlines available through the Connector.

- **Community One Stop for Growth** – Single application portal and collaborative review process for economic development grants.

- **Community One Stop for Growth Expression of Interest** – Optional form localities can submit to seek state guidance on ways to strengthen their economic development grant application(s) and/or identify relevant supports.

- **Proactive State Guidance on Best-Fit Resources** – New approach to reviewing grant applications that puts responsibility on the state to connect municipalities to best-fit resources. In this new model, rather than simply deny applications that don't score well, the state helps those communities understand where they needed to improve and connects municipalities to planning grants, technical assistance, or other supports that will position those communities for success with larger grants in the future.

Results

In her opening remarks for the administration's final State of the Commonwealth, the Lieutenant Governor reflected on the impact of its eight-year effort to "reimagine" the state's relationship with local governments. "Two weeks after taking office, Governor Baker signed the first Executive Order of our administration – creating the Community Compact Cabinet and giving cities and towns a seat at our table," Lieutenant Governor Polito reflected. "Eventually, all 351 cities and towns joined this unprecedented effort to modernize, update and strengthen municipal services." [50] Through FY22, the final full fiscal year of the Baker-Polito administration's two terms, 623 Compacts, covering 1,180 best practices, were entered into. These efforts were supported by $14.7 million in grants from the Legislature. The program's 2021 application opened August 15; by mid-October, funding was exhausted – reflecting continued demand for the program.

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50. Polito, Karyn. Introductory remarks for 2022 State of the Commonwealth, January 25, 2022.

Community Compact Program Statistics, FY16 - FY22

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	Total
Number of Compacts Entered Into	254	58	99	64	72	27	58	623
Number of Best Practices Chosen	532	140	163	97	114	44	90	1,180
Number of Grants Awarded	237	78	120	79	105	41	87	747
Grant Totals (in millions)	$2.6	$2.5	$2.2	$2.0	$2.4	$1.0	$2.0	$14.7

As a result of these Compacts, communities across the state now have stronger foundations upon which to manage themselves – from financial policies to a forecasting model to assess the impact of a policy choice, from wage and classification plans to HR policies and procedures, from IT master plans to cybersecurity assessments, from economic development strategies to master plans.[51] These are things that would not exist for many municipalities if not for the Community Compact Program. For many municipalities, these initial improvements catalyzed larger advances. For example, the town of Topsfield received a bond rating upgrade to "AAA" after undertaking three financial management best practices. Auburn created an economic development plan that resulted in zoning changes, the hiring of an economic development coordinator, and access to additional state and philanthropic funds to move forward with the plan. "The way we got more money was to show we had a plan," Town Manager Jacobson explained. "If you drove through Auburn now, you'd see the construction, the progress."[52]

Moreover, in the first year of the Community One Stop for Growth's existence, 360 project proposals were submitted from 177 communities and 196 grants were awarded to projects in 122 communities. In total, the administration awarded more than $88.6 million in community and economic development grant funds, including $21.7 million to rural and small towns.[53]

Such results helped improve relationships and trust between the state and localities and laid the foundation for future collaboration including, notably, the state's response to COVID-19. "The bond rating upgrades, the new technologies for municipalities to use to drive efficiencies, and the regionalization efforts are great outcomes of the program," Cronin remarked. "However, they pale in comparison to the impact that the relationships, communication, and trust that was generated between 2015 and 2020 had on the ability of the state and its municipalities to respond to the pandemic in such a strong manner."[54]

51. For more examples, see "Community Compact Reports and Completed Best Practices." Mass.gov, accessed September 25, 2022. https://www.mass.gov/lists/community-compact-reports-and-completed-best-practices.
52. Jacobson, Julie. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 8, 2022.
53. "FY22 Community One Stop for Growth Awards." Mass.gov, accessed September 19. 2022. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/fy22-community-one-stop-for-growth-awards.
54. Cronin, Sean. Email. August 18, 2022.

As Lieutenant Governor Polito told local leaders at the 2022 Massachusetts Municipal Association annual meeting, "While there may not have been a playbook for most of these unprecedented times, we at least had one for communicating and listening to those of you that had your ears to the ground in communities" across the state.[55]

With these close relationships and communication channels, the state was able to quickly communicate out to localities about evolving public safety rules and guidance, and to take in local feedback that informed the development of new support programs, including a Shared Streets and Spaces program through the Department of Transportation, which allowed communities and local businesses to shift their businesses outside into sidewalks and roadways with additional funding, and Food Security Infrastructure Grants through Energy and Environmental Affairs, which allowed businesses to purchase and build infrastructure to combat food insecurity during the pandemic and beyond. The state's established systems for working with municipalities also allowed for rapid deployment of COVID stimulus funds and other economic development resources, and enabled quick responses to other local emergencies, like the Merrimack Valley gas explosions in 2018.

"If there was skepticism [that their campaign promise about state-local relations] was just talk, the administration really lived up to it during their tenure," Town Manager Suhoski reflected. "I've been around 20 years in this type of role, and this administration is as close to really hearing local input as I've seen." [56]

## Lessons for Future Efforts to Strengthen State-Local Collaboration

The Baker-Polito administration's approach suggests several underlying principles other state leaders can apply to build strong local relationships and strengthen localities' capacity to deliver:

Make cities and towns a priority from the top down: Building strong relationships between a state and its localities requires consistent engagement and meaningful action. To support focus and follow-through, states should establish a clear, senior-level point person responsible for state-local relations. This person should be a top official who can prioritize communities at the executive level; has sufficient authority from, and connection to, the Governor to make it clear to cabinet members, commissioners, and other executive decision makers that a focus on helping localities is an expectation from the top; and who has enough of a public profile to show consistent, visible executive commitment to state-local relations. While it is important to have an executive leader, strong state-local relations cannot rely on a single person – it requires system-wide engagement. Once a leader is identified, they must, therefore, activate funding partners, capacity-building supports, and decision-making and implementation entities throughout the system to unlock the holistic resources, approvals, and assistance

55. Polito, Karyn. Speech delivered at Massachusetts Municipal Association's 2022 Annual Meeting, January 2022.
56. Suhoski, Shaun. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 13, 2022.

localities need to succeed. Working successfully with such stakeholders requires multiple, consistent two-way communication channels.

Making Cities and Towns a Priority from the Top Down
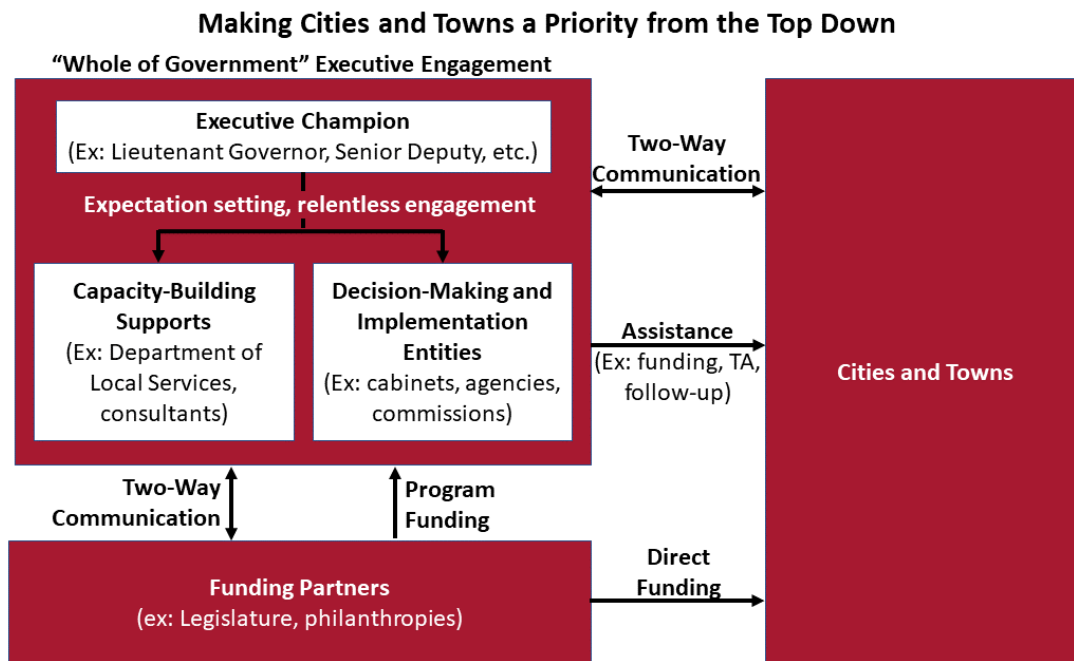
If you're going to ask, listen and act: "Relationships are built on trust, listening and follow-through," Lieutenant Governor Polito reflected at the end of the administration's second term.[57] If executives are going to engage local leaders about how state government can change, they need to be prepared to follow through on at least some of the feedback they receive. As former Secretary Ash explained: "If you go out and ask and can't respond, it's counterproductive."[58] Local officials are busy managing day-to-day operations; if they start to feel that their time is being wasted or their input isn't really helping, they will stop engaging and may even start complaining – leading to both a breakdown in trust and, potentially, a political problem. Follow-through does not have to mean acting on every piece of input received. In Massachusetts, the municipal leaders' survey raised several issues that were non-starters because of cost or political sensitivity. This was, in fact, one of the reasons the Municipal Modernization Act was so comprehensive – the administration was intentional about showing that even if they couldn't do everything, they were going to do as much as they could. This early, significant demonstration of follow-through helped build trust and buy-in from local leaders that was critical for strengthening the state-local relationship.

Small dollars can have a big impact: Modest investments in local capacity building can lead to significant improvements – this is especially true in smaller communities where resources are often most constrained. For example, in Athol, Massachusetts, a north-central town in Massachusetts with a population of roughly 12,000, a "modest" $25,000 Community Compact grant allowed the town to create a community development plan

57. Polito, Karyn. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Boston. August 31, 2022.
58. Ash, Jay. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Phone. September 13, 2022.

for a space that, for decades, had seen no progress. As Town Manager Suhoski explained: "That little planning grant of $25,000 allowed the project to spring to life," producing a vision plan for the space, building community support throughout the process, and unlocking other larger grants for which the town would not have previously been competitive.[59] As an added benefit, even small dollar grant programs create an opportunity to engage and build trust with communities. "The Community Compact wasn't big dollars," former Secretary Ash explained, "but it allowed us to go out to communities and talk about a program that could help."[60]

Leverage state capacity to unlock local potential: It is inefficient to require every city and town to be an expert in state grant processes and funding opportunities. It is also unrealistic – leading to an uneven playing field in which large, well-resourced communities are better positioned to compete for limited state assistance. To address this, states should strive to consolidate and simplify funding opportunities – as Massachusetts did with the Community Compact Connector and the Community One Stop for Growth – and to establish dedicated teams responsible for helping localities identify and apply for best-fit state supports – as Massachusetts did with the Community Compact Program and the One Stop's expression of interest. Such steps leverage state officials' holistic view of available supports and let localities have more time and money to focus on what they're good at – responding to local need.

"It may have been unique that [Governor Baker] and I had local experience, but these strategies are replicable" and applicable for any state leader, Lieutenant Governor Polito reflected.[61] "A strategic state-local governance system matters not only because it adds up to good government policy, but also because it makes a difference for setting up the future success of communities as we compete in a global economy … and creates a sustainable ecosystem for growth and progress – something we can all agree is good for the future."[62]

59. Suhoski, Shaun. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Virtual. September 13, 2022.
60. Ash, Jay. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Phone. September 13, 2022.
61. Polito, Karyn. Interview by Danielle Cerny. Boston. August 31, 2022.
62. Polito, Karyn. Email. September 21, 2022.

Appendices

Appendix - Full Toolbox: Structures, strategies, and programs developed or adapted by the Baker-Polito administration to support local collaboration and capacity building.

Executive Commitment

Goal: Signal executive commitment to a strong partnership with cities and towns and establish the structures and people necessary to deliver on that commitment.

- **Executive Order on Cities and Towns** – Public declaration of commitment "to strong partnership with cities and towns;" made structural changes to implement commitment, including identifying an executive "champion for municipal issues across state government."

- **Community Compact Cabinet** – New body designed to elevate local issues to the Executive Office and enable a "whole of government" approach to supporting localities; comprised of select secretaries from the Governor's Cabinet and chaired by the Lieutenant Governor.

- **Division of Local Services** – Strengthened department responsible for supporting localities; served as primary point of entry for the Community Compact Program and provided technical assistance, when appropriate, for best practice implementation.

- **Hiring of State Staff with Local Experience** – Intentional recruitment of individuals with local experience – such as former mayors, city councilors, selectmen, and town managers – to increase the state's capacity to understand, and respond to, local need.

Active Listening

Goal: Develop meaningful, consistent modes of communication between local and state officials and demonstrate follow-through on input received.

- **Regular Visits to Localities** – Consistent, proactive physical presence in communities to build relationships and understand local need; took multiple forms including, visits by the Lieutenant Governor and Governor's Cabinet secretaries as well as traveling Governor's Cabinet meetings.

- **Municipal-Level Liaisons** – Roles established in each secretariat to work on local issues and support follow through.

- **"Get Stuff Done Meetings"** – Regular, cross-secretariat meetings in which the principals of the housing and economic development, energy, and transportation agencies worked through issues to move local projects forward.

- **Mapped Grant Distributions** – Tracking grant distributions on a map of the state to check geographic diversity.

- **Unfunded Mandates and Local Funding Pledges** – Baker-Polito administration's upheld pledge to not propose any unfunded state mandates on cities and towns and to predictably increase state funds for essential municipal services consistent with growth in consensus tax revenue.

- **Omnibus Municipal Reform Legislation** – Legislation developed to update numerous broad-reaching state laws that impeded effective local governance and service delivery; direct outgrowth of local feedback and early, visible demonstration of follow-through.

Building Local Capacity

Goal: Get every community to a fundamental, foundational level of governance and service delivery capacity to improve day-to-day operations and increase localities' competitiveness for larger state grants.

- **Community Compact Program** – A flexible program designed to strengthen local capacity to perform and deliver services; utilized incentives and supports to encourage local uptake, including small dollar grants, bonus points on certain grants for participating communities, and hands-on technical assistance for implementation.

- **Community Compact** – Two-year voluntary agreements between the administration and individual cities and towns; in each compact a locality agreed to implement at least one best practice of their choosing and the Commonwealth agreed to uphold state-level commitments, such as identifying ways to expedite state reviews of local projects.

- **Best Practice List** – Comprehensive list of best practices localities chose from to strengthen their service delivery and/or performance capacity; developed with local input, the list covered areas such as housing and economic development, financial management, IT, and energy and the environment.

- **Implementation Supports** – Resources provided to localities to help with best practice implementation; could range from hands-on help with critical work to strategizing and information sharing with the state. Assistance came in several forms: in-house support from DLS's team of subject matter experts, relevant executive departments, and contracted entities, such as outside consultancies.

Streamlined, Proactive Resources

Goal: Make it as easy as possible for all localities – regardless of size and resources – to identify, and be connected to, best-fit state supports.

- **Community Compact Connector** – Central location where local leaders can learn about grant opportunities for cities and towns, regardless of which state agency manages a grant program.

- **Community Compact Connector Calendar** – Single calendar for tracking all application openings and deadlines available through the Connector.

- **Community One Stop for Growth** – Single application portal and collaborative review process for economic development grants.

- **Community One Stop for Growth Expression of Interest** – Optional form localities can submit to seek state guidance on ways to strengthen their economic development grant application(s) and/or identify relevant supports.

- **Proactive State Guidance on Best-Fit Resources** – New approach to reviewing grant applications that puts responsibility on the state to connect municipalities to best-fit resources. In this new model, rather than simply deny applications that don't score well, the state helps those communities understand where they needed to improve and connects municipalities to planning grants, technical assistance, or other supports that will position those communities for success with larger grants in the future.

Appendix - Executive Order No. 554: Creating the Community Compact Cabinet

DATE: 01/23/2015
ISSUER: Governor Charlie Baker
MASS REGISTER: No. 1280
REVOKING AND SUPERSEDING: Executive Order No. 537

WHEREAS, cities and towns are at the front lines of delivering services to the citizens of the Commonwealth;

WHEREAS, cities and towns are vital partners in creating the conditions under which economic development flourishes throughout Massachusetts;

WHEREAS, cities and towns face increasing pressures on municipal and school budgets, which impacts those essential services;

WHEREAS, cities and towns, through local aid and other programs, are partners with the Commonwealth;

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth wishes to recommit itself to a stronger partnership with its cities and towns;

WHEREAS, cities and towns have the right to hold the Commonwealth accountable, the Commonwealth has the right to hold cities and towns accountable, and the citizens have the right to hold all levels of government accountable. There should be a new compact between the state and our communities to create more effective, efficient and accountable governments.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Charles D. Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution as Supreme Executive Magistrate, Part 2, c. 2, § 1, Art. 1, do hereby revoke Executive Order No. 537 and order as follows:

Section 1. There is hereby established within the Executive Office of the Governor, a Community Compact Cabinet to advise the Governor on its areas of responsibility set forth in Section 4 below.

Section 2. There shall be, within the Department of Revenue, a Senior Deputy Commissioner, Division of Local Services, who shall report to the Commissioner of Revenue and shall be responsible for the operations and activities of the Division of Local Services. In addition, the new Senior Deputy Commissioner will also be the primary lead on local issues on behalf of the Secretary of Administration and Finance.

Section 3. The Community Compact Cabinet shall be chaired by the Lieutenant Governor. The Senior Deputy Commissioner, Division of Local Services shall serve as the Vice-Chair of the cabinet. The cabinet shall also include the Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, the Secretary of the Executive Office of Education, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Assistant Secretary for Operational Services, the Chief Information Officer, and any other person whom the Lieutenant Governor may designate from time to time.

Section 4. The Community Compact Cabinet shall have the following areas of responsibility:

1. to champion municipal interests across all executive secretariats and agencies;
   a. to develop, in consultation with cities and towns, mutual standards of best practices for both the state and municipalities, working toward the creation of community compacts that will create clear standards, expectations and accountability for both partners;
   b. to develop ideas to incentivize adoption of best practices at the municipal and school district level;
   c. to work with the Local Government Advisory Commission (the "LGAC") to resolve issues and implement recommendations made by the LGAC and approved by the Governor;
   d. to review state regulatory burdens on municipalities and school districts and recommend reforms to lessen the burdens on municipalities and school districts;
   e. to understand the major cost drivers of municipalities and school districts and identify actions that the Commonwealth, municipalities and school districts can take to control them;
   f. to identify and remove barriers to economic development opportunities for cities and towns; and
   g. to empower cities and towns and school districts by finding new ways for local governments to leverage state resources and capacity.

Section 5. All agencies subject to the Governor's control shall provide assistance to the Community Compact Cabinet by sharing information and expertise, as requested.

Section 6. This Executive Order shall continue in effect until amended, superseded or revoked by subsequent Executive Order.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston this 23rd day of January in the year of our Lord two thousand fifteen and of the Independence of the United States of America two hundred thirty-nine.

Appendix - Community Compact Template

COMMONWEALTH COMMUNITY COMPACT

WHEREAS cities and towns and the Commonwealth must work together to create the conditions for a strong and resilient economy; and

WHEREAS cities and towns face increasing pressures on municipal and school budgets which impact essential services; and

WHEREAS cities and towns are partners with the Commonwealth and the Baker-Polito Administration is recommitting itself to that partnership through the Community Compact Cabinet; and

WHEREAS the Commonwealth is committed to promoting mutual standards of best practice for both the state and municipalities that will create clear standards, expectations, and accountability for both partners; and

WHEREAS the citizens of Massachusetts are right to expect forward-thinking, innovative government from both the Commonwealth and local governments.

Commonwealth Commitments

As a sign of its commitment to an improved partnership with cities and towns, the Baker-Polito Administration:

- Intends to be a reliable partner on local aid.
- Pledges to work with our partners in the Legislature toward earlier local aid formula funding levels.
- Will work to make available technical assistance opportunities for cities and towns as they work toward best practices.
- Will not propose any new unfunded mandates, and we will look at existing mandates with a goal toward making it easier to manage municipal governments.
- Will give special attention, in its review of state regulations, to those that affect the ability of municipalities to govern themselves.
- Pledges to work closely with municipal leaders to expand opportunities to add municipal voices to those state boards and commissions that impact local governments.
- Will introduce incentives for municipalities that sign Compacts in existing and proposed state grant opportunities, including proposals for technical assistance grants available only to compact communities.
- Will identify ways to expedite state reviews that can often slow down economic development opportunities or hinder other municipal interests.

Community Commitments

NOW THEREFORE the [City/Town] of [insert name] pledges to adopt the following best practice:

[Insert best practice(s)]

The Commonwealth will work with the [City/Town] of [insert name] as a partner in implementing these best practices, including prioritizing technical assistance when that is needed to accomplish execution of a new best practice.

Commonwealth Compact Community Incentives

The Baker-Polito Administration seeks to recognize municipalities that are striving to become more innovative and accountable and introduce incentives through various state grants and programs to reward municipalities who have signed Community Compacts and committed themselves to continuous improvement. Municipalities that pledge to adopt best practices through compacts will get bonus points on selected state grant programs and will be prioritized for various technical assistance programs.

TOGETHER we sign this Community Compact in a spirit of partnership and public service, understanding that we serve the citizens of our Commonwealth and that our citizens deserve the best government possible.

Signed this [Date]

[State Signature]   [Locality Signature]

Appendix - Community Compact Program, Best Practice List (as of September 2022)

Age and Dementia Friendly Best Practices

An Age-Friendly community is one that is livable for residents of all ages inclusive of older adults and those living with dementia. Age-friendly communities strive to be equitable and accessible with walkable streets, housing and transportation options, access to services, and opportunities for residents to participate in community activities.

Engagement

Best Practice: Engage and convene leaders across municipal departments, businesses, local citizen groups, regional planning agencies, and private and non-profit organizations to align around the goal of creating an age- and/or dementia-friendly community, including partnering with neighboring municipalities to engage in a regional effort. Community engagement should take a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens.

Action Planning and Assessment

Best Practice: Conduct a baseline assessment, informed with data, age- and dementia-friendly indicators, and community feedback to inform the planning and implementation of specific age- and dementia-friendly community initiatives. Map results for key indicators such as transportation, housing, employment, outdoor spaces and building, civic participation, and social inclusion. Among the sources of relevant data and information available to communities are: Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative (MHAC) Community Profiles, World Health Organization's Checklist of Essential Features, and National Alzheimer's and Dementia Resource Center dementia-capability tool or similar nationally recognized assessment tool or process.

Implementation

Best Practice: Review and amend municipal policies, regulations, and programs with a goal of promoting aging in all policies, programs, and services in an equitable and inclusive manner.

Best Practice: Raise public awareness that aging is an asset and that older adults, including people living with dementia, make meaningful contributions to the community.

Best Practice: Inventory, publicize and share local information and resources, including programs, services, and supports for older adults and their caregivers.

Best Practice: Develop policies, practices, and programs to support aging in community, improve elder economic security, or facilitate connection and engagement, including through technology access. Programs or activities may include, but are not limited to, support for older workers, job seekers and volunteers, technology programming and digital literacy, property tax assistance programs, built environment improvements, and transportation and mobility programs.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Best Practices (DEI)

Best Practice: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training Program: Develop a comprehensive ongoing training program for staff, elected and appointed officials. The pathway to advancing equity begins with training. Training is helpful in building a shared vocabulary and understanding of equity concepts and how they impact the community.

Best Practice: Community Needs Assessment: Conduct a community needs assessment to ascertain community buy-in and goals related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Best Practice: Workforce Assessment: Conduct Assessment of Town's workforce and compare to population and census data. Identify gaps. Provide areas that require improvement and make recommendations on how to implement positive change.

Best Practice: Equity Audit: Conduct a town/city wide equity audit to determine what the existing barriers are to equitable representation and participation, access and opportunity for all residents and business owners in the community.

Best Practice: Human Resources: Recruitment and Retention of a Representative Workforce: Develop a data driven and informed plan to guide human resources professionals with the goal of recruitment and retention of a representative workforce. This will include model policies and procedures to be adopted, as well as technology to support the continued practices.

Best Practice: Public Engagement: Develop an initiative to improve and increase community engagement, particularly with underrepresented members of the community and young people and improve access to local government.

Best Practice: DEI Strategic Planning: Develop a plan that includes community's goals and strategies for improving the delivery of services through a DEI lens. (could include a single focus, like housing, or be more general).

Best Practice: Zoning Review: Comprehensive review of Zoning Bylaws through an informed racial equity and civil rights lens and recommend any changes for adoption by Town Meeting/City Council.

Best Practice: Municipal Supplier Diversity Program: Develop a Municipal Supplier Diversity Program with purchasing policies and procedures to promote and ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in contracting for businesses owned by minorities, women, Portuguese, veterans, service-disabled veterans, those with a disability, and LGBT individuals, as well as small Massachusetts businesses. This may include spending goals and benchmarks for various businesses.

Education Best Practices

Best Practice: Focus on college and career planning, in collaboration with regional workforce organizations (e.g., MassHire Career Centers), beginning in middle school and continuing through high school, by implementing the MyCAP framework for college and career advising for all students.

Best Practice: Implement collaborative arrangements among regional vocational technical schools, comprehensive high schools, and community colleges to maximize opportunities for high school students and adults to access specialized vocational education programs.

Best Practice: Create opportunities for municipal governments to collaborate with high schools and colleges to provide students with internship experiences aligned to their courses of study, especially in STEM-related departments (i.e., IT, engineering department, accounting, etc.).

Best Practice: Improve the alignment and integration of YouthWorks and Connecting Activities programs for local high school students pursuing summer jobs and paid internships.

Best Practice: Strengthen partnerships between public safety, social services, healthcare providers, and local public and private schools to establish systems and protocols for assessing and identifying children and young adults who present risks to themselves or to others, in order to ensure effective and pro-active responses that can prevent violence and provide timely supports to individuals in need.

Energy and Environment Best Practices

Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Best Practice: Plan Ahead to mitigate climate change by establishing goals, creating an action plan, assigning responsibility, and tracking progress.

Best Practice: Use Renewable Energy instead of fossil fuels by generating or purchasing clean power and by zoning for renewable power generation.

Best Practice: Increase Energy Efficiency in order to reduce power consumption, fuel costs, and GHG emissions.

Best Practice: Promote Zero or Low Carbon Transportation to reduce municipal transportation emissions & those from people living/working in the community.

Best Practice: Encourage Sustainable Development to reduce, through higher density & mixed-use, the number distance of car trips & resulting GHG emissions.

Best Practice: Protect and Manage Natural Resources to reduce carbon emissions from loss of natural land cover and to encourage carbon sequestration.

Best Practice: Reduce Municipal Solid Waste and Increase Recycling in order to reduce GHG emissions associated with solid waste disposal.

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Best Practice: Become a Green Community pursuant to M.G.L. c. 25A §10 to realize the energy & environmental benefits.

Best Practice: Construct high performance all electric buildings (or communities) to reduce GHG emissions & enhance resiliency. Examples include Zero Energy or Passive House buildings.

Best Practice: Convert streetlights to LED technology to reduce cost and GHG emissions.
Best Practice: Reduce energy use at times of peak demand to reduce GHG emissions and enhance resiliency.

Best Practice: Provide electric vehicle infrastructure to facilitate the purchase & use of electric vehicles and when replacing municipal vehicles evaluate feasibility to integrate electric vehicles into existing fleet(s).

Climate Change Adaptation & Resilience

Best Practice: Complete a Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program to assess local risks from climate change and identify potential actions to enhance community resiliency.

Best Practice: Use the Municipal Vulnerability Action Grant or other funding to implement climate adaptation actions that utilize nature-based solutions & increase equitable outcomes for and support strong partnerships with Environmental Justice communities.

Best Practice: Engage & protect Environmental Justice and other climate vulnerable populations in adaptation planning & action to decrease risk and increase resilience for those who are more susceptible to climate change effects.

Best Practice: Utilize the beta RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool to mainstream climate resilience into capital planning & budgeting to ensure investments decrease risk & enhance resilience to a changing climate.

Best Practice: Integrate Climate Adaptation into Land Use and Environmental Regulation to minimize future risk & costs for new and redevelopment.

Sustainable Development and Land Protection

Best Practice: Complete a Master or Open Space & Recreation Plan to guide land conservation & development decisions including zoning & land acquisition.

Best Practice: Zone for Natural Resource Protection, Transfer of Development Rights, Traditional Neighborhood, or Transit Oriented Development.

Best Practice: Invest in Land Conservation or Park Creation/Restoration via Community Preservation Act or other funds to protect land & provide outdoor recreation.

Best Practice: Plant Trees to increase tree cover in residential neighborhoods and other densely developed settings or Adopt a Tree Retention Bylaw/Ordinance to preserve and enhance tree cover.

Water Resource Management

Best Practice: Require Localized Flood Protection Best Practices, including Stormwater Management Measures to increase recharge, manage water movement, reduce pollution, and control flooding to protect lives, public safety, infrastructure, the environment, & critical assets.

Best Practice: Utilize Advanced Financing Tools such as an enterprise fund, stormwater utility, full cost pricing, or water bank for water/waste/storm water systems.

Waste Management

Best Practice: Enhance Waste Ban Compliance so that recyclable and hazardous materials are diverted from the waste stream and reused or recycled and support markets for hard-to-recycle items such as mattresses.

Best Practice: Develop Waste Contracts that are fiscally, environmentally, and otherwise beneficial to the community.

Best Practice: Adopt Pay-As-You-Throw so that residents have an incentive to reduce trash disposal and save money.

Best Practice: Increase the Recycling Rate through regulatory improvements, service expansion, and other mean in order to reduce waste and disposal costs.

Best Practice: Enhance Education via Recycle Smart MA, the Recycling IQ Kit, etc. so residents throw away less, recycle more, & follow smart waste practices.

Best Practice: Work to increase residential and commercial composting by providing educational materials, tools and equipment, and other technical assistance to communities, residents, and businesses.

Site Cleanup

Best Practice: Complete a Brownfields Inventory so that the community is aware of all abandoned and underutilized properties and can develop plan of action.

Best Practice: Conduct Site Assessments to determine the nature and extent of contamination and develop a plan of action.

Best Practice: Facilitate Site Cleanup and Reuse to encourage assessment, cleanup, & reuse of privately held sites offer tax incentives or update regulation.

Agriculture

Best Practice: Adopt a Right to Farm By-law/Ordinance to clearly indicate that agriculture is a local priority and to minimize abutter conflicts.

Best Practice: Establish an Agricultural Commission to advocate for local farms, administer a right to farm bylaw, & otherwise represent agricultural interests.

Best Practice: Support Sustainable Forestry to help the forest economy in rural areas, improve forest habitats, and assist in the conservation of forest land.

Best Practice: Support Local Agriculture including Urban Agriculture, Aquaculture, Floriculture, & Horticulture, via education, marketing, promotion, and the Farm to School initiative to help local agricultural businesses increase awareness of and access to fresh as well as value-added agricultural products through the effort of an organized community farmers market and/or an agricultural fair/festival.

Best Practice: Establish a city/town/local Food Policy Council to address food system inequities, adopt policies/bylaws, and develop meaningful solutions to eradicate food insecurity in the region.

Best Practice: Commit to supporting the protection of agriculture in your community. Commit to co-holding Agricultural Preservation Restriction by contributing towards the acquisition of easements.

Best Practice: Identify and assess food aid and hunger relief programming efforts, education and outreach, and opportunities for collaboration with local farms, fisheries, processors, and distributors to engage and reach more community members.

Best Practice: Work with local school districts to put in place policies that attempt to purchase food from local farmers and encourage institutions to do the same.

Best Practice: Create an inventory of local farms and quantify the fiscal benefits to your community of keeping land in agriculture through a Cost of Community Services study. Also document the cultural and environmental benefits of agriculture in your town.

Financial Management Best Practices

Best Practice: Establish a Budget document that details all revenues and expenditures, provides a narrative describing priorities and challenges, and offers clear and transparent communication of financial policies to residents and businesses.

Best Practice: Develop, document and implement Financial Policies and Practices including reserve levels, capital financing, and use of Free Cash. Such policies should identify the responsible parties and procedural steps necessary to carrying out the directed strategy or action.

Best Practice: Develop and utilize a Long-range Planning/Forecasting Model that assesses both short-term and long-term financial implications of current and proposed policies, programs and assumptions over a multi-year period.

Best Practice: Prepare a Capital Improvement Plan that reflects a community's needs, is reviewed and updated annually, and fits within a financing plan that reflects the community's ability to pay.

Best Practice: Review and evaluate Financial Management Structure to ensure that the structure and reporting relationships of the community's finance offices support accountability and a cohesive financial team process.

Best Practice: Utilize Financial Trend Monitoring, modeled after the ICMA's Financial Trend Monitoring System (FTMS).

Housing and Economic Development Best Practices

Preparing for Success

Best Practice: Create an Economic Development Plan that engages diverse stakeholders, leverages local and regional economic strengths and assets, encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, and/or promotes workforce development planning and implementation.

Best Practice: Align Land Use Regulations, especially zoning, capital investments, and other municipal actions with Housing Development, Economic Development, Master, Land Use Priority or other plans for future growth. Promote development and reuse of previously developed sites.

Best Practice: Create and Distribute an Economic Development Guide/Manual to not only promote development goals and priorities, but also specifically and clearly outlines the community's policies and procedures related to zoning and permitting.

Best Practice: Create Opportunities for Engaging Diverse Stakeholders in economic development efforts, such as to assist with identification of priority development projects, improve local permitting processes, and proactively address obstacles to housing accessibility and affordability as well as job creation.

Best Practice: Create Cross-Sector Partnerships to help carry out community-driven responses to community-defined issues and opportunities for economic development.

Best Practice: Create a District Management Entity that engages public/private stakeholders to develop and support downtown revitalization efforts.

Best Practice: Adopt as-of-Right Zoning and/or Streamlined Permitting to promote development in priority districts.

Best Practice: Adopt Chapter 40R Smart Growth zoning to facilitate the creation of dense residential or mixed-use smart growth zoning districts, including a high percentage of affordable housing units, to be located near transit stations, in areas of concentrated development such as existing city and town centers, and in other highly suitable locations.

Competitiveness

Best Practice: Engage in an Economic Development Self-Assessment exercise to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas of opportunity.

Best Practice: Establish and Utilize Performance Data to evaluate the competitiveness of the community, conduct year to year comparisons, and measure performance against comparable communities.

Best Practice: Create a Public Dashboard to benchmark, monitor, and communicate to the public regarding various housing and economic development performance measures.

Housing

Best Practice: Create a Housing Production Plan (HPP) that accounts for changing demographics, including young families, changing workforce, and an aging population.

Best Practice: Amend Zoning By-Laws to allow for increased density and housing opportunities in a manner that is consistent with neighborhood character and supportive of aging in community.

Best Practice: Develop Sector Strategies and Plans in collaboration with various providers and stakeholders to address homelessness for specific high need population groups, such as homeless youth, veterans, older adults, and/or families.

Best Practice: Complete an Assessment of Fair Housing Report, including strategic goals in alignment with HUD's new rules to affirmatively further fair housing. Using HUD data, local data and knowledge, a significant community participation process, and the assessment tool provided by HUD, the community will prepare, complete, and submit its AFH to HUD.

Urban Renewal Planning

Best Practice: Determine need and appropriateness of establishing an Urban Renewal Entity in accordance with MGL chapter 121B. If prepared to proceed, develop action plan and timeline for the creation of the urban renewal entity.

Best Practice: Prepare an Urban Renewal Plan Application in accordance with MGL chapter 121B in partnership with the urban renewal entity.

Human Resources Best Practices

Best Practice: Cost-Out Collective Bargaining proposals so that the impact of the total package is known. This provides the municipality with a clear understanding of both short-term and long-term budgetary impacts.

Best Practice: Develop a Workplace Safety program so that the risk of on-the-job injuries is minimized.

Best Practice: Develop a formal Wage and Classification Plan that details, at a minimum, job descriptions, employee grades, and salary ranges, thereby providing the municipality with a tool to make pay decisions that are reasonable in comparison to similar work being carried out in all areas of city/town government.

Best Practice: Develop Employee Policies and Procedures for things such as discrimination, sexual harassment, information technology use, drug and alcohol, use of social media, and town-owned vehicles.

Best Practice: Manage employee benefit costs such as health insurance, dental insurance, unemployment insurance, and worker's compensation/111F; includes eligibility review and evaluation of insurance choices.

Best Practice: Prepare a Succession Plan to help address the pending wave of retirements that will challenge a municipality's ability to maintain service levels and utilize expertise and experience of mature workers through consulting or mentorship programs.

Best Practice: Explore Centralized Human Resources/Personnel Operations to improve service delivery and build efficiencies.

Information Technology Best Practices

Best Practice: IT Assessment - Perform a general IT assessment that results in a written evaluation and best practice recommendations. At a minimum, the assessment should include a review of hardware infrastructure, networking, backup, email and user account management.

Best Practice: Cybersecurity - Perform a cybersecurity assessment to identify human and technology risks within the environment, analyze and identify gaps in existing cyber security processes, assess vulnerability to external attack and identify steps to remediate identified issues.

Best Practice: Strategic Planning - Review technology organizational structure, spending and business goals across the community and develop a strategy to prioritize technology investments.

Best Practice: Regional/Shared Services - Design a regional shared IT services program to maximize technology resources across communities and/or school districts.

Best Practice: Business Continuity - Develop IT resiliency, recovery and contingency plans that are aligned with community realities and position the community to effectively manage unforeseen events.

Best Practice: Citizen Engagement - Develop a plan to improve digital communications with the public, including content structure on the website, practices around content creation and ownership and social media.

Best Practice: Transparency - Develop a document and/or records management strategy that results in operational efficiencies and improved responsiveness to the public.

Public Accessibility Best Practices

Best Practice: Undertake an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Develop a Transition Plan to comply with Federal civil rights laws that require public buildings to be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Best Practice: Strive for the Universal Participation (UP) designation from the Mass Cultural Council by encouraging and supporting arts and cultural facilities and events in the community.

Public Health Best Practices

Best Practice: Community Coalitions are critical partners for substance use disorder prevention that can be a pathway to becoming a Prevention Prepared Community. The Coalitions can use SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) Model as a guide for creating a thoughtful and comprehensive community prevention plan to address substance use and other related community issues. There are many prevention strategies to choose from with programs and practices that can be tailored to each unique community.

Best Practice: Assess where in the municipality overdoses occur and develop environmental solutions, such as: public education signage and outreach campaigns, ensuring that first responders carry naloxone and are trained in overdose response, and make street outreach teams aware of locations where overdose occur.

Best Practice: Using SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) to ensure a consistent data-driven planning process across the community to inform the selection of culturally responsive and sustainable strategies and prevention interventions that will have both a measurable effect and a meaningful impact on preventing the early onset of substance use disorder among youth, as well as addressing more acute issues such as reducing opioid misuse and preventing opioid overdoses.

Best Practice: Work to expand community access to all FDA-approved Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD), including promoting telehealth connections between patients and their providers where appropriate, coordinating with the criminal justice/correctional system and behavioral healthcare system, and making training on using MOUD available to addiction treatment and health/human services providers. Work to reduce stigma of substance use disorder and encourage evidence-based treatment.

Best Practice: Assess challenges posed by recent public health crises and identify opportunities for building public health infrastructure and staff capacity. Develop shared public health services with contiguous municipalities. Examples include environmental health; infectious disease prevention, reporting, and case management; emergency preparedness, including dispensing sites; animal and vector control; hazardous and toxic substances; inspections of retail food establishments, housing, recreational camps, and pools; and ability to set appropriate regulations, bylaws, and ordinances.

Best Practice: Convene local and state health and enforcement officials to develop a standardized response protocol, by region, for hoarding, including animal hoarding. Create a list of contacts and resources that can be accessed by the appropriate service agency, including but not limited to the: Department of Mental Health, Department of Children and Families, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Disabled Persons Protection Commission, and the Department of Veteran's Services. The list should be reviewed and updated frequently to contain the most up-to-date information.

Best Practice: Healthy Community Design focuses on changing policies and practices to create conditions for people to eat better and move more where they live, learn, work, and play. Conduct a Built Environment Regulatory Review (BERR), a point-in-time evaluation of existing municipal policies/plans/regulations. The review will provide a

baseline from which to prioritize strategies to promote walking and biking. This best practice can be combined with several other best practices that relate to municipal zoning and land-use.

Best Practice: Conduct a Community Food Assessment (CFAs), an evaluation of the food system within a single neighborhood/municipality/region that defines needs and assets to improve access to healthy foods. The evaluation may lead to a Community Food Plan that identifies priority actions (i.e., addition of food retail into a town's economic development plan). This best practice can be combined with several other best practices that relate to municipal zoning and land-use.

Best Practice: Implement and enforce evidence-based tobacco control strategies at the point of sale to reduce youth initiation of tobacco use.

Best Practice: Climate Change Adaptability Planning. Data collection, strategy development and planning at the local level are critical to the overall preparedness and long-term resilience to the effects of climate change. Develop a report that identifies: the range of climate impacts, associated potential health outcomes, vulnerable populations, the additional burden of health outcomes due to Climate Change, and the most suitable health interventions. Use the CDC's BRACE framework to develop and implement a plan that introduces health system program changes.

Best Practice: Develop foodborne illness outbreak protocols and assess capacity to enforce regulations that evaluate food systems.

Best Practice: Assess capacity to ensure all housing inspections include lead hazard identification and that lead inspections are conducted when requested by families with small children.

Best Practice: Local boards of health (LBOH) can take a leadership role to advance health equity by: 1) building internal infrastructure, 2) working across government; 3) fostering community partnerships, and 4) championing transformative change. LBOH may adapt strategic practices to advance health equity in local health both internally within their departments and externally with communities and other government agencies. DPH Office of Local and Regional Health and Office of Health Equity staff are available for support.

Best Practice: Implement the National CLAS Standards within local public health to help advance and sustain culturally and linguistically appropriate services by establishing a framework to serve the increasingly diverse communities.

Best Practice: Disaggregate data by race/ethnicity, income status, sexual orientation/gender identity and expression, and other key demographic factors to identify and address health inequities.

Best Practice: Collaborate with Emergency Management to ensure preparedness and planning efforts address gaps and ensure resiliency for essential public health and community functions. Using tools, such as CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) and DPH's Emergency Preparedness Portal, incorporate planning considerations for at-risk populations, including people with disabilities have access and functional needs in times of disasters and emergencies.

Public Safety Best Practices

Best Practice: Conduct Active Shooter Preparedness and Response Training in collaboration with the Massachusetts State Police Tactical Operations (STOP) Team, onsite with local law enforcement.

Best Practice: Establish an Emergency Preparedness Plan in partnership with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to develop and enhance a community's disaster and emergency response capabilities.

Best Practice: Establish Hazardous Material Response Protocols in conjunction with Regional Hazardous Materials Response Teams under the Department of Fire Services, to enable cities and towns to protect their citizens, the environment, and property during incidents involving a release or potential release of hazardous materials.

Best Practice: Hold In-service Training Programs for Municipal Police to better prepare local police officers and first responders for incidents involving domestic violence, mental health disorders, and substance abuse.

Best Practice: Convene an opioid task force, consisting of key stakeholders, to identify, implement, coordinate and improve strategies around the prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery of substance use disorders.

Best Practice: Adopt Standardized Tools for Domestic Violence Cases by partnering law enforcement with local domestic violence organizations to adopt a best practice policy on training and implementation of standardized, evidence informed danger and strangulation tools. Municipalities are encouraged to apply individually or as a collective.

Best Practice: Establish a Triad program (a partnership of three organizations—law enforcement, older adults, and community groups). This group maintains an ongoing schedule of community education to combat fraud and elder abuse involving the Attorney General's Office, Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation, District Attorneys, and other state agencies, as appropriate.

Regionalization/Shared Services Best Practices

Best Practice: Regionalize services and share resources among municipalities for efficient and effective service delivery to residents and taxpayers in this era of shrinking budgets, loss of seasoned employees to retirement, and increased need for service improvements.

Transportation / Public Works Best Practices

Safe Mobility

Best Practice: Develop a Safe and Mobile Older Drivers plan for the aging of the population by proactively addressing older driver issues, including education for older road users, infrastructure improvements, and transportation options.

Best Practice: Enhance citizen safety by establishing community-based programs to increase safety for all roadway users including pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, motorcycle, and alternative and shared mobility devices (ex. scooters and electric bikes). The community will demonstrate participation in the Commonwealth's Office of Public Safety and Security's trainings and conferences as well as the dissemination of public safety information to citizens. In addition to the Complete Streets program, communities are encouraged to participate in MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces grant program.

Best Practice: Ensure Safe Infrastructure so as to provide a safer environment for all users and modes by implementing traffic engineering enhancements. The municipality will demonstrate regular and routine improvements on locally-funded roads, such as cutting back vegetation at intersections where it is known to interfere with sight distance, clearing brush that obscures traffic signage, renewing or installing pavement markings, conducting nighttime surveys to check visibility and retro reflectivity, implementing traffic calming measures at known high crash locations.

Active Transportation

Best Practice: Implement Complete Streets by joining MassDOT's Complete Streets

Funding Program and demonstrating the integration of Complete Streets principles into regular planning and design practices on local roadways.

Best Practice: Utilize Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) fundamentals to create zoning around transit centers that maximizes bike, pedestrian, and transit use and which allows for lower levels of required parking and mixed use to put needed amenities near population centers.

Best Practice: Develop a Safe Routes to School program that also includes student education on pedestrian safety.

Training

Best Practice: Participate in the Bay State Roads, which provides on-going training and helps municipalities share ideas and information with other communities about state-of-the-art planning, design, and operational information for city and town public works managers.

Asset and Infrastructure Management

Best Practice: Inventory and Geo-Code all public works assets so that a database of every public works asset is created, geocoded and condition rated, which is used to inform capital planning, as well as emergency repair.

Best Practice: Develop a Pavement Condition Index that rates street condition for the municipality.

Best Practice: Develop a Multi-Year Vehicle Maintenance and Replacement Plan for their municipal vehicle fleet.

Best Practice: Develop a Bridge / Culvert Preventative Maintenance plan to help prolong the life of these critical transportation assets.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (Optional)

The purpose of this Expression of Interest is to give interested applicants an opportunity to articulate their overall goals, objectives, and preparedness as they relate to growth through community economic development. When completing the form, consider all of the funding requests that may be made in the full application. Forms submitted by the posted deadline will be reviewed by the state's economic development partner agencies, who can provide feedback and guidance for the best path forward for each project.

SECTION 1. Prospective Applicant & Project Information

1.1   Primary Location: (*Select from drop-down*)

EOHED Region	*(auto-filled)*	MassDOT District	*(auto-filled)*	Rural or Small Town	*(auto-filled)*
MDFA Regional Office	*(auto-filled)*	Gateway City	*(auto-filled)*	Housing Choice	*(auto-filled)*
Regional Planning Agency	*(auto-filled)*	MVP Community	*(auto-filled)*	MBTA Community	*(auto-filled)*

1.2   Organization Type: (*Select from following drop-down options*)

Public Entity:
☐ Municipality
☐ Public Housing Authority
☐ Redevelopment Authority or Similar Quasi-
   Governmental Agency
☐ Water or Sewer District
☐ Other Public Entity. Specify: _____

Non-Public Entity:
☐ Community Development Corporation
☐ Non-Profit Organization
☐ For-Profit Corporation

1.3   Applicant Organization Name: _____

1.4   Applicant Organization Legal Address: _____

1.5   City/Town: _____   1.6   State: _MA_   1.7   Zip Code: _____

1.8   CEO Name: _____   1.9   CEO Title: _____

1.10   CEO Tel.: _____   1.11 CEO Email: _____

1.12   Project Contact Name (if different): _____

1.13   Project Contact Title: _____

1.14   Contact Tel: _____   1.15   Contact Email: _____

1.16   Indicate any applicable certifications and/or classifications for this organization (For Non-Public Entities Only):

☐ Women-Owned Business Enterprise   ☐ LBGTQ-Owned Business Enterprise

☐ Minority-Owned Business Enterprise   ☐ Disability Business Enterprise

☐ Disadvantaged Business Enterprise   ☐ N/A

☐ Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise

1.17   Describe applicant, including organizations structure and primary economic development goals. _____

_____

_____ (*2,000 characters*) _____

SECTION 2 (P): Priority Projects / Initiatives – Describe up to top priority projects or initiatives that the applicant intends to submit in a One-Stop application for grant consideration. Describe the projects, areas, and/or sites and indicate the types of funding sought, even if unsure about the specific sources. This section is meant to provide state reviewers with insight into the prospective projects.

Project / Initiative One

P1.1   Name of Project/Initiative: _____

P1.2   If applicable, list the name and contact for any additional partner organizations. If this is a regional application, list other communities involved in the project: _____
        (*1,000 characters*)

P1.3   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum[1], what is the primary funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative: (*Check up to two)*

      ☐ Capacity Building   ☐ Infrastructure (horizontal construction)
      ☐ Planning and Zoning   ☐ Other: _____
      ☐ Site Preparation   ☐ Not sure
      ☐ Building (vertical construction)

P1.4   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, are there other type(s) of funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative? If not, please type "N/A". _____
        (*1,000 characters*)

P1.5   Brief Description of Project/Initiative. Indicate if project is phased and progress made to date: _____
        (*1,000 characters*)

P1.6   How much funding do you anticipate requesting from the One Stop for Growth?
        o   Less than $100,000
        o $100,000 to $500,000
        o $500,000 to $1,000,000
        o   Over $1,000,000

P1.7   What would you use the One Stop funding for? If possible, indicate specific scope of work. _____
        (*1,000 characters*)

P1.8   Please describe your timeline for your project and timing of the use of the One Stop funding. (Note that award decisions will not be public until fall 2022). _____
        (*1,000 characters*)

P1.9   Would you like to add a second project?
        ☐ Yes   ☐ No

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[1] "One Stop for Growth Development Continuum. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/one-stop-for-growth-development-continuum.

Project / Initiative Two

P2.1   Name of Project/Initiative: _____

P2.2   If applicable, list the name and contact for any additional partner organizations. If this is a regional application, list other communities involved in the project: _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*)

P2.3   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, what is the primary funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative: (*Check up to two)*
☐ Capacity Building   ☐ Infrastructure (horizontal construction)
☐ Planning and Zoning   ☐ Other: _____
☐ Site Preparation   ☐ Not sure
☐ Building (vertical construction)

P2.4   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, are there other type(s) of funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative? If not, please type "N/A". _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*)

P2.5   Brief Description of Project/Initiative. Indicate if project is phased and progress made to date: _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*)

P2.6   How much funding do you anticipate requesting from the One Stop for Growth?
o   Less than $100,000
o $100,000 to $500,000
o $500,000 to $1,000,000
o   Over $1,000,000

P2.7   What would you use the One Stop funding for? If possible, indicate specific scope of work. _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*)

P2.8   Please describe your timeline for your project and timing of the use of the One Stop funding. (Note that award decisions will not be public until fall 2022). _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*)

P2.9   Would you like to add a third project?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Project / Initiative Three

P3.1   Name of Project/Initiative: _____

P3.2   If applicable, list the name and contact for any additional partner organizations. If this is a regional application, list other communities involved in the project: _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*) _____

P3.3   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, what is the primary funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative: (*Check up to two*)

☐ Capacity Building   ☐ Infrastructure (horizontal construction)
☐ Planning and Zoning
☐ Site Preparation   ☐ Other: _____
☐ Building (vertical construction)   ☐ Not sure

P3.4   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, are there other type(s) of funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative? If not, please type "N/A". _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*) _____

P3.5   Brief Description of Project/Initiative. Indicate if project is phased and progress made to date: _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*) _____

P3.6   How much funding do you anticipate requesting from the One Stop for Growth?
o   Less than $100,000
o $100,000 to $500,000
o $500,000 to $1,000,000
o   Over $1,000,000

P3.7   What would you use the One Stop funding for? If possible, indicate specific scope of work. _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*) _____

P3.8   Please describe your timeline for your project and timing of the use of the One Stop funding. (Note that award decisions will not be public until fall 2022). _____
_____ (*1,000 characters*) _____

P3.9   Would you like to add a fourth project?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Project / Initiative Four

P4.1   Name of Project/Initiative: _____

P4.2   If applicable, list the name and contact for any additional partner organizations. If this is a regional application, list other communities involved in the project: _____
              (*1,000 characters*)

P4.3   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, what is the primary funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative: (*Check up to two*)

    ☐ Capacity Building   ☐ Infrastructure (horizontal construction)
    ☐ Planning and Zoning   ☐ Other: _____
    ☐ Site Preparation   ☐ Not sure
    ☐ Building (vertical construction)

P4.4   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, are there other type(s) of funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative? If not, please type "N/A". _____
              (*1,000 characters*)

P4.5   Brief Description of Project/Initiative. Indicate if project is phased and progress made to date: _____
              (*1,000 characters*)

P4.6   How much funding do you anticipate requesting from the One Stop for Growth?
    o   Less than $100,000
    o $100,000 to $500,000
    o $500,000 to $1,000,000
    o   Over $1,000,000

P4.7   What would you use the One Stop funding for? If possible, indicate specific scope of work. _____
              (*1,000 characters*)

P4.8   Please describe your timeline for your project and timing of the use of the One Stop funding. (Note that award decisions will not be public until fall 2022). _____
              (*1,000 characters*)

P4.9   Would you like to add a fifth project?
    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Project / Initiative Five

P5.1   Name of Project/Initiative: _____

P5.2   If applicable, list the name and contact for any additional partner organizations. If this is a regional application, list other communities involved in the project: _____
          (*1,000 characters*)

P5.3   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, what is the primary funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative: (*Check up to two*)

☐ Capacity Building   ☐ Infrastructure (horizontal construction)
☐ Planning and Zoning   ☐ Other: _____
☐ Site Preparation   ☐ Not sure
☐ Building (vertical construction)

P5.4   Based on the descriptions outlined for the One Stop's Development Continuum, are there other type(s) of funding you would like to explore for this project/initiative? If not, please type "N/A". _____
          (1,000 characters)

P5.5   Brief Description of Project/Initiative. Indicate if project is phased and progress made to date: _____
          (*1,000 characters*)

P5.6   How much funding do you anticipate requesting from the One Stop for Growth?
          o   Less than $100,000
          o $100,000 to $500,000
          o $500,000 to $1,000,000
          o   Over $1,000,000

P5.7   What would you use the One Stop funding for? If possible, indicate specific scope of work. _____
          (*1,000 characters*)

P5.8   Please describe your timeline for your project and timing of the use of the One Stop funding. (Note that award decisions will not be public until fall 2022)._____
          (1,000 characters)