COVID-Safe Cooling Program Guidance (2022)

The Barr Foundation, with the support of the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), has provided emergency funding to help community organizations and municipalities respond to the health risks of extreme heat to residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The primary goal of the **COVID-Safe Cooling (CSC) Program** is to ensure that individuals and families experience safe temperatures in their homes and neighborhoods, with a special focus on meeting immediate needs related to extreme heat this summer for those most vulnerable. The program also seeks efforts this summer to contribute to equitable, resilient community support systems and to inform future investments and strategies that will protect residents from extreme temperatures.

Who Should Apply

Municipalities will apply to a fund administered by MAPC, and community-based organizations (CBOs) will apply to a fund administered by MyRWA, but municipalities and CBOs are encouraged to collaborate on projects. Eligible communities include Boston (CBOs only), Chelsea, Everett, Revere, Brockton, Lawrence, and Lynn. Any municipal department, including but not limited to the Mayor's Office, Planning and Development, Public Health, Parks and Recreation, School Department, and Council on Aging are eligible to apply.

Types of Projects Eligible for Funding

The CSC Program team has identified four categories of projects listed below. Applicants can propose project types that fit one or more of these categories in their project scope. Project examples are included in the Appendix. If you have a project idea that does not fit under these categories, contact the Program Team for support and guidance. In addition to projects that address extreme heat, we are also interested in projects and solutions that build resilience to extreme weather year-round. **Funding awards will range from $25,000 to $50,000.**

1. **Cool At Home:** Interventions to promote safe and affordable access to in-home cooling.
2. **Cool Public Spaces**: Interventions to provide outdoor cooling refuge and to encourage use of publicly accessible cooling spaces.
3. **Cool Communications**: Interventions to promote education and awareness building of heat risks and adaptation measures.
4. **Investments in the Future**: Projects to sustain and expand 2020 or 2021 Covid-Safe Cooling Grant-funded projects and other pilot initiatives to extreme temperatures to address longer-term climate, health, and community needs.

Funding Priorities | Review Criteria

The project:

- Benefits populations most likely to be impacted by and vulnerable to climate-driven heat (e.g., older adults, young children, pregnant people, outdoor workers, low-income renters, people experiencing homelessness, people with heat sensitive health conditions).
- Aligns with the objectives of the COVID-Safe Cooling Grant Program:
    - Improves resilience to climate-driven extreme heat.
    - Improves resilience to extreme temperatures or other climate hazards that are inclusive of climate-driven heat.
    - Follows CDC COVID-19 public health recommendations.
- Can be reasonably completed before September 30th, 2022 (if a summer-only project) or March 2023 (if project addresses additional hazards). Feasibility shall be determined based on:
    - Project budget: Are funds requested plus any matching funds sufficient to cover the cost of proposed activities?
    - Partnerships: Does the grantee have the partnerships necessary to accomplish their project goals, or have plans for forming these in a timely manner? Has the grantee demonstrated thoughtful consideration of stakeholders and how best to optimize collaboration across the municipality and community-based organizations?
- Creates opportunities for learning, replication, scaling, and development of best practices.

Additional consideration will be given to projects that:

- Advance long-term resilience through capacity building, education, technical assistance, pilot interventions, and/or permanent installations of equipment or services.
- Advance work to reduce fossil fuel energy use and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Meet multiple community public health and/or climate goals, such as a pop-up food bank with outdoor cooling measures next to a COVID-19 vaccination site.
- Work to provide multiple co-benefits, such as improving indoor air quality.

Project Reporting and Evaluation

The CSC team hopes that these projects will create opportunities for learning that can be applied to long-term heat adaptation planning and interventions. Municipal and organizational staff leading these projects will be asked to respond to an end of project survey and participate in an exit interview. The CSC team will also host 3-4 (dependent on demand) Learning Community Sessions to bring grantees together for collective planning, problem-solving, reflection, and learning. **CBO applicants: Please ensure that your budget reflects staff time needed to participate in these activities.**

Key Dates and Timeline

The deadline to apply is **Friday, April 8th** with applications being accepted on a rolling basis after that.

Grant Program Kickoff	March 1st
Expression of Interest and Grant Application Released	March 1st
Grant Application Response Due	Friday, April 8th (rolling thereafter)
Applicants Notified of Award Decision	Early May
Contracting	May
Funds Disbursed	May (dependent on signed contract/letter of agreement)
Project Implementation/Grant Period	Grant period will depend on type of project and needs addressed: Projects planning to address summer 2022 cooling needs ONLY should be completed by September 30th, 2022. Projects inclusive of activities to address winter heating needs or preparation for summer 2023 should be completed by March 30th, 2023.

Additional Guidance & Resources

- **Applicants from within the same municipality are strongly encouraged to explore opportunities to collaborate on their cooling interventions.** Collaboration can lead to more holistic and impactful projects. Several 2020 cooling projects demonstrated strong, multi-sector and multi-partner collaborations among municipalities, community-based organizations, and service providers. Both municipalities and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for funding.
- **Please ensure that you are allocating funds to cover staff time** related to implementing project activities (e.g., cooling equipment distribution), capacity building (e.g., training, learning community meetings), and stipends/salaries for outreach workers.
- **Applicants can also apply now for extreme weather interventions during the winter months.** While the primary focus of the COVID-Safe Cooling Grant Program is keeping people safe and healthy during extreme heat events, we also are supportive of projects and solutions that build resilience to extreme weather year-round.

Additional Resources:

MAPC Extreme Heat Resources Page

MAPC Extreme Heat Communications and Social Media Toolkit

Appendices

A. Project Examples
B. Budget Template
C. Cooling Equipment Purchasing Information
D. Sample Letter of Agreement

Appendix A. Project Examples

The examples below do not represent an exhaustive list and reflects what we have learned from the prior two years of the Covid-Safe Cooling Program and our conversations with municipal and community-based organization representatives.

1. Cool at Home | Interventions to promote safe and affordable access to in-home cooling.

- **Purchase and distribute fans, air conditioning units, and wearable cooling devices** to residents without access to in-home cooling and least able to leave home for their cooling needs. Some wearable cooling devices can function without use of electricity, in case of a potential power outage.
- **Provide utility bill assistance** to help residents cope with the added expense of operating cooling equipment.
- **Facilitate linkages to cost-saving home energy programs** like Mass Save and the Weatherization Assistance Program that can promote long-term resilience to extreme temperatures and lower utility costs through weatherization, energy-efficient heating and cooling, discounted utility programs, and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)[1] assistance.
- **Facilitate access to overnight non-congregate emergency shelter** in hotels or motels to ensure individuals at greatest risk of heat-related health impacts have access to air-conditioned sleeping accommodations and power for electrically-powered medical devices (in case of an outage).
- **Encourage the installation of air-source heat pumps (ASHPs)** in households to provide energy efficient, pollution-free cooling and heating. Possible projects may include educating residents and businesses about ASHPs, running a Cool Smart-Heat Smart campaign, or installing ASHPs in homes or at a municipal or community facility also used for sheltering and/or schools.

2. Cool Public Spaces | Interventions to provide outdoor cooling refuge and to encourage use of publicly accessible cooling spaces.

[1] As administered in Massachusetts, LIHEAP provides income-eligible households with winter heating assistance. However, any unused benefit can be applied towards electric utility expenses. https://www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-about-low-income-home-energy-assistance-program-liheap

Why is outside a safer choice?

Outdoor activities pose a significantly lower risk of spread of the Covid-19 virus than indoor activities do. Studies show that people are more likely to be exposed to Covid-19 when they are closer than 6 feet apart from others for longer periods of time, especially in poorly ventilated spaces.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021)

- **Deploy cooling "pop ups" with temporary movable shade, seating, and misting equipment** for people who are standing in line at businesses, Covid-19 testing and vaccination sites, and food distribution hubs. Cooling pop-ups can also be deployed at parks, along pedestrian routes, and in seating areas outside housing developments to enhance cooling refuge and to facilitate safe outdoor programming.
- **Install permanent cooling features in outdoor public spaces,** including vegetated or structural shade, seating, drinking fountains/hydration stations, misting, and spray features. Communities may also consider temporary installations, such as reflective pavements, to pilot ideas for potential permanent installation. Artist partnerships may support engagement and design of both temporary and permanent outdoor cooling installations.
- **Expand access to water for drinking and sanitary uses,** by installing temporary or permanent hydration stations in commercial areas and along pedestrian corridors, expanding hours at public and non-profit facilities with public showers, and distributing drinking water.
- **Implement Covid-19 public health measures in outdoor cooling spaces,** including parks, plazas, splash pads, and pools. Activities might include posting signage installing physical guides to facilitate physical distancing, distributing masks, etc. Consider employing additional recreation staff (including through youth employment) to supervise spray parks and other outdoor cooling features to encourage physical distancing, sanitization, and other precautions. See CDC and National Recreation and Park Association guidance on COVID-19 and parks and recreation.
- **Adapt cooling centers to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission,** including by implementing physical distancing measures, health screenings, rapid Covid-19 testing, distributing masks, and air filtration improvements. See CDC guidance on COVID-19 prevention in cooling centers. Ensuring that these spaces are well advertised, accessible, equipped with wifi and power for personal devices, and programmed can encourage their use. See CDC summary of strategies to improve effectiveness of cooling centers.
- **Enhance the capacity of community-serving spaces to provide cooling and emergency aid.** Schools, childcare centers, churches, and non-profit community spaces provide services, programming, and spaces for gathering throughout the summer. They are also trusted purveyors of information during emergencies. Installing air conditioning (integrated with other energy efficiency measures) and back-up power sources can ensure that these spaces are able to provide cooling refuge throughout the summer, including during heat

emergencies. Increase capacity for heat emergencies by also providing emergency preparedness training for staff, expanded hours during emergencies, and distributing food and cooling kits.

3. Cool Communications | Interventions to promote education and awareness building of heat risks and adaptation measures.

- **Train and partner with trusted messengers in the community** to encourage heat risk screening, information sharing, and prevention measures. Information may cover heat-illness risks, first aid, prevention measures, and cooling resources, such utility bill and weatherization assistance. Trusted messengers may include caregivers, healthcare providers, staff and volunteers from neighborhood and community groups, religious organizations, and mutual aid networks. Funding may be used to support salaries and stipends for messengers to support their participation in training and outreach activities.
- **Develop creative heat health messaging campaigns** to spread awareness of heat risks and help people access cooling resources and/or implement low-cost, low-tech indoor cooling measures. Messages can be tailored to specific audiences, including older adults, workers, parents of young children, and people with heat-sensitive health conditions. Messaging should be culturally and linguistically inclusive and may include video, print, social media, and word of mouth. Artist partnerships may support creative messaging.
- **Integrate heat risk and adaptation messaging with other communications campaigns**, such as aligned efforts to encourage vaccine access, testing, and energy program participation. Vaccination and testing can expand the range of cooling options available to individuals.

4. Investments in the Future | Projects to sustain and expand 2020 or 2021 Covid-Safe Cooling Grant-funded projects and other pilot initiatives to extreme temperatures to address longer-term climate, health, and community needs.

- **Evaluate your cooling activities** to document and learn from project implementation and impact. Communities may choose to conduct an evaluation of their 2020 and/or 2021 Covid-Safe Cooling project and/or integrate evaluation and reporting activities into a proposed project. Grantees are **strongly** encouraged to integrate evaluation activities into their projects.
- **Engage residents and organizational stakeholders** to explore opportunities to adapt, sustain, or expand pilot cooling efforts. 2020 and/or 2021 Covid-Safe Cooling projects demonstrated many innovative, multi-sector partnerships to support cooling interventions.
- **Develop and implement pilot interventions that test longer-term strategies** for sustaining climate-smart healthy cooling and resilience measures to combat extreme temperatures and weather. Try out small-scale demonstrations, such as technical assistance to a rental unit or multifamily home to install weatherization plus ASHPs or overcome barriers to those measures. Evaluate before and after cost, energy, and GHG savings,

and design ways to scale up best practices for technical assistance and support to renters and homeowners.

APPENDIX B. Sample Budget (for information purposes only)

Air Conditioners ($250 per AC x 50 units= $12,500)

Cooling Kits (branded water-bottles and cooling cloths) ($25/kits x 200 units= $5,000)

Communications- printing handouts and distribution ($500)

Staff time – 100 hours for project coordination at $50/hr = $5,000

Total Request: $23,000

Excel Budget Template: COVID-Safe Cooling_budget template_5.18.21.xlsx

APPENDIX C. Cooling Equipment Purchasing Information

Lessons learned from 2020

During the first round of the COVID-Safe Cooling Strategies Program, MAPC provided support to grantees interested in purchasing cooling equipment including air conditioners, box fans, evaporative coolers, and wearable cooling devices. This included researching where to find cooling equipment, who had the best prices, and what models and features were available. MAPC also coordinated a group purchase of air conditioners and box fans to help grantees find equipment during a nation-wide supply shortage and to ensure competitive pricing. We are committed to providing similar support to grantees during the 2021 COVID-Safe Cooling Strategies Program.

This resource is designed to help applicants and grantees develop their project scopes and budgets to incorporate cooling equipment. Pricing and availability may vary. The details below are provided for informational purposes only and are not guaranteed. Please note, municipal entities are required to follow applicable State procurement laws.

Air Conditioners

We encourage you to consider the following as you develop their project scopes and budgets:

- **Price** – Through the MAPC-coordinated group purchase, grantees purchased 246 Friedrich 5,000 BTU ENERGY STAR air conditioners at $268 per unit. Other units purchased or priced up by grantees cost $138 (Garrison 5,000 BTU, not ENERGY STAR) and $311 (LG 10,000 BTU, ENERGY STAR). Prices may vary depending on order size and availability.
- **Size** – Air conditioners come in different sizes based on their cooling capacity measured in British thermal units, or BTUs, per hour. Most grantees in 2020 purchased 5,000 BTU per hour air conditioners which will typically cool a small room of 100 to 150 square feet (e.g. 10' x 10' or 10' x 15'). See ENERGY STAR's room air conditioner buying guidance for more information about sizing.

- **Efficiency** – Grantees are encouraged to look for energy-efficient models such as those with the US EPA's ENERGY STAR rating, awarded to air conditioners that are at least 10% more efficient than other models. This ensures that the lowest amount of fossil fuels are being used to operate the device, while also keeping people cool.
- **Type** – Most grantees provided window air conditioners like those listed above, but some also provided mobile evaporative coolers such as the Arctic Air Evaporative Cooler ($41.99 at Ace Hardware) and the Hessaire MC18M 1,300 CFM Evaporative Cooler ($169.99 at Ace Hardware).

Box Fans

Grantees also purchased box fans, a low-cost, energy-efficient cooling equipment option. For municipal governments interested in purchasing off the statewide contract, 20-inch box fans are available for about $20 each. Last year, grantees purchased units similar to the Lasko 20-in. 3 Speed White Box Fan ($18.97 at Home Depot).

Offsetting the Cost of Operation

Some grantees who provided cooling equipment also provided utility assistance payments to offset the increase in electricity costs from running the equipment. These costs will vary based on the type of equipment and how it is used, but we wanted to provide some examples to help with budgeting if you are interested in providing utility assistance.

- The manufacturer's estimated yearly energy cost for the Friedrich 5,000 BTU air conditioners that we purchased in bulk is $42 (source, p. 4). Electricity rates are relatively high here in Massachusetts, so the cost may be closer to $60 or $80 per year.
- The manufacturer's estimated yearly energy cost for the LG 10,000 BTU air conditioners purchased by one grantee is $80 assuming the national average electricity cost of 13 cents per kilowatt-hour (source). With higher rates in Massachusetts, the cost might be closer to $100 or $150 per year.

Timing

Grantees are encouraged to plan ahead and order equipment as early in the season as possible to ensure that the equipment is in stock and that it can be distributed in time.

Storage, Delivery, and Installation

Grantees found the logistics of storage, delivery, and installation to be one of the most challenging parts of their projects. Storing large quantities of cooling equipment can take up a lot of space. Window air conditioners can be heavy and difficult to install, particularly for seniors and people with disabilities. We encourage you to think about where the cooling equipment will be stored and how you plan to get it to the people who need it. Consider partnering with your municipal government, a food bank, or another community organization with storage space and experience distributing supplies to the target populations you plan to serve through your project. If you want to rent storage space or pay for installation, make sure you build the cost of that into your project budget.

Mini-Split Heat Pumps

Mini-split heat pumps are like super-efficient air conditioners that also provide heat. They cost more to install (think thousands, not hundreds of dollars per unit), but they can provide most or all of the heating and cooling a home needs quietly and efficiently. While the low cost of fossil gas can make mini-split heat pumps more expensive to run in the short term for those currently heating with gas, those heating with oil or propane can reduce their energy bills immediately. Learn more about heat pumps at https://www.masssave.com/en/learn/residential/mini-split-heat-pump-tips.

Contact Information

Questions about cooling equipment purchasing? Contact Brooks Winner at MAPC (bwinner@mapc.org, 617-933-0785).

APPENDIX D. Sample Letter of Agreement for Municipal Applications

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

AND THE CITY OF XXXXX

FOR THE DISBURSEMENT AND USE OF

COVID-SAFE COOLING STRATEGIES FUNDING

Pursuant to the terms established on or about February 18, 2022 by and through the Barr Foundation, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council ("MAPC") has been selected to disperse emergency funds in order to assist Cities of XXXXX ("City") in their efforts to combat extreme heat conditions amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under its terms, MAPC will disburse two payments of $XX,XXX to the City for its use in providing cool strategies to residents amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. The first disbursement will be done via check as soon as possible after the execution of this Agreement and the second disbursement will be done via check after the completion of the mid-grant check-in.

The City can use this funding to cover expenditures to implement cooling strategies amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, for the following purposes identified in City's' grant proposal, as determined by the agreement with the Barr Foundation.

- Development and Dissemination of Communications Materials
- Distribution of Personal Cooling Equipment
- Hydration Assistance
- Utility Bill Assistance
- Provision of Overnight Cooling Shelter
- Adaptation of Existing Cooling Infrastructure
- Installation of New Cooling Infrastructure
- Heat Health Assessment and Data Collection

- Heat Health Training and Capacity Building

The City is wholly responsible for documenting the use of said funds and keeping accurate and detailed records as to how the funding is deployed. The City is also wholly responsible for reporting on the use of said funds to any authorized party seeking such information and holds MAPC harmless from any such obligations. MAPC can at any time seek information on the use of said funding from the City but MAPC is not responsible for the accuracy or completeness of the records it obtains.

If there are further funds distributed by the Barr Foundation through MAPC to Cities and Towns, the additional disbursement shall be governed by separate agreements.

This letter constitutes the entire agreement between MAPC and the City. Any and all amendments to these terms shall only be effective upon the written agreement of MAPC and the Town.

This Agreement is hereby signed and dated by the Chief Executive Officer of MAPC and a binding authority of the City.

_____	_____
Binding Authority	**Executive Director**
City of XXXXX	**MAPC**
Date signed: _____	**Date signed:** _____