



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Rhode Island

The Boston Fed will post updates to this document as needed to reflect additional questions we receive from prospective applicants after the start of the Challenge. If you have a question that you don't see answered here, please contact Armeather Gibbs at armeather.gibbs@bos.frb.org.

About the Working Cities Challenge

1. What is the Working Cities Challenge?

The Working Cities Challenge is an economic development effort designed to strengthen leadership in smaller postindustrial cities 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.

2. How were the thirteen eligible communities in Rhode Island selected?

Eligibility is restricted to **small- to mid-size cities and towns in Rhode Island** with populations of 15,000-250,000 people. These cities and towns must have median family income less than median for peer Rhode Island Cities (\$82,603) or high poverty (individual and family poverty rate above median for peer Rhode Island cities and towns, 8.9% and 5.9% respectively).

3. What are the thirteen eligible cities/towns in Rhode Island?

Burrillville, Central Falls, Cranston, East Providence, Johnston, Newport, North Providence, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, West Warwick, Westerly and Woonsocket;

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

No, the Federal Reserve is not a grant-maker. Funding partners in Rhode Island are Commerce Rhode Island, Rhode Island Housing, the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, the Rhode Island Foundation, Delta Dental of Rhode Island, Bank of America, Washington Trust Company, AT&T, New England, Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) and Verizon. National funders are the Doris Duke Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, Living Cities, and NeighborWorks America.

5. What is the role of the Boston Fed?

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

Team Composition

6. Must every sector be represented on our team in order to qualify for a design grant?

Yes. As noted within the Expression of Interest form, teams must be comprised of leaders representing your city's nonprofit, public, and private sectors as well as local low income and residents of color. The design phase is for planning and we understand that your team may not yet have all essential partners at the table. The design phase will allow teams time to reach out to additional members with a focus on underrepresentation of sectors or stakeholders. Anchor institutions such as hospitals and universities may count as private sector partners if their involvement is based on their role as employers, procurers, and generators of economic activity.

7. How many members should my team have?

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

8. Can a team include members that are not based in the target city?

Teams may include members that are not based in or exclusively focused on the target city. However, Working Cities Challenge funds may not be used to support work that primarily benefits residents outside of the eligible cities. Initiatives will ultimately be judged only on the intended systems changes and impacts created for low-income and residents of color within the target city.

9. What is the role of the lead applicant during the design phase, and who can serve in that role?

Any organization or entity represented on the team may serve as the lead applicant, and teams may elect to have two entities serve as co-leads for the design phase. Because grant funds can only be disbursed to tax-exempt entities, a private sector lead will need to identify a nonprofit or public sector co-lead that can act as the team's fiscal agent. In addition to managing the \$15,000 design grant award, lead applicants are also expected to manage the team and be the key contact throughout the design phase. This is a time-intensive process that requires a certain level of capacity that the application will gauge. For the implementation phase, teams will need to select one lead applicant, only.

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

No. Cities and towns will assemble collaborative teams that demonstrate leadership across sectors, including the public sector, but the city's leadership does not have to be involved to assemble a winning bid.

11. Can two cities partner together and apply for one application?

Yes. Two cities may submit one joint application to further 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 local leaders 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 the standard implementation award (\$300-\$500,000), and an additional \$100,000 Collaboration Award.

12. How will design phase applications be scored?

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

- Focus on low-income residents up to 30 points
- team composition; inclusion of key stakeholders, leaders and community groups, including low-income residents and residents of color; consideration given to cities/towns that submit one joint application; 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 for how the problem would be addressed up to 15 points
- Likelihood of significant number of team members who will commit to and actively and thoughtfully participate in design phase work up to 15 points

13. What is the advantage of two cities collaborating and submitting one application?

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:

- Two cities are trying to impact an issue that has drivers that operate at a larger scale than a single city, such as workforce issues.
- Two abutting 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 two (2) cities/towns to take advantage of a key moment of change that involves both cities/towns;

Application and Selection Process

14. 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 Fed. Typical juries are comprised of community

development practitioners, national and local philanthropic representatives, municipal administration and finance experts, and technical assistance providers.

15. How do I get access to the design application and/or the implementation grant and other information?

All pertinent grant information will be provided to applicants by e-mail. Applications, Expression of Interest forms, etc., will be submitted back to the Fed, also by e-mail. Documents will also be available on the Working Cities Challenge webpage:

<http://www.bostonfed.org/workingcities/rhode-island/application-selection-process.htm>

16. 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 May 31, 2016) 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.

17. How many planning awards and implementation awards does the WCC expect to give in RI? 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 seven to eleven 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 three cities/towns of between \$300,000 and \$500,000. The precise number of grants will be determined by the steering committee based on the pool of funds available.

18. 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) in your budget.

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

The design grant selection committee's criteria (found on page 1 of the Design Grant Application) do not explicitly address whether a team has worked together before. However, the committee may elect to give additional consideration to team that demonstrates a history of working together or, conversely, a team that reflects a promising new approach to collaborating around a selected problem.

20. Will a similar design phase scoring process be used when final Challenge applications are reviewed?

No. The core elements of the Working Cities Challenge remain as the critical components of all plans, and will guide selection of implementation winners. Those elements are: collaborative leadership, community engagement, systems change, evidence based decision making, and systems change. When final implementation awards are made, it will be expected that teams will successfully provide a much higher level of detail, readiness and planning that reflects more advanced and refined plans in the final round.

21. More than one team from out city/town is interested in submitting an application. Can the Boston Fed help us get multiple applications down to one?

The Boston Fed will help you identify other prospective applicants by sharing the Expressions of Interest we receive from lead applicants via email by **5:00 p.m. on April 29, 2016**. However, the Boston Fed cannot advise any city on a strategy for getting to one application. The importance of collaborating to ensure that only one application is submitted on behalf of your city cannot be overstated: if the Boston Fed receives more than one design grant application from a single community, that city will be deemed ineligible for a design grant and thus an implementation grant as well. Therefore, it is essential that prospective applicant teams work together to determine how to get to one application.

Selecting a Challenge and Describing an Approach

22. What types of projects might the cities take on?

Competing cities determine the focus of their initiative, based on strengths, priorities and opportunities at a local level. The Fed does not dictate the focus, but it must have significant impact on low- and moderate-income residents and residents of color. Some Massachusetts cities are tackling local challenges in areas of workforce development, immigrant entrepreneurship, education, and neighborhood stabilization. Regardless of the issue area, cities co-created their projects with heightened engagement from mayors, anchors, key community nonprofits, residents, and businesses.

23. 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 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.

24. When will teams get access to the implementation grant application?

The implementation grant application 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.

25. How developed should initiatives be at key points in the process of participating in the Challenge?

The first step in the overall process is to submit an Expression of Interest which is a short form letting us know you plan to apply for a design grant. 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, implementation grant applications will be made available and teams can begin to refine work on their focus area initiative. Implementation grants will be due once the design phase is completed (exact date to be determined). The Core Elements document (<http://www.bostonfed.org/workingcities/rhode-island/application-selection-process.htm>) provides definitions for each Element and where your team should be at each step of the way.