

**MESM ACADEMY:**

**Grant Writing & Preparing A  
Project Pipeline**

**November 3, 2025**

This workbook was developed by Naomi Mermin Consulting, a woman-owned (WOSBE certified) healthy housing and environmental strategy firm. Our firm's strength is identifying strategic actions that support tangible and sustainable change for a cleaner and healthier environment. We determine strategic intervention points and bring diverse groups together to work toward common goals. To governments, nonprofits, and small businesses, we offer strategic management, project design, facilitation, organizational development, and marketing and communications services related to the environment and health.

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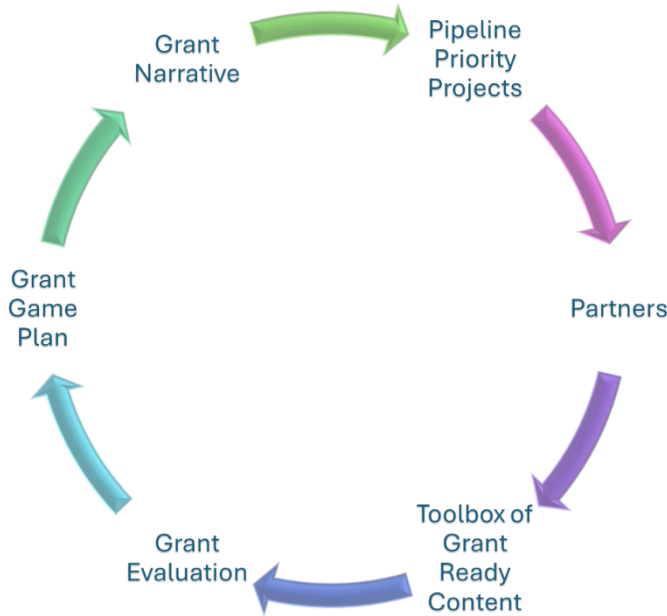
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# Introduction – The Virtuous Cycle of Grant Writing

The biggest mistake you can make in seeking funding is to start with a grant opportunity and try to find a project to fit it. Grant opportunities have very specific criteria and short turnaround timelines. As a Municipal Energy Manager, your goal is to get energy conservation projects completed. Energy projects often require substantial technical assessment, many require design and engineering, and comprehensive projects need a stacked capital budget (i.e., funding from multiple sources). Most large energy projects also require the key stakeholders in your community to be invested and engaged.

In this training and with this workbook, we’re giving you a tried-and-true methodology for becoming successful in attracting additional funding—winning grants—for the projects that matter most to your community.

The training session and this workbook present a linear path. Your reality will look different. You may find yourself with a grant opportunity without having completed all of the tried-and-true steps we outline. Don’t worry! You can do any of these steps out of order! This workbook offers additional details and resources that will allow you to work from where you are now and proceed to deepen your understanding and practice over time. You can always come back to the processes laid out and continue to work on the program to prepare for successful writing and winning grants. We hope this will become a **virtuous cycle**, not a one-time activity.



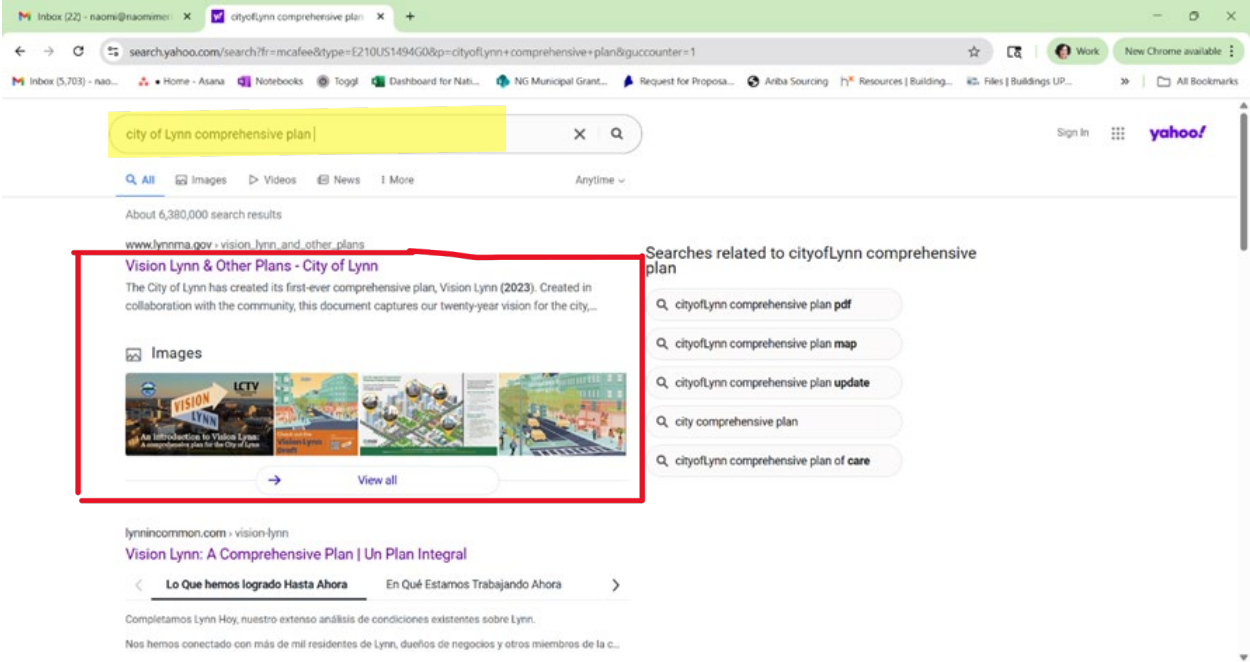
# Understanding Your Community’s Priorities

Most communities have existing plans and previous grant applications that provide detail about the community’s priorities. If you don’t already have a copy of your community’s comprehensive plan or capital plan, try searching:

- *your city or town name* comprehensive plan
- *your city or town name* capital budget 2026

Not all communities will have a comprehensive plan or capital plan. Many small communities may have information in their annual budgeting documents.

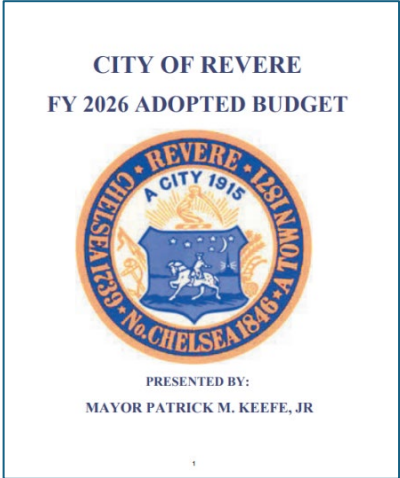
Other plans which can help you learn about your community’s priorities: Green Communities Plan, Climate Action Plan, Strategic Plan, Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Assessments and Plans. Here’s what we found when we searched for “City of Lynn comprehensive plan”.



In addition to a recently completed comprehensive plan, the search turned up links to additional plans: a workforce development plan, a downtown recovery plan, and a coastal vulnerability and regional adaptation plan. These are all likely to have relevant background information on the city and relevant priorities related to energy efficiency, electrification and resilience. Generally, these plans have gone through a formal community engagement

process, which allows the priorities identified in the plan to be discussed in grants as community priorities. From these plans you can pull valuable background text, maps, and pictures to make your case for investing in municipal buildings. We’ll talk more about this in the “Build a Grant Writing Toolbox” section.

Capital plans are different from these other broad planning documents. A capital plan identifies the highest priority capital outlays needed in the next 1-5 years. Many will include the committed funding—bonding or other capital commitments the City has voted to implement. These plans, even if they only represent one year’s capital plan, or annual budget, have already been vetted through multiple city leaders. For an example of searching for relevant information in a capital plan please see Appendix B: Sample Capital Plan Search.



### Critical Facilities

Many grants targeting energy efficiency or clean energy will prioritize projects with other community benefits and specifically support community resiliency. This is why understanding which municipal and school buildings are providing critical services can be key to finding and securing grant funds. Unfortunately, there is no central database of “critical” facilities. You will learn which buildings are critical by talking with your colleagues in the city and school departments, as we discuss in Building Relationships: Internal Partners.

If the facility is a “critical facility,” projects at the site will likely be more competitive for clean energy grants. And your priority clean energy project may become eligible for other types of funding (i.e., not purely targeted at energy measures). Take the Critical Facilities Worksheet (Appendix A) with you to meetings with your internal partners/city colleagues. Ask the questions that will help identify additional uses of municipal buildings.

For some energy projects the barrier isn’t the funding for energy conservation measures, rather it is the other essential elements of the larger project scope, including engineering and design, project management, and significant enabling repair work (roofs, roofs, roofs!). These “critical” facilities are the ones your community is most likely to prioritize for city capital funds, and they will be excited to learn you can help them find funds to add energy efficiency elements to these buildings.

**Critical Facility Example:**

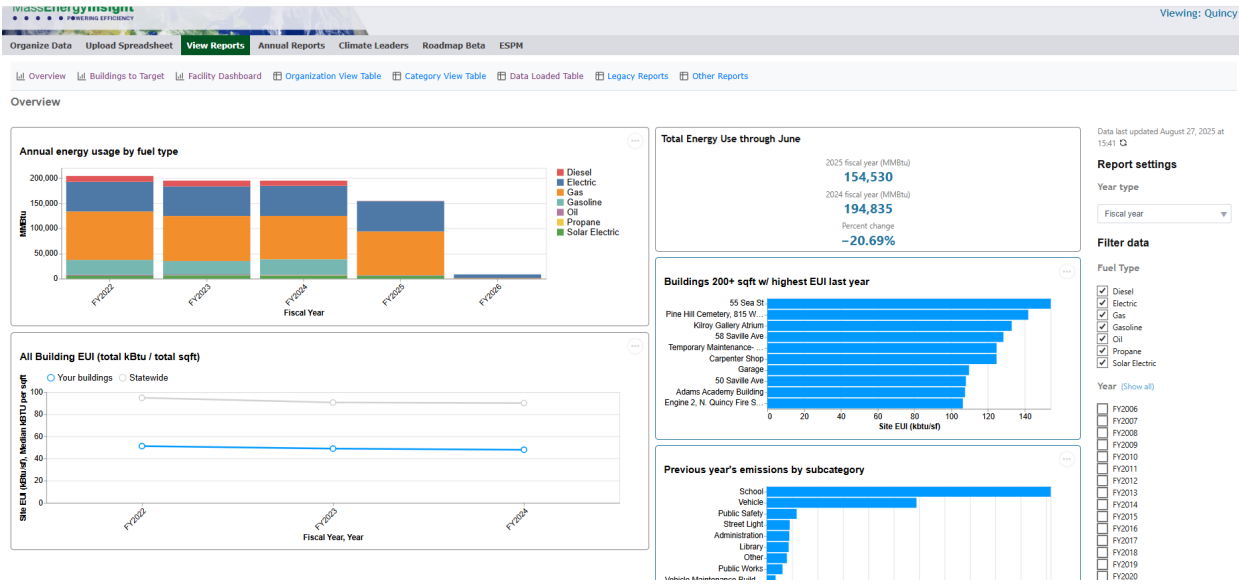
Appendix B shows information from the Revere Capital Plan. In the plan, we see the McKinley school is targeted for renovation to create a multipurpose building with an early childhood education center, the Revere Food Hub, and the Metro North Regional Emergency Call Center. Revere has already secured \$6.9 million through an ESSER grant for early education, \$2 million for the food hub, and an estimated **\$16 million from the State 911 grant for the Emergency Call Center**. This renovation may have opportunities to upgrade the lighting, heating, cooling, and backup systems (generators/batteries), which present opportunities to secure Mass Save incentives and the potential to find grants to supplement existing funds to ensure the renovation meets higher clean energy goals.



| Questions to Identify Critical Facilities  | List of Buildings |
|--|-------------------|
| Which municipal buildings are used as shelters?  |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are used as Community Centers?   |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are service sites for vulnerable populations? (i.e., senior center, early childhood center)                |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are cooling or warming sites during extreme weather?   |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are food distribution sites?   |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are part of the City’s Emergency Response infrastructure and require additional resilience infrastructure? |                   |

# Determine Your Highest Usage/Cost Buildings

As a Municipal Energy Manager, you have been learning about the Green Communities program and the Mass Energy Insights (MEI) database. The MEI tool can help **identify your highest cost buildings, and your most energy inefficient buildings.** (Check out this excellent presentation, [Green Communities 101](#), from the September 17, 2025 MEM training, and this [library](#) of helpful video trainings on MEI for deeper knowledge of how to use these tools in building a pipeline of energy projects and to understand the Green Communities funding.) Below is a screenshot of the MEI **Buildings to Target** report that outlines buildings with the highest energy use. Most town and city leaders and stakeholders will consider high costs and inefficient buildings to be high priorities.



Understanding which buildings have **high maintenance costs or failing equipment** is something you are likely to uncover from conversations with colleagues in the city and school department. You will learn which facilities have aging energy infrastructure from colleagues who have direct experience with the buildings. This aging energy infrastructure will require city or town expenditures upon failure, making them good targets for proactive upgrades.

As you talk to your colleagues to complete the Energy Management Assessment (EMA) and Energy Management Plan (EMP) that are part of your Municipal Energy Manager grant requirements, you will create a list of the municipal and school buildings that have *energy savings opportunities*. The October 6, 2025 MESM Energy [Managers Reporting Requirements Training](#) provides supportive templates and resources to track your energy project pipelines. Having a strong list of energy saving measures and completed assessments can be invaluable when a grant opportunity lands with a short turnaround.

In addition to information pulled from Mass Energy Insights and your colleagues, you may also pull in information from completed building assessments. Assessments may include already completed Project Expediter (PEX) or Municipal Vendor assessments, or Comprehensive Building Assessments. There will be additional trainings on how and when to secure these assessments. Check the [Municipal Energy and Sustainability Managers Academy Training Schedule](#).

## Build Relationships/Be a Partner

### Internal Partners

There are many critical internal partners in a city. Getting to know your school superintendent and their priorities is critical, particularly for grants focused on school buildings. In setting up a relationship with your superintendent, it may be helpful to first reach out and meet the facilities and energy management personnel for the schools. Every community is different; the energy and systems maintenance functions could be carried out by municipal personnel, and the personnel and budget could all be held within the school department or district. Understanding these lines of responsibility and authority and connecting to the people early is important.

In addition to connecting with the school's superintendent's office, you will need to build relationships with the office of the mayor or town manager. You need to know **who can help you with budget-related matters, capital planning cycles and requests**, and **who is authorized to sign on behalf of the City/School District** (usually this is the mayor, town manager, or superintendent for large grants). You need to know the process and timeline for getting an authorized signature. If you are lucky enough to be in a community where there is a grant writing team, find out what department they are in and how their work is prioritized.

Building a relationship with the people who manage these buildings takes time, but it will pay huge dividends when you are building out a grant application. In addition to school facilities personnel and decision makers, you will want to connect with the Department of Public Works and/or Municipal Buildings Department. Your Utility/Mass Save representative may already have relationships with some of these people and be able to provide a "warm" introduction or come with you to a meeting.

Consider asking the internal partners with direct responsibility for buildings to give you a tour of their buildings to help you understand where they have needs. Consider offering to bring coffee and plan to listen. Often these meetings and walk throughs will provide opportunities for **early wins**. No- and low-cost assessments and ECMs can be a great way to get an early project under your belt and win friends! Consider offering them access to a

free assessment through a Mass Save municipal vendor. Lighting upgrades and no-cost steam trap surveys have been well received and can be key entry points to establishing relationships.

You want to learn where your partner’s pain points are, what is working, and what their goals are (these are not always energy related). Do they have community partners already invested in their project/priorities? Are certain buildings doing double duty as community centers or shelters?

**Partner Worksheet:**

| Partner   | Contact Information | Meeting Scheduled? |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|
| School Superintendent                             |                     |                    |
| Facilities/Building Staff                         |                     |                    |
| DPW Team  |                     |                    |
| Mayor’s office/Budget Office/Authorized Signers   |                     |                    |
| Grants Writing Team                               |                     |                    |
| Community Partners working with internal partners |                     |                    |
| Mass Save/Utility Team                            |                     |                    |

## Community and Stakeholder Engagement

As you meet with your internal partners at the city and the school department you want to capture what community engagement already exists. Is there an active set of volunteers, an energy committee, or group of active and supportive (or potentially supportive) community members? (For example, a branch of Mothers Out Front or a Mass Climate Action Network chapter active in your community.) Are there schools that have active PTOs or teachers who are working on sustainability or resilience or another aligned idea? Are there Community Based Organizations? Some of you may have Community First Partnership grants that include Community Based Organization(s) to help with outreach and education. These are often good partners.

Your planning department and school department may have done community engagement and made connections with community organizations. Often, grants will ask how you engaged the community and how you learned the project you are proposing is a community priority. They may also expect a plan for continued community engagement.

It is important to define “Community.” Many grants are specifically asking for:

- K-12 students and teachers
- Adult vocational and youth vocational students/job seekers
- Local businesses
- Language isolated
- Low income
- Residents of Environmental Justice neighborhood/census block
- Disadvantaged or special-needs

And sometimes combinations of these.

Do not assume you need to invent a completely new community or stakeholder engagement plan for each project. You may have had community meetings to define your comprehensive plan, or your capital plan, or as part of your municipal preparedness planning process. All these community engagement processes can be cited and leveraged. Keep track of what the city has documented in a plan as a community’s desire for action (ex: Lynn’s Vision plan makes school facilities a priority!).

For some grant opportunities, you may need to build on past work with specific stakeholders and include roles and resources for community and stakeholder engagement. Having built relationships in advance will allow you to quickly build out the specific community meetings or forums you need with stakeholders to satisfy grants’ stakeholder or community engagement requirements.

Your **teachers and students in schools are “stakeholders”**; so are your **facility and maintenance personnel**. Having worked with them and involved them in project development can count as having engaged your community to define the problem and to inform the design and implementation of solutions.

Having a regular schedule of meetings with your school facilities personnel/superintendent, energy committee, and Utility/Mass Save partners can be used as community/stakeholder engagement pathways as well as evidence of ongoing community engagement.

*Example Photo from an Electrify Everett Small Business Community Meeting*



# Build a Grant Writing Toolbox

At the beginning of your grant writing journey, your toolbox may feel a little empty, unless you’ve had the good fortune of joining a team that has already written a few grants and started a pipeline of priority projects. We highly recommend that you have a folder (digital) that you label as your Grant Toolbox. Below we will walk you through some key items to store in this folder for quick access!


**PLANS:** One of the reasons we had you start by looking at your town’s existing plans, including Comprehensive Plan, Capital Plan, Climate Plan, Green Communities Plan, is that these are likely to include good narrative descriptions of your town and background and demographics that could be relevant and recycled when a grant opportunity arises. These plans may also have maps and pictures that will help tell your story.

## Comprehensive Plan: Example From Lynn

In the summary page below for the Lynn Comprehensive Plan, one of the highest priorities that came out of an extended stakeholder process was “Build high-quality educational facilities for our students.” This summary, as well as other materials deeper in the report, can be used to show community engagement, to recognize the city’s long term commitment to this project, and in conversations with partners about how your energy efficiency opportunities and grants could support achieving this community priority.

### Vision Lynn, Summarized

Vision Lynn is the City of Lynn’s comprehensive plan. It captures the vision and values of our community and outlines the development, infrastructure and strategies we will need to achieve them. Learn more about the plan at [LynnInCommon.com/vision-lynn](http://LynnInCommon.com/vision-lynn)



**Our Vision page 56**

- Lynn will be a city where people feel safe and comfortable to live, work, learn, and play.
- Lynn will be a city where all community members have the housing, transportation access, social connections, and educational or economic opportunities to live a fulfilling life.
- Lynn will be a city to be proud of, with strong, diverse, and connected communities that take care of our shared spaces, natural resources, and each other.

**Growth in Lynn page 70**


Vision Lynn articulates why we need growth, what we expect from new development, and where we are comfortable accommodating new development. The end result is our Degree of Change Map.

**Implementation Priorities page 136**

The plan identifies numerous infrastructure needs to help accommodate the community’s vision and ends with key implementation priorities for moving forward:

- Build high-quality educational facilities for our students
- Push forward on workforce development
- Build affordable housing, particularly for low-income households
- Continue championing artists, makers, and entrepreneurs
- Invest in coastal resilience

**Degree of Change Map page 99**



**Enhance:**  
Find opportunities to improve and elevate places without totally changing them.

**Transform:**  
Explore a large-scale, holistic transformation that could change the character of the place, informed by neighborhood-level plans.

**Maintain:**  
Maintain existing infrastructure, open space, streets and public realm, and continue to improve as we see fit through public and private support.

**PRIOR GRANT APPLICATIONS:** Your toolbox should definitely include grant applications submitted (whether won or not!) related to clean energy projects. You most likely already have a file for Green Communities. You should also be collecting grants written by internal and external partners that may be broader. For example, your municipal vulnerability program application may include relevant information, maps, and stories to include when discussing the need for efficient cooling solutions or a backup battery system at a specific facility.

If you have partners who have asked for letters of support for grants or sought data for their project, ask for a copy of the grant and remember to reach out when you have an aligned project they can support. Check if your city or town has applied for related grants either for the specific building (i.e., an ADA accessibility or IAQ grant), or for a related sustainability area (i.e., safe routes to school, putting in a garden, or starting a student energy club).

### Using Prior Grants<sup>1</sup>: Example from Everett

Everett has worked with the Mystic River Watershed Association as a partner in several prior grants looking at extreme heat and Resiliency in the Mystic River Watershed communities. When Everett seeks funds to upgrade the Everett Connolly Community Center as a resilience hub, we have pulled graphics and text from prior successful grants.

1. **Project Name: Resilient Everett:** Transforming the Connolly Community Center into a resilience hub within the **Lower Mystic Resilient Community Center Network**, a network of year-round, safe, resilient community centers with educational, recreational, and social programming relevant to priority populations within Everett and neighboring communities.

2. **Need:** The Mystic River Watershed is the most highly urbanized watershed in New England; its downstream portion (Lower Mystic) is home to the highest concentration of environmental justice residents in the region. Prior MVP-funded community science work called Wicked Hot Mystic teamed volunteers with the Museum of Science to document relative ground level air temperature, humidity, and air quality during an August, 2021 heat wave.

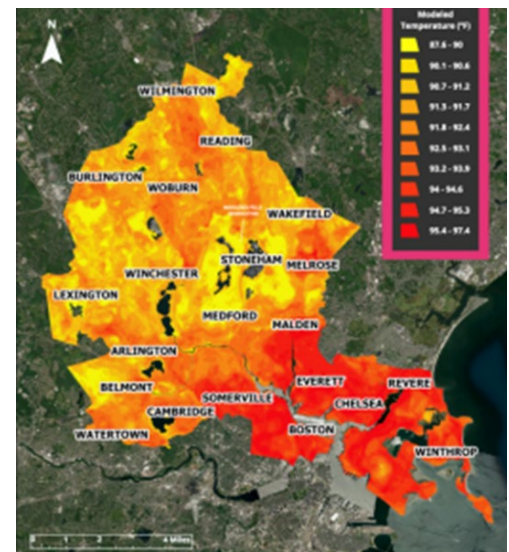


Figure 1. Ambient Air Temperature Across the Mystic River Watershed at 3 pm August 12, 2021. Data collected by volunteer community scientists for Wicked Hot Mystic Project.

<sup>1</sup> Grant examples and photos shared with permission

**OUTREACH AND EDUCATION EVENTS:** You will be providing education and outreach, you will plan your own events and you will also get requests to present at other groups’ meetings. Take pictures and keep track of these events, save flyers and invitations, especially if they are attractive. Document your social media activity and that of partners, especially when it includes energy education and outreach. This can all be used as evidence of the history of community engagement. Pictures of community members, when allowed, can help reviewers connect emotionally to your project much more than pictures of buildings or equipment.

**DEMOGRAPHICS:** This can be tricky! Many grants specify the type of demographics they want. When a grant is sponsored by a Massachusetts agency, they will often specify Massachusetts-specific data. For example, the recent Massachusetts Clean Energy Center Green School Works Grants required: “Schools must be public K-12 schools in Massachusetts and must have served a student population that is at least 40% low income in at least one of the last three school years (2023, 2024, or 2025). Applicants may review the [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s data](#) to verify eligibility.”

Other state grant opportunities may be restricted to Massachusetts Gateway Cities or Environmental Justice Census tracts. **Pay attention if the grant asks for specific demographics from specific sources.** When you aren’t required to use a specific source, dive again into your comprehensive plan and other documents that have described your community.

You may also find compelling demographics from your regional planning agency. Massachusetts Area Planning Council’s (MAPC) [data common](#) is a great resource for those in the MAPC territory. [Data.mass.gov](#) is an overwhelming treasure trove of data—it will allow you to look at census data, community health data, and you can build reports and maps. As a rule, **only start a deep data dive after first looking at what you can easily find in existing documents or talking with your internal and external partners.** Then, narrow down to the data that will really sell your story to your particular funder!



1 | 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize - Technical Narrative Template

**TECHNICAL NARRATIVE**  
2024 Renew America’s Schools Prize

Team Name: Lowell Public Schools

Submission Title:

RELIEF (Reducing Emissions in Lowell Through Infrastructure and Energy Efficiency First)

## Evaluating a Grant Opportunity

A quick read through a grant notice will help you identify key elements of the application and if your project/community is a fit. We have pulled together a simple checklist that highlights the information you need to make a GO!/NO GO! decision. You will also continue to turn to this summary of the grant requirements as you build your project and project team/partners. You will continue to check against the summary to see if you are remaining a competitive project for this grant.

To evaluate a grant opportunity, read the grant notice (PON, RFP, NOFA) with the checklist below open. Pull in the relevant information from the grant into the worksheet. When you are finished, save it with the title of the grant opportunity and use it as your grant summary.

The first and most important element is are you an eligible applicant (i.e., is a municipality an eligible applicant)? If the grant can only be awarded to a rural school district, does that eliminate you from consideration? Other eligibility criteria may include:

- Need to have a CBO or other partner to be an eligible applicant?
- Restricted to school districts? Regional school districts? Rural communities?
- Restricted to Environmental Justice/disadvantaged or low-income communities?

The **deadline to apply** and whether there is a **required match** are the criteria most likely to force a GO!/NO GO! decision. If you know that you cannot meet the deadline or you cannot find the match, that is a NO GO! decision point that should be made early. Check if the grant may be reissued at a later date; for example, the Mass CEC EmPower grants tend to come out on a regular schedule. You can begin preparing for the next round rather than rushing to meet an unrealistic deadline. You may also be able to work towards securing the match funds with more time.

Pay close attention to the scoring or prioritization described in the grant notice. When there is an actual point score or percentage offered, be rigorous in evaluating whether you can meet or secure points. While eligibility criteria may offer a threshold, (e.g., a minimum 60% decarbonization), scoring may weight heavily how close to 100% decarbonization you can get—the true factor in whether your grant is competitive.

# Grant Evaluation Worksheet

| Grant Evaluation Worksheet |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Eligibility                                       |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Deadline to apply                                 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Funding amount                                    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Letters of support or approvals required to apply |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Cost share or match requirement                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Types of projects funded                          |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Grant scoring                                     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Other notes                                       |  |

## Grant Evaluation Worksheet: Example Green School Works

| Grant Evaluation Worksheet |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Eligibility                                       | 40% low income on DESE, remain a school facility for 20+ years   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Deadline to apply                                 | April 30, 2025, 11:59 p.m.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Funding amount                                    | Up to \$5 million; over \$1 million must include full decarb plan; over \$2.5 million, reduce fossil fuel by at least half                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Letters of support or approvals required to apply | No LOS required; requires mayor or superintendent signature  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Cost share or match requirement                   | None required, points given for other sources of funding   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Types of projects funded                          | Heat pumps, solar, storage, ventilation, electrification, electric vehicles, BMS (as part of other projects), roof and windows, weatherization |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Grant scoring                                     | Population served, energy and fossil fuel reductions, project feasibility, maximizing impact   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Other notes                                       | Does not cover ADA or fire compliance  |

# Build Your Grant Game Plan

## Build the Initial Project Description

If you've passed the initial screen of your GO!/NO GO! and believe your project could be a good fit, the next step is to write a short description of the project and a rough budget. Answer the Who, What, and How questions below and draft a budget. Your first cut can be bullets and relatively rough.

- Who is the applicant, who are partners, who are beneficiaries/stakeholders?
- What is the project? What are the core elements?
  - ECMs?
  - Building rehabilitation?
  - Study?
- How will you accomplish the “what”?
  - Team
  - Timeline
  - Activities
- Budget
  - Personnel cost (may be in-kind)
  - Partner budgets
  - Study, Design /Engineering Costs
  - Equipment/Construction Costs
  - Match dollars—usually city capital or operating dollars, sometimes in-kind salaries or Mass Save incentives can count! In general, the same source cannot be a match (i.e., if you have a federal grant or state grant you can't use those dollars as match to a different federal or state grant).

After you have your project description and rough budget, **go back to the scoring outline** and look at how the project will score.

- Where are the most points awarded? Will you be competitive?
- Double check minimum requirements: is there some data or a study you need before you can apply?
- Who do you need to help you win? Do you need a partner, or would a partner bring extra value to scoring? Your Mass Save technical partners can be listed in a grant (with permission) and add a depth of technical ability to a team. This is especially true if you have secured a study or assessment that is supporting this application.

- Community partners may offer a strong connection to the target audience/beneficiary and strengthen your community or stakeholder engagement.

Now is the time to think about adjusting the project scope to capture as many points and be as attractive an applicant as you can. But be careful—you don't want to lose the project you actually want to do. And you don't want to add significant new costs.

**Revise those bullets into a short one-page description you can start sharing with partners along with a potential budget.** We don't always have time to write a one pager or have a long partner building process. But when you can engage in this process it sharpens your project and will allow you to reuse the application/partnership to look for additional funding opportunities and/or to marry existing funding and projects together.

## Set Submission Date

- As a rule of thumb, submit one or two days before the deadline if possible. This will allow time for system glitches or access modifications if required. Create a timeline that works back from this date to get all the steps outlined below completed!

## Build the Technical and Project Team

- Pull your internal team and partners (if appropriate) into meetings to flesh out the project. If this is a school project, you're going to need to include the school facilities team and decision makers early in your process to work through the project. If your budget is counting on Mass Save incentives, bring your Mass Save partners in early, find out if they can give you a good estimate or even a commitment letter on incentives. They may also help access other key technical resources to help flesh out the approach.
- Secure documentation necessary for a competitive application. Recently, we've seen how valuable having a Comprehensive Building Assessment or even a strong report from a municipal vendor can be in explaining the implementation work and costs. You may need strong estimates from other vendors, if your project needs an Owners Project Manager (OPM) or design and engineering work, it can be helpful to get good documentation to support those budget line items and work these through with your project team.

## Secure Partners

- Request Letters of Support (LOS) and/or letters of commitment if needed. Some grants ask for letters of commitment from project partners, some are happy to have letters of support from a broader group of stakeholders. In any case, your partners and stakeholders will need time to get you a signed letter. Your partners should be

asked early and provided with a sample letter that describes their commitment, or, if it's a letter of support, that describes their role in the community and why they support the project. They may personalize these letters, but always appreciate the sample letter.

- Gather photos, prior grants, and information that can support the application
- Resumes may be required as part of the grant application. Ask your partners early. You may need to create a resume for some of your internal partners who do not have traditional resumes or bios.

## Provide Advance Notice and Schedule Approval Signatures

- Some communities require legal review before signing authorized applicant forms. Do not wait to get this in the queue! Check the application and see who needs to sign and if there are multiple forms that need to be signed. Many grants include a sample terms and conditions appendix and a required sign off on these terms. Make sure the proper authorities in your city or town have reviewed these!

## Gather Required Supporting Documents and Attachments

- As the supporting documents and required signed forms are finalized, double check the format and naming conventions and begin to save these in their final form. We like to keep a “final upload file” folder where only the final grant application and attachments with proper naming conventions are stored, so on the day of submission you know you have the final set of documents in the correct format ready to go.

## Build Your Narrative: It's Always About the People

*What is the great story, and why does it matter to your community?*

Technically you will be working on this narrative the minute you draft that one pager to share with your partners. Also, many applications have you respond to specific questions, so your “narrative” isn't all in one place. You have to tell your story, in multiple places, in response to the questions or in the format the grant requires. Always make sure you answer the questions. Winning grants often comes down to winning the points and the hearts of the grant reviewers. If you've followed the steps to this point, you should be in position to win the points—now let's win the hearts! Reviewers are inclined to award the higher end of the points if they are in love with the project.

When crafting narratives for grant applications, it's beneficial to tell a compelling story that clearly articulates both the challenges your community faces and the vision for a better future. Begin with the great story. What is the driving purpose behind your project and why

does it matter? Include common pain points, e.g., high energy costs, frequent maintenance issues, school closures due to unsafe conditions like flooding or mold, and other infrastructure-related concerns. Highlighting these issues demonstrates a tangible need and builds the case for why your project deserves support.

Your grant narrative should also show your positive and achievable vision with the grant funding. Describe how your proposed project will deliver clear benefits such as energy and cost savings, contributing to broader goals like decarbonization and climate action. Emphasize the creation of healthier, more resilient learning environments with cleaner air and improved infrastructure. Point out how the space can serve as a valuable community hub and drive local job creation. Connecting the dots between pain points and a positive vision is the recipe for a grant narrative focused on people.

How is this project, in your community, unique and valuable? Be careful to describe more than the technical values. If you're going to achieve a 95% fossil fuel reduction, say that, especially if it is a key set of points. If the neighborhood where this is going to be achieved is subject to or has been subject to intense pollution—that makes it more compelling to invest here. If the children in the school are special needs or your community suffers higher asthma rates, again this makes it more compelling. Highlight the positive stories of community resilience and commitment.

Here's an example of a wonderful introductory paragraph from a successful federal grant application that paints a picture of community needs, is responsive to the grant criteria and also paints a community that is resilient and ready to act:

*Lowell, Massachusetts, is a vibrant and diverse community of 114,804 individuals. Our community has a proud history as a historic mill town and manufacturing center, attracting a diversity of individuals from around world. According to the EPA's EJ Screen Community Report, 40% of households speak a non-English language at home, 52% of community members are people of color, and 35% of community members are low-income. According to CEJST the majority (72%) of Lowell census tracts are DAC and/or contain EJ block groups. Our proposed Reducing Emissions in Lowell through Infrastructure and Efficiency First (RELIEF) initiative is the result of multiple years of effort across our community to address the growing risks to our community from climate change. The initiative will reduce the burden of high energy costs and pollution of current fossil fuel energy systems, while supporting our community in joining the transition to a clean energy economy. RELIEF will improve the lives of our constituents and students by upgrading our school buildings so they are "decarbonization ready" on a pathway to net zero emissions. The proposed upgrades will not only provide emissions reductions but will also help provide relief to those served in our schools, help to "re-leaf" our urban environment, and provide solutions to urban heat islands. RELIEF will continue to partner with our community and labor organizations to ensure this effort delivers multiple community benefits. RELIEF is an ambitious and far-reaching initiative that encompasses all twenty-eight schools within the geographic boundary of the city, reflecting a comprehensive approach to sustainability and environmental stewardship.*

The most recent Massachusetts Clean Energy Center Green School Works grant application offered very little space for storytelling. The project narrative section was primarily focused on the technical elements. The application included an elevator pitch of 1-3 sentences. Here's an example of making the most of a short answer, hitting all the criteria and speaking to the pain points and the positives of this community and this specific school.

Snug Harbor Elementary School is a Title 1 School in an Environmental Justice Census Tract serving a student population that is 73.9% low income, 89.2% high needs, and 49.2% with disabilities. The school is in an isolated location at the end of a peninsula, adjacent to 918 units of public housing, vulnerable to coastal flooding and extreme heat. The community has faced a long history of exposure to industrial pollution from the neighboring Fore River Designated Port Area.

This project will support the complete electrification of the Snug Harbor school with air source heat pumps and ERVs, achieving 81% fossil fuel reduction and 79% GHG reductions within the project period. The project will enable full electrification, increase resilience, improve indoor and outdoor air quality and greatly improve the learning environment for students and teachers.

The project offers a highly replicable model for Quincy and other Massachusetts school districts to braid funding and phase implementation to allow schools to remain operable while rapidly transitioning to healthier, more resilient, energy-efficient, fossil free fuel schools.

# Grant Opportunities

There are some common, recurring state grants, as well as one-time funding opportunities. Below is a chart with some of the opportunities that may have funding for your community.

| Funding Source           | Grant   | Traditional Funding Cycle   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <a href="#">DOER</a>     | <a href="#">Green Communities</a> —watch the <a href="#">Green Communities Overview of FY 26-27 Competitive Grants webinar</a> for more information | Fall/Spring Cycle   |
| <a href="#">DOER</a>     | <a href="#">TESI</a>  | One-time funding.   |
| <a href="#">DOER</a>     | <a href="#">AMP grants for energy storage</a>   | Varies. Check website.  |
| <a href="#">Mass CEC</a> | <a href="#">Workforce Development</a>   | Varies. Check website.  |
| <a href="#">Mass CEC</a> | <a href="#">EmPower Implementation</a>  | Fall/Spring Cycle   |
| <a href="#">Mass CEC</a> | <a href="#">EmPower Capacity Building</a>   | Fall release, rolling application through March   |
| <a href="#">Mass CEC</a> | <a href="#">Green School Works</a>  | April 2025, additional round to be announced. Unknown at this time if it will be recurring. |
| <a href="#">DEP</a>      | <a href="#">Gap grants</a>  | Varies. Check website.  |
| <a href="#">MSBA</a>     | <a href="#">Accelerated Repair Program</a>  | Every other year—next round 2027  |

# Appendix A – Worksheets

## Grant Evaluation Worksheet

| Grant Evaluation Worksheet |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Eligibility                                       |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Deadline to apply                                 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Funding amount                                    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Letters of support or approvals required to apply |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Cost share or match requirement                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Types of projects funded                          |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Grant scoring                                     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>   | Other notes                                       |  |

### Partner Worksheet

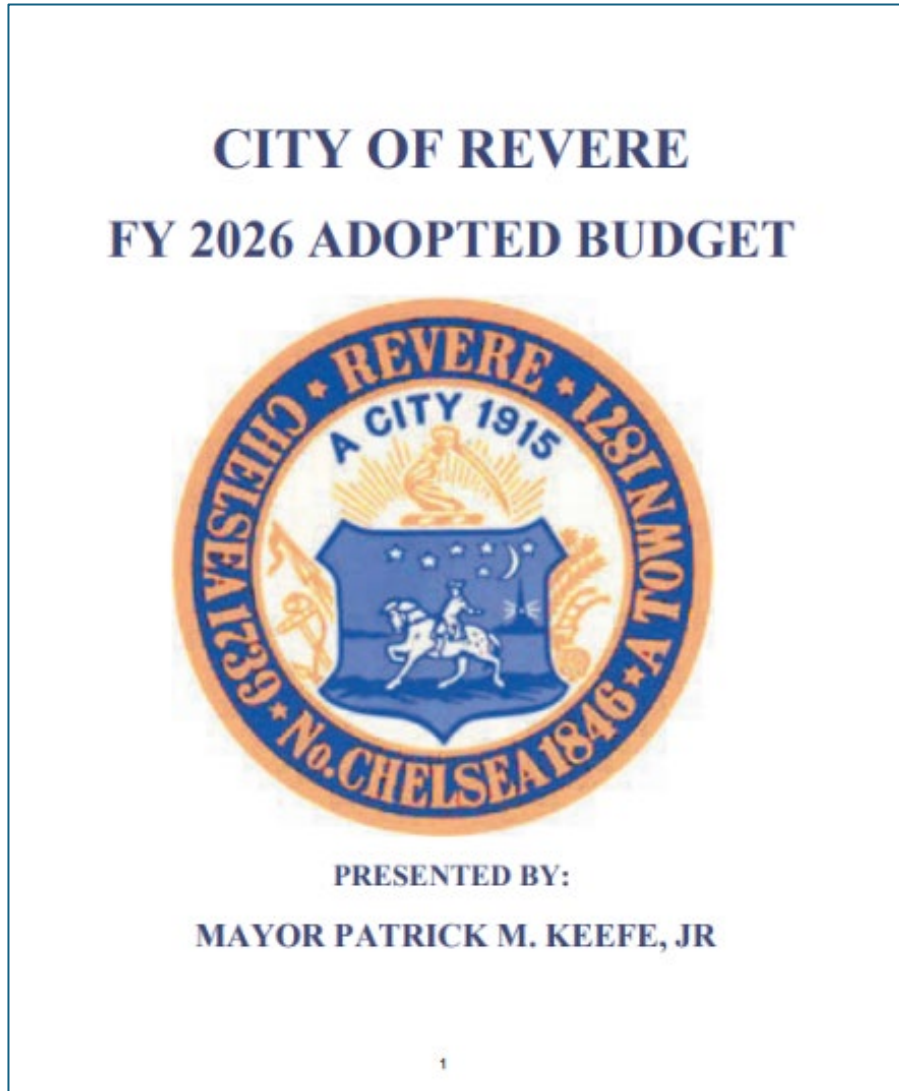
| Partner   | Contact Information | Meeting Scheduled? |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|
| School Superintendent                           |                     |                    |
| Facilities/Building Staff                       |                     |                    |
| DPW Team  |                     |                    |
| Mayor's Office/Budget Office/Authorized Signers |                     |                    |
| Grants Writing Team                             |                     |                    |
| Community Partners                              |                     |                    |
| Mass Save/Utility Team                          |                     |                    |
|   |                     |                    |

### Critical Facilities Worksheet

| Questions to Identify Critical Facilities  | List of Buildings |
|--|-------------------|
| Which municipal buildings are used as shelters?  |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are used as community centers?   |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are service sites for vulnerable populations? (i.e., senior center, early childhood center)                |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are cooling or warming sites during extreme weather?   |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are food distribution sites?   |                   |
| Which municipal buildings are part of the City’s Emergency Response infrastructure and require additional resilience infrastructure? |                   |

## Appendix B: Sample Capital Plan

Another example of how to research your community's priorities is the Revere capital improvement budget



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Revere’s population is growing and has been doing so for some time. In fact, between 2010 and 2020, the total population grew from 51,755 to 62,186 (+10,431 residents). Revere is the fastest growing community in the Commonwealth. Per the Department of Revenue’s Division of Local Services, the City of Revere has approximately 108 road miles and an income per capita of approximately \$25,000 (with the state average of \$48,000).

Infrastructure components for which the City of Revere is responsible include:

*City Facilities:* The City manages 16 buildings that serve a multitude of purposes.

| REVERE CITY FACILITIES                               |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| City Facility  | Address                  |
| American Legion Building                             | 249R Broadway            |
| City Hall  | 281 Broadway             |
| DPW Building   | 321 Rear Charger Street  |
| Fire Station #1                                      | 360 Revere Beach Parkway |
| Fire Station #2                                      | Point of Pines           |
| Fire Station #3 (shared with City of Malden)         | 3 Overlook Ridge Drive   |
| Fire Station #4 (headquarters)                       | 400 Broadway             |
| Fire Station #5                                      | 4 Freeman Street         |
| Fire Department storage/Future Community Arts Center | 929 Winthrop Avenue      |
| Revere Historical Society                            | 108 Beach Street         |
| McKinley School                                      | 65 Yeamans Street        |
| Police Department                                    | 400 Revere Beach Parkway |
| Public Library                                       | 179 Beach Street         |
| Recreation Offices                                   | 150 Beach Street         |
| Revere Boxing  | 200 Winthrop Ave         |
| Rossetti-Cowan Senior Center                         | 25 Winthrop Avenue       |

In FY2025, the city will be commencing the process to renovate the historical McKinley School to create a multipurpose building that will house several needed facilities for the city. These facilities include an early childhood education center through Revere Public Schools (utilizing 11,000 sq ft of the building), the relocated Revere Food Hub (approximately 5,000 sq ft), and the remainder of the building devoted to the Metro North Regional Emergency Call Center (MNRECC). This project will be funded through multiple sources, including \$6.9 million

# Appendix C: Community and Stakeholder Engagement<sup>2</sup>

## Background:

In September 2023 KickStart Massachusetts, a \$50,000 award from HEET (a nonprofit), was made available to communities through a competitive grant cycle, with a deadline of December 1, 2023. The RFR specifically required stakeholder engagement.

Shortly after Gloucester had submitted the KickStart grant, they learned about the Community Energy Innovation Prize with three phases with a \$100,000 award for the Concept Phase, and a \$100,000 for Progress phase (only available to those who win the Concept Phase). Below we provide the specific grant requirements for the HEET grant and how Gloucester responded, leveraging previous community engagement activity, and building in just the level of additional work necessary to the specific application. This positioned Gloucester to recycle this content for the Community Energy Innovation Prize, adding into that request additional resources for 2 partners Town Green and Undaunted K-12 to do specific engagement on the High School Project.

## HEET Grant requirements

What the HEET RFP asked: **Section 4: Stakeholder Engagement and Knowledge**

1. Please describe the process for stakeholder engagement in your municipality as it pertains to environmental policy and program development. **(1000 words maximum)**
  - a. What stakeholder groups are engaged?
  - b. How is community input gathered?
  - c. Where is information shared?
  - d. What opportunities are provided to educate stakeholders?
2. Please describe any stakeholder engagement and education that has been conducted in your municipality around networked geothermal. If none has been done so far, please describe how you would conduct that engagement process. **(500 words maximum)**
3. Please describe how you would educate and elicit feedback from environmental justice communities during the study to ensure a thorough analysis of the key environmental justice considerations. Describe what those considerations may be in your municipality. **(500 words maximum)**
4. List the interested stakeholders/stakeholder groups that your team plans to collaborate with throughout the feasibility study and provide any letters of support from relevant municipal offices, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

---

<sup>2</sup> Grant information and photos shared with permission

Gloucester’s HEET application, Stakeholder Engagement Section, leveraging a long and strong history of community engagement.

**Section 4: Stakeholder Engagement and Knowledge**

**Outreach Capacity and Strategies**

The City of Gloucester has recently built in new capacity through the creation of a full-time Sustainability Coordinator role within the Community Development Department. For the duration of participation in the Community First Partnership Program, we will also have a part-time Energy Coach on staff. The City has a Clean Energy Commission (CEC) that acts as the interface between the public and the city and oversees implementation of the city’s Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP). In addition, the Community Development Department works with Benchmark Strategies, a PR firm, to consolidate all outreach under a single brand, Innovate Gloucester. Visit Innovate Gloucester's [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [X \(Twitter\)](#).

In September of 2021 Gloucester launched planning for the creation of its first Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP). The CARP employed a variety of strategies to reach the community and solicit feedback, summarized [here](#). Since the creation of the CARP we have expanded community relationships through both direct outreach and network building. Outreach strategies have included direct mail, canvassing, social media content, tabling at events, hosting events, participating in an English-isolation working group, Meeting-in-a-Box, and hiring high school interns.

**Figure 8: Outreach Images**





**Outreach to Environmental Justice Communities**

Engagement of Environmental Justice Communities in Gloucester has historically been facilitated through our key partners such as Gloucester Schools, Senior Center and Veterans Center, service organizations like Action Inc, Wellspring House, and BackYard Growers, and the Gloucester Housing Authority. Recently we have worked with these partners, and with landlords of large housing complexes serving low-income populations, to host Energy Bill Support Sessions at several key sites throughout the city. We also host monthly bill-support office hours at Gloucester’s Senior Center, located central to our EJ community. Given the density of our EJ neighborhoods, door knocking, tabling and posting flyers in shops has also been an effective way of reaching people.



Targeting English Isolation communities specifically, Gloucester is a member of a local English-isolation working group that has been developing resources to make services more accessible to our English Language Learner (ELL) community. As part of this, we have identified key local touch points and leaders in the Brazilian and other new immigrant communities. Within the Sustainability Division specifically, we have worked towards both translating outreach materials and having translators available at all events we host.

**Geothermal Outreach**

As part of development of this grant application we presented on Networked Geothermal at Gloucester’s Clean Energy Commission twice. We also reached out to several of the major stakeholders in the intended study area. Over the course of one to two meetings at each organization we build the initial support needed to apply for this grant and a baseline

understanding of networked geothermal. Letters of support from each of the stakeholders we met with are attached. Some local advocacy groups, TownGreen and Cape Ann Climate Coalition, have also organized informational sessions at their monthly meetings to provide a baseline understanding of networked geothermal. Both organizations have been highly engaged in bringing this application together, including helping vet vendors and make connections to stakeholders.

**Key Stakeholders**

| Stakeholder                   | Type                             | About   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Pathways for Children*        | Facility in Study Area           | Pathways for Children provides child care and other services to children and families impacted by economic and social inequity.<br><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.pw4c.org/">https://www.pw4c.org/</a>  |
| The Open Door*                | Facility in Study Area           | The Open Door Food Pantry in Gloucester provides free, three-to-five-day supplies of emergency groceries to income-qualified residents, supports nutritional needs, and provides other supports that alleviate the impact of hunger in our community.<br><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://foodpantry.org/">https://foodpantry.org/</a>  |
| Gloucester Housing Authority* | Facility in Study Area           | The Gloucester Housing Authority assists over 1300 households in the Cape Ann area through Public Housing, Rental Assistance, Homeownership, and Resident Service programs.<br><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.ghama.com/">http://www.ghama.com/</a>  |
| Division of Marine Fisheries  | Facility in Study Area           | The Division of Marine Fisheries manages the state’s commercial and recreational saltwater fisheries and oversees other services that support the marine environment and fishing communities.<br><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-marine-fisheries">https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-marine-fisheries</a>  |
| ElementCare                   | Facility in Study Area           | Element Care PACE supports older adults to live safely and comfortably in their homes and communities for as long as they can, keeping their stays in hospitals and nursing facilities as minimal as possible.<br><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://elementcare.org/">https://elementcare.org/</a>   |
| TownGreen*                    | Local Climate Action Non-profit  | Town Green is a local climate advocacy non-profit that works towards a better understanding of the resilience and climate issues faced by Cape Ann, provides support to municipal partners to implement solutions and organizes community members as volunteers and educators to move climate solutions forward.<br><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://towngreen2025.org/">https://towngreen2025.org/</a> |
| Cape Ann Climate Coalition*   | Local Climate Advocacy Coalition | Cape Ann Climate Coalition is a local advocacy group with over 300 members dedicated to promoting effective collaboration and coordination efforts in mitigating and adapting to climate change.<br><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://capeannclimatecoalition.org/">https://capeannclimatecoalition.org/</a>   |

\*Letter of support attached

## Community Innovation Prize Official Rules for Community Engagement

The Prize rules awarded points for the team’s experience working with disadvantaged communities and promoting clean energy development. It also awarded points for addressing climate change and energy justice issues. It required Gloucester to describe an engagement and outreach plan that “builds trust and strengthens relationships and partnerships with community members and other relevant stakeholders.”

**Gloucester was able to include all the stakeholder engagement and work presented in the HEET application** including letters of support from all the aligned nonprofits. Gloucester added in resources to the prize budget for existing partners Town Green and Undaunted K-12 to do specific activities directly related to this project. Town Green was already working with Gloucester on community engagement and the HEET project already called for presentation to the community at specific point.

## Gloucester’s Prize Application: stakeholder engagement responses highlighted

### **CEI Goal:**

Our overarching goal is to continue in partnership with our EJ communities, to complete the technical and economic feasibility analysis of the most advanced decarbonization technologies for our existing high school which serves our most disadvantaged communities, and to allow for a community-driven deployment of selected technologies at the high school. Our project advances the understanding and potential for a networked geothermal microgrid, a technology with the potential to radically advance equitable energy transition and decarbonization through a highly energy and economically efficient technology, while also offering our community alternative pathways should networked geothermal not prove feasible.

Our project aligns perfectly with the CEI prize clean energy technology track goal: “To foster a grassroots innovation ecosystem and deployment that can provide a just and equitable clean energy economy through activities focusing on community-centric networks and bottom-up solutions for sustainable development, based on the needs of the communities involved.”

Our project has been developed in concert with grassroots advocacy organizations, our vocational high school students, and neighborhood stakeholders. Beginning several years ago with our Climate Action and Resilience Plan, our community has been working to find equitable decarbonization solutions.

Our project will allow us to connect to, broaden, and build out the Massachusetts municipal and grassroots network, helping to advocate and move this exciting model forward. By pushing forward with technical and financial analysis of the potential technology paths to electrification and considering the possibility of a geothermal microgrid, we can secure the most advanced and equitable technology for our community while pushing on a statewide scale a new technology that holds the potential for a faster and more equitable transition of our natural gas utility.

## **2. Building community support and accessing additional partners and resources to move from feasibility to a community determined technology deployment**

The city and our partners have been actively collaborating to bring this project forward. We have regular community forums and sessions to learn how to upgrade the clean energy capacity of Gloucester while ensuring the benefits reach our most needy and historically underserved neighbors.

Throughout our outreach, we have connected with our youth community. This project, based at the high school, puts our high schoolers at the center of outreach strategy. TownGreen will hire an intern from Gloucester High. In addition, we will continue our partnership with our vocational education program, engaging our students and faculty in the implementation decisions on the feasibility and electrification studies. As implementation opportunities arise, particularly from the electrification study, we will ensure that students can incorporate hands-on learning into their curriculum.

### Stakeholder and Justice40 Engagement

TownGreen will host community engagement events through their network of local climate activists to build grassroots support for implementation of the project. They will also hire a local youth intern, through an existing youth Climate Leadership program, to follow and support outreach on the project. This will include:

- Two educational community events surrounding electrification of school buildings and networked geothermal applications in Massachusetts
- Two events with Networked Geothermal feasibility study area partners to kick-off the HEET study and present results, and
- Several informational sessions at Gloucester High School's technical education programs

### Broader Engagement in the Clean Energy Ecosystem and Case Study

Throughout the study process, we will work with UndauntedK12 to connect to the policy, regulatory, and economic resource opportunities that can make the community's chosen technology path a reality. With UndauntedK12's expertise and connections, we will bring our community voices to state and national forums. We hope, as we become integrated into regional networks working to decarbonize schools, that we will be able to both inform the movement with real experience from our EJ communities and seek additional technical and economic resources to pursue our vision. Undaunted K12 will also produce a case study of our process and outcomes that presents our project in a way lay people can follow and other schools districts can learn from.

# Appendix D: Budget Worksheet Examples

**Mass CEC EmPower Implementation Grant Worksheet:**

| <b>Proposed Activity</b>   | <b>Team Member Receiving Funds for Each Proposed Activity</b>                                | <b>Funding Amount</b>     |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| <i>(Example: Funding staff time &amp; supplies devoted neighborhood stakeholder engagement sessions, outreach, pre-development sign ups)</i> | <i>(Examples: Lead Applicant, project partner, if a partner be specific as to which one)</i> | <i>(Example: \$2,000)</i> |
|  |  | \$                        |
|  |  | \$                        |
|  |  | \$                        |
|  |  | \$                        |
|  |  | \$                        |
|  |  | \$                        |
| <b>Total</b>   |  | <b>\$ Total</b>           |

**Mass CEC Green School Works Budget Worksheet**

| <b>Description of Budget Item</b> | <b>Organization/ Company Responsible</b> | <b>Status (Complete/ In Progress/ Not yet started)</b> | <b>Total Budget Item Amount</b>  | <b>Amount of MassCEC Funding Requested for Budget Item</b> | <b>Other Source of funds (e.g., MSBA, etc.) if applicable</b> | <b>Other Notes</b>               |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Click or tap here to enter text.  | Click or tap here to enter text.         | Click or tap here to enter text.                       | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.                           | Click or tap here to enter text.                              | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text.  | Click or tap here to enter text.         | Click or tap here to enter text.                       | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.                           | Click or tap here to enter text.                              | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text.  | Click or tap here to enter text.         | Click or tap here to enter text.                       | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.                           | Click or tap here to enter text.                              | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| <b>Total</b>                      |  |  |                                  |  |   |                                  |

NOTES: