



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Connecticut

The Boston Fed will post updates to this document as needed to reflect additional questions we receive from information sessions. If you have a question that you don't see answered here, please contact David Radcliffe at david.radcliffe@bos.frb.org.

<https://www.bostonfed.org/workingcities/connecticut/index.aspx>

What is the Working Cities Challenge?

The Working Cities Challenge (WCC) is an economic growth effort designed to strengthen leadership in smaller postindustrial cities in New England through a rigorous process that builds cross-sector collaboration to solve issues impacting the lives of these cities' lower-income residents and residents of color. The WCC is not just a grant competition – the process a city team uses and bolstering civic infrastructure also matter.

Based on what the Boston Fed learned from the Working Cities process in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, developing competitive and viable initiatives and the capacity to integrate the core elements of the Challenge - collaborative leadership, community engagement, evidence-based decision-making, and systems change - takes a lot of work and time.

Therefore, Working Cities Challenge in Connecticut **involves a two-step process**: first, teams have the opportunity to apply and compete for **design grants** of \$15,000 to fund and support the process of planning their initiatives and learning more about the model. Design grant RFPs and a letter of interest form will be released on **November 1, 2016**. Letters of interest are due **December 1, 2016** with full design applications due on **January 31, 2017**.

While the Boston Fed will accept more than one letter of interest from each city (December 1 deadline), we will only accept one design application per city (January 31). Where there is more than one letter of interest from a city, the Boston Fed will reach out to all who submitted a letter to encourage a single application. The design applications will be evaluated by an independent selection jury that will award 10-12 design grants in March 2017.

Design grantees will spend **six months** deepening their understanding of the WCC model and developing their initiatives. They will then be eligible to submit applications for **implementation prizes** in the fall of 2017. Only cities that were awarded design grants will be eligible to apply for implementation prizes. Like the design process, applications for three-year prizes will be evaluated by an independent jury, which will announce winners of the \$300,000 - 500,000, three-year prize by January 2018.

For the purposes of this competition, note that 'city' doesn't necessarily mean a municipality or local government, but rather a cross-sector team from a city or town.

Important dates:

November 1: release of design RFP application and letter of interest form

December 1: deadline for letters of interests
January 31: deadline for design RFP application

I About the Working Cities Challenge

1. What is the role of the Boston Fed?

The Boston Fed provides leadership and staff support for the WCC and assists with outreach, writing and distributing RFPs, receiving applications and collecting and disbursing funds through our fiscal agent. The Boston Fed also hires and supervises Working Cities staff, secures evaluators, manages the planning grant process and the learning community, and provides technical assistance to teams. The Boston Fed does not play a role in selecting winners for design and implementation grants.

2. How many planning awards and implementation awards does the WCC expect to give in CT? How large are these awards?

Cities will compete for design grants of \$15,000 to aid in the process of developing their proposals. We anticipate that 8-12 design grant awards of \$15,000 each will be awarded. Later, after the design process is completed, we anticipate that we will also award final implementation grants to 4-6 cities/towns of between \$300,000 and \$500,000 over three years. The precise number of grants will be determined by the CT WCC Steering committee based on the pool of funds available.

3. Does the Federal Reserve fund the Working Cities Challenge?

No, the Federal Reserve is not a grant-maker. Funding partners in Connecticut are: the State of Connecticut; AVANGRID Foundation; Stanley Black & Decker; Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals / BI Cares Foundation; Travelers Companies, Inc.; The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; Webster Bank; Eversource Energy; Liberty Bank Foundation; Bank of America; Hartford HealthCare; Barnes Group Foundation; Hoffman BMW of Watertown/Hoffman Auto Group; United Technologies Corp.; Charter Communications; Thomaston Savings Bank; Fairfield County's Community Foundation; Valley Community Foundation; Community Foundation of Greater New Haven; Community Foundation of Greater New Britain; Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut; Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut; Connecticut Community Foundation; Main Street Community Foundation; New Canaan Community Foundation; Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation; Jewish Community Foundation of Hartford. National funders are the Doris Duke Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, Living Cities, and NeighborWorks America.

4. How were the (16) eligible communities in Connecticut selected?

Eligibility was determined based on Boston Fed research about the importance of collaboration and leadership to economic outcomes for struggling small to midsize cities. Eligibility is restricted to **small- to mid-size cities and towns in Connecticut with** populations over 25,000 and median family incomes below the state's median family income and poverty rates above the state poverty rate.

5. What are the (16) eligible cities/towns in Connecticut?

Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, Hartford, East Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Torrington, Waterbury, West Haven, and Windham.

II Building Your Collaborative Team

1. How important are community engagement and racial equity¹?

Meaningful input and ongoing involvement of lower-income and diverse residents, including communities of color, are an important part of the process to identify and implement an effective economic growth initiative. City teams are encouraged to assess their current approach to engaging residents in a meaningful and sustained way, and consider what more needs to be done. Having a partner on your team with experience and capacity to support community engagement can be very helpful. The design phase provides structure to develop a plan, as well as time and ideas for helping understand and integrate community engagement in the design and implementation of initiatives.

It is important that city teams carefully consider racial equity as part of a broader public participation strategy and a team's overall plans including:

- how and who is involved in selecting and defining the community's challenge to address;
- how to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower residents and diverse constituencies in a sustained, meaningful way over time;
- the impact (including unintended consequences) that a team's proposed solution has on diverse populations, communities of color and relevant systems.

Because communities have different structures, capacity and readiness to address resident engagement and racial equity we understand that not everyone will have this aspect fully built out. However, we will look to see the commitment to undertaking the process to support authentic participation from a diverse group of residents and stakeholders. Note that the economic growth initiatives that communities take up need not be a challenge that is directly focused on improving racial equity.

2. Does a city or town's mayor or administrator have to be involved to win?

Cities and towns will assemble collaborative teams that demonstrate leadership across sectors, including the public sector. Mayors and City Managers are not required to participate, but can be part of core leadership team. They can also:

- Help engage partners, convene discussions;
- Align Working Cities effort with city priorities, policies, etc.;
- Engage city departments and relevant local systems.

3. Can (2) cities partner together on a joint effort, and submit one application?

Eligible cities or towns might want to consider a joint application if doing so helps them best address the challenge they have identified for their cities/towns. This may be true if:

¹ Racial equity is the proactive ability of community leadership to create policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce and sustain equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, outcomes and distribution of resources by institutions and systems. Goes beyond "anti-racism", with focus on systems, not individuals. It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity. Improving racial equity is built on an understanding of the underlying root causes of outcome disparities in our cities and regions.

- Two cities are trying to impact an issue that has drivers that operate at a larger scale than a single city, such as workforce or education issues.
- Two abutting eligible cities decide to focus on a neighborhood or other area that extends past city boundaries.
- One or both cities would benefit from increased capacity or expertise by involving partners both from within and outside their city.
- A joint application may support heightening the level of community engagement in your initiative; present an innovative approach to solving an entrenched problem; or allow (2 or more) cities/towns to take advantage of a key moment of change that involves both cities/towns.

Two or more eligible cities may submit (1) joint application to promote collaboration opportunities across city/town lines. Core elements of the competition - meaningful collaborations, community engagement, cross sector participation, and systems change - are still required and a joint application must demonstrate that award benefits will extend to *each city's low-income and residents of color* and that public, private and non-profit sector members and residents *from each city* will be actively engaged.

If a joint application makes it through all the rounds and is selected for a final Implementation grant award, the application would receive one standard implementation award (\$300,000 - \$500,000), and an additional \$200,000 Collaboration Award to support the involvement of additional partners.

Alternately, if a city's challenge and solution benefit from the involvement of one or a few entity(ies) outside of a town (employer, community college, hospital, non-profit, etc.), an eligible city may propose such a partnership. In this case, it is not necessary that all elements be in place for the second city (including public, private and non-profit sector members, community engagement, etc.). Note there while there is no additional funding with this approach, adding partners who help your team's effectiveness will strengthen your effort and therefore is likely to help your application.

Note that a partner from any sector may serve on more than one city team, though keep in mind that the partner will have to participate on both city teams throughout the design phase.

4. Is there a preference for new versus established teams and initiatives?

The WCC is not meant to replace or compete with an existing collaborative effort in town, but rather to deepen and broaden this work (where it exists). A community that builds on existing community / resident engagement and collaborative work may lead to a stronger application and increase the likelihood of success for the overall initiative. Please note that the WCC looks for all sectors (public, private, non-profit, community) to be involved on teams, so building on an existing effort may involve broadening the partnership. If there is another collaborative in town, the selection jury may ask how and why the team is partnering with them (or not).

III Application and Selection Process

1. When are important deadlines for the letters of interest and design grant applications?

The design RFP will be released on **November 1, 2017**. Teams have until **December 1, 2016**, to submit an **Expression of Interest**, which is a short form (also available on November 1) letting us know you plan to apply for a design grant. The complete design grant application – one per city – is due by **January 31, 2017**. All applicants will be interviewed by a selection committee prior to final award determination.

In March 2017, 10-12 design grants in the amount of \$10-15,000 for each community will be awarded to support city teams through a 4-5 month learning and planning process. The design phase will allow teams time to understand and integrate the Core Elements of the challenge and develop implementation-ready initiatives.

Early in the design phase (starting April 2017), implementation grant applications will be made available and teams can begin to refine work on their focus area initiative. Implementation grant applications will be due once the design phase is completed (exact date to be determined). The Core Elements document (available at the Working Cities information sessions and to be shared by-email and available on the website on November 1) provides definitions for each Element and where your team should be at each step of the way.

2. How do I access to the design application and other materials?

All pertinent grant information will be provided to applicants by e-mail to those who attended and/or RSVP'd to any of the Working Cities information sessions. Design applications and Expression of Interest forms will be submitted back to the Fed, also by e-mail, by December 1, 2016. Documents will also be available on the Fed Working Cities website starting November 1, 2016.

3. Who selects the cities that win either Design Grants or Implementation Grants?

There will be two independent juries assembled to review Design Grants and Implementation Grants. Juries assembled will not include the Boston Fed. Typical juries are composed of community development practitioners, national and local philanthropic representatives, private sector leaders, municipal administration and finance experts, technical assistance providers and other experts in areas relevant to city applications (such as workforce and education).

4. What is involved with the project evaluation?

To ensure that the design phase is effective at building the capacity of teams and helping them to develop high-quality initiatives, the Boston Fed will work with evaluators to understand the influence of this process on your team members and your work. By submitting an application for a design grant, each team agrees to fully participate in the evaluation, even if the team does not receive a grant. Participation may include completing a survey before and after the design phase and responding to additional questions from our evaluator. Responses of individual team members are confidential and will not be shared with the Boston Fed or the selection jury.

5. How will design phase applications be scored?

We will use a scoring system of points (up to 100 points possible) for each major section of the application as follows:

- Benefit economic well-being of low-income residents and communities of color up to 30 points
- Team composition and broad community input, including key stakeholders, leaders and community groups, including low-income residents and residents of color; teams may maximize scores with multi-town application and clarity describing relationship to any existing collaborative efforts up to 25 points
- Lead applicant's capacity to manage the team throughout the design process up to 15 points
- Team's ability to articulate a problem and a shared vision with potential for population-level impact in 5-10 years up to 15 points
- Likelihood that team will engage actively and thoughtfully in design phase work and that a significant number of team members will participate up to 15 points

6. What is the purpose of the team interview?

The independent selection committee that will award design grants recognizes that a brief, typewritten application may not fully capture your team's collaborative nature, capacity, and enthusiasm for taking on this work. Therefore, they would like to talk directly with your team by way of a brief (30-45 minute) interview with your team members. Teams who submit an acceptable written application (by January 31, 2017) will be

scheduled for an interview during which their team members will meet with members of the selection committee. Boston Fed staff will work with each lead applicant to manage interview logistics beforehand.

7. What can our team use the design grant to fund?

Design grant awards are intended to support your team in the development of its initiative. Eligible expenditures include but are not limited to staff time, consultants, meeting and event costs, and supplies. Funds cannot be used for lobbying activities or capital expenses. It is important to note that the amount of time and effort your team members will invest in the design process will likely exceed the grant amount. To help teams budget accordingly for the time needed to engage actively in the design phase, we require you to show at least a 20% in-kind match of grant funds (\$3,000 for the design phase) in your budget.

8. Can we change and/or adjust our design plans leading up to final implementation grant?

Yes. The design phase is intended to allow teams to thoroughly review their focus and plans. If the original focus does not make sense or is not feasible or changes for other reasons, teams will have time to adjust and change their focus accordingly.

9. When will teams have access to the implementation grant application?

The implementation grant application (due October 2017) will be made available early in the design phase. Teams will be able to refine their plans as they move through the design phase so that the teams are building on what will be required for implementation grant applications.

III Next Steps

If the WCC seems like the right fit for you and your partners, taking the following steps will help your city apply for a design grant by January 31, 2017:

1. Learn more about the goals and criteria of the Challenge

The WCC isn't the right fit for every stakeholder or collaborative. It is important for prospective applicants to familiarize themselves with our approach by carefully reviewing this FAQ and the design RFP, to be released **November 1, 2016**, as well as review the design phase requirements (at the end of this document).

2. Determine the problem you wish to focus on, and your vision for addressing it

A key feature of the Challenge is that the Boston Fed doesn't specify or provide support on what economic growth problem or opportunity your city team must focus on. Instead, we encourage you to work with other community leaders to select your own pathway to improving outcomes for low-income residents—one that is reflective of your city's needs, assets, and momentum. Successful proposals will also build a diverse, broad cross-sector team early on to help identify the challenge and implement the solution. Some Massachusetts cities are tackling local challenges in areas of workforce development, immigrant entrepreneurship, education, and neighborhood stabilization (with application to the broader city). Regardless of the issue area, cities co-created their initiatives with heightened engagement from mayors, anchor institutions (hospitals, universities, community college, library, local philanthropy, etc), key community nonprofits, residents, and businesses.

During the design phase, teams will work within a framework created by the Boston Fed and outside experts to set clear, realistic, and measurable goals for addressing that problem. Therefore, it is important for your team to begin with a clear understanding of the nature and scope of the challenge you're hoping to address.

3. Ensure that your team is representative of key stakeholders, all sectors and community residents

Early in the design phase – including prior to submitting a design application - teams should be composed of leaders representing your city's nonprofit, public, community residents, and private sectors (which can include anchor institutions as defined above). Because the design phase is intended to help your team further define your approach as well as your team, we understand that the composition of your team will likely evolve as you move through the process, and you may not yet have all essential partners at the table. Therefore, you will be given the opportunity to identify underrepresented sectors or stakeholders and strategies you may use to engage them during the design phase in your design grant application.

There is no required minimum number of team members, nor is there a maximum—but note that each member of the core team must commit to participating in all of the design phase sessions convened by the Boston Fed.

4. Determine which member(s) of your team will serve as the lead applicant.

Any team member's organization or entity can serve as the lead applicant, regardless of sector. The lead applicant is responsible for managing the \$15,000 design grant award. Lead applicants are also expected to manage the team throughout the process of the design phase, a time-intensive process that requires a certain level of capacity in collaborative process. The design grant selection committee will be assessing the lead applicant for this capacity. Because some teams may not have a single team member that is suited to manage both tasks, you may elect to identify two team members to serve as co-leads.

5. Express your intent to apply, so that you can connect with others interested in applying from your city and ensure that your team meets the requirement of submitting only ONE APPLICATION PER CITY.

While we know that many eligible cities are working on a number of long-term, cross-sector efforts that might be suited for the WCC, the Boston Fed will only accept one design grant application per eligible city. As we learned in the first round in MA, this requirement can go a long way toward building civic infrastructure in your city, because it necessitates communication and collaboration to ensure that teams do not inadvertently disqualify their city by submitting more than one application. Note that the Boston Fed cannot advise any city on a strategy for getting to one application.

To make a potentially difficult process a little easier, we are requiring all teams that wish to apply to register their intent by **December 1, 2016**. If there are multiple letters of interest submitted from one community, the Boston Fed will notify all respondents so that all interested parties can determine how their city will move forward with a single submission.

6. Familiarize yourself with what will be expected of your team during the design phase.

The design phase will demand a great deal of your team's time and energy. In addition to participating in four, full-day sessions between May and September 2017, your team will be expected to plan your initiative and compose your implementation grant application independently. Therefore, every member of each prospective team should review the overview of the design phase on the last page of this FAQ to ensure that they have the capacity to commit to this six-month process.

Working Cities Challenge Connecticut - Design Phase and Evaluation Overview

PURPOSE: The design phase is intended to support teams in their efforts to better understand and incorporate the core elements of the WCC within their initiatives: collaborative leadership, community engagement, evidence-based decision making, and systems change (those elements are defined in the Core Elements document of the WCC). The Boston Fed expects that teams will emerge from the design phase with:

- Heightened levels of understanding about how and why to integrate the Core Elements of the Challenge in their initiatives
- Team structure that includes new partners and/or reflects a deeper level of collaboration across the public, private and non-profit sectors
- Work plans that reflect a clear and thoughtful connection between strategies, short-term outcomes, and long-term goals
- Initiatives that are implementation-ready for teams that win the Challenge
- Initiatives that are viable and competitive for other funding sources, for teams that do not win the Challenge

STRUCTURE: The design phase will consist of 4-6 months of team planning opportunities and working sessions. Teams will participate in up to four day-long working sessions in Connecticut organized by the Boston Fed. Some of the questions that will be addressed in these sessions include:

- What is a long-term goal your team can realistically accomplish and track progress toward, and what additional partners need to be at the table to help your team succeed?
- How do institutional practices and cultural norms influence your day-to-day work, and how might these practices and norms be changed to help your team achieve its goal?
- What are the strategies and activities your team will need to undertake to accomplish this goal, and how will you know you are making progress?
- Why is community engagement important to accomplishing your goal, and how can you build your team's capacity to do this meaningfully throughout the process?
- What systems - including policies, practices, resource flows, and decision-making processes - affect your team's ability to succeed, and how can you intervene to create lasting change?

While the Boston Fed will create a structure for engaging in these conversations, and bring in practitioners and experts to share their experience with doing so, the Fed will not provide direct consulting and guidance to each team.

EXPECTATIONS: At a minimum, all individuals listed as core team members are expected to attend all working sessions. In order to get the most out of these sessions, teams may be asked to undertake some pre-work beforehand and some homework afterward, all of which will be directly connected to the implementation application.

Teams are also expected to work independently throughout this process to develop their initiatives and complete their applications. Acknowledging that \$15,000 design grants are unlikely to cover the full cost of undertaking this work, teams may need to contribute time and energy beyond what may be captured in your 20 percent in-kind match. Implementation grant applications will be made available early in the design phase and

once design winners are announced (spring 2017) winning teams will be able to begin planning their implementation application immediately.