

ARTIST OPPORTUNITY:

Creative Resource Guide

Release Date: September 28th, 2026

Due date for Responses: October 12th, 2026

I. OVERVIEW

Purpose

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), in partnership with the City of Malden, seeks an artist or artist team to design flexible templates for a City Hall resource guide and wayfinding map along with a core suite of graphic assets (e.g., icons, color palettes, illustrations) that can be adapted across digital and physical channels such as websites and posters. The design should be built to accommodate multilingual text and layouts and meet accessibility and municipal communication standards. The goal is to make municipal resources clear, engaging, and accessible to residents through compelling and culturally responsive visual design.

The selected artist or team will collaborate with municipal staff and youth members to develop these designs. As part of the process, the artist or team will have the opportunity to host interactive activities at a municipal Office Hours in late October to gather local visual inspiration and co-create graphic assets with residents.

All final deliverables must be completed by February 26th, 2027.

We invite applications from graphic designers, illustrators, and visual artists. Artists with experience in collaborative design, creative branding, community engagement, or municipal projects are strongly encouraged to apply.

Key Dates

1. Call for Artists Application Release Date: September 28th, 2026
2. Application Due Date: October 12th, 2026 at 11:59pm
3. Awards announced on or before October 19th, 2026
4. Grant agreement signed on or before October 23rd, 2026
5. Final artwork to be completed [and installed] on or before February 26th, 2027.

Award

The grant offers a total of \$3,000 to one artist or artist team. The grant will cover all project expenses, including but not limited to artist fees, materials, engagement supplies, and transportation.

MAPC will enter into grant agreements with individual artist or artist team.

II. CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

MAPC is partnering with the City of Malden on a project to strengthen the City's capacity for community engagement and foster deeper relationships with Malden communities. Through conversations with community partners and municipal staff, clear, structured, and consistent communication of municipal resources emerged as a critical need. Currently, community members are often unsure who to contact at City Hall or how to find the information they need. Similarly, community organizers often rely on personal connections to navigate services and involuntarily serve as informational intermediaries, which drains their time and capacity.

To address the gap, MAPC and City of Malden are piloting two connected initiatives:

1. Hosting municipal Office Hours to answer community member questions and support them in accessing City Hall resources
2. Launch a comprehensive City Hall resource guide and wayfinding map, supported by an adaptable suite of visual assets.

Together, these efforts aim to establish lasting practices for accessible, responsive resource distribution.

The Creative Opportunity:

We believe civic information should be welcoming, intuitive, and community centered. This project seeks to integrate creative and participatory design to make the resource guide and wayfinding map and related outreach materials visually appealing, approachable, and culturally responsive.

Building on earlier phases where local youth helped build content for the guide, the selected artist will continue the collaboration to shape the visual design. Meanwhile, the municipal Office Hours in late October will serve as live canvas, providing the selected artist an opportunity to lead interactive, hands-on activities where residents can contribute ideas, imagery, and visual inspiration for the final assets.

III. WHO CAN APPLY

The call is open to any resident of the United States of America aged 18 years or older. Current or former residents of Malden and Massachusetts artists familiar with Malden are strongly encouraged to apply. Artists and teams with experience in graphic design, illustration, communications, social media, or creative engagement are encouraged to apply. Preference will be given to applicants who demonstrate experience working with municipalities, community-based organizations, BIPOC communities, and other segments of the population that are underrepresented in the public realm.

IV. SELECTION PROCESS & CRITERIA

A review committee consisting of staff of MAPC and the City of Malden will evaluate the applications received. Committee members will review submissions in accordance with the criteria listed below. The review committee may seek outside expertise, including, but not limited to, input from technical and subject matter advisors to assist in the selection process.

Selection Criteria:

- **Visual Design Quality:** proven technical skill in graphic design, illustration, layout, and creating adaptable digital and print assets
- **Co-design and Engagement Experience:** Demonstrated ability to facilitate collaborative design activities and work directly with community members and youth, paired with an understanding of Malden's diverse neighborhoods and cultural context.
- **Accessibility & Cultural Responsiveness:** Skill in translating civic information into clear, welcoming, and culturally relevant visuals, including the ability to build designs that accommodate layouts across multiple languages and meet accessibility standards
- **Civic & Municipal Experience:** Past experience collaborating with municipal or government-associated organizations and navigating public communication standards
- **Project Management:** Demonstrated capacity to deliver final templates and assets within the project timeline and grant budget.

V. HOW TO APPLY

Please click [here](#) to submit your application. You will need the following materials for the application:

1. Artist Information
Contact information: Lead applicant name, mailing address, email address, and phone number. If applying on behalf of a team, please list the full names of all team members.
2. Concise responses to the following:
 - a. What artistic form do you practice? What experience do you have in graphic design, illustration, communications, or visual communications related to this project?
 - b. What is your experience with collaborative design or community engagement? Please specify your connections to Malden if applicable
 - c. How have you incorporated cultural responsiveness and multilingual accessibility into your past design work?
 - d. What experience do you have working on public or civic engagement projects, or municipal collaborations?
 - e. Your availability to deliver the project within the budget and timeline.
3. Brief biography or simplified resume
4. Link(s) to a portfolio or website that is exemplary of your artistic practice and experience.

For more information, please contact Nubes Chen at nchen@mapc.org

VI. COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The City of Malden shall own the final project deliverables created specifically for the City, including templates, icons, illustrations, layouts, visual assets, and other materials developed through this project.

The City may use, reproduce, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and distribute the final deliverables for any municipal or public purpose without additional permission or compensation to the artist. The City will provide attribution to the artist whenever reasonably practicable.

The artist retains ownership of any pre-existing work or intellectual property incorporated into the project. The artist may display the completed project in their portfolio, website, social media, and other professional materials. Any reuse, modification, or adaptation of the final deliverables for purposes outside the City's project requires the City's prior written permission.

The artist agrees not to resell, redistribute, or otherwise make the final project deliverables available as a separate product without the City's prior written permission.

The artist shall provide the City with editable/source files for the final deliverables so the City can continue to use, update, and adapt the materials. Materials updated or modified by the City may be identified as having been updated or modified by the City, as appropriate.

Attachment A: Application Review Rubric

Scoring Criteria	Weight	Evaluation Rubric
Visual Design Quality	25 points	21-25 pts - <i>Exceptional</i>: Portfolio exhibits exceptional proficiency in branding, layout, typography, and illustration. Visuals are polished, versatile, and highly adaptable across digital and printed mediums. 11-20 pts - <i>Qualified</i>: Portfolio shows solid graphic capabilities and a basic level of adaptability across multiple formats. 0-10 pts - <i>Limited</i>: Portfolio demonstrates limited design skills or minimal experience in visual communications.
Co-design and Engagement Experience	25 points	21-25 pts – <i>Exceptional</i>: Clear track record of leading interactive, co-design processes with community members. Demonstrates a deep local connection to Malden or an exceptionally thoughtful approach to place-based engagement. 11-20 pts – <i>Qualified</i>: Experience with community engagement or collaborative design. Basic understanding of community dynamics, though experience with hands-on co-design or local Malden ties may be generic. 0-10 pts – <i>Limited</i>: Little to no experience in participatory design or community engagement
Accessibility & Cultural Responsiveness	25 points	21-25 pts – <i>Exceptional</i>: Clear evidence of designing for multilingual contexts. Demonstrates deep intentionality around cultural responsiveness and visual accessibility. 11-20 pts – <i>Qualified</i>: Shows strong skills in producing clean and readable designs that meet accessibility standards, though explicit multilingual design experience may be limited. 0-10 pts – <i>Limited</i>: No clear demonstration of multilingual capability, cultural responsiveness, or accessible visual communications.
Civic & Municipal Experience	15 points	11-15 pts – <i>Exceptional</i>: Extensive prior experience working directly with municipal agencies, city departments, or public-sector clients. Clear understanding of government workflows and public communication standards. 6-10 pts – <i>Qualified</i>: Some experience working with non-profits, community coalitions, or public-facing organizations; adaptable to municipal environments. 0-5 pts – <i>Limited</i>: No prior experience working within public, civic, or institutional frameworks.
Project Management	10 points	6-10 pts - <i>Strong</i>: Demonstrated track record of managing projects successfully and delivering high-quality outputs within designated timelines and budgets. 0-5 pts – <i>Limited</i>: Limited experience in project management or contract fulfillment.
Capacity & Feasibility	Pass / Fail	Explicitly confirms availability and commitment to the project timeline, key event dates, and fixed grant budget. Applicants who cannot confirm availability will not be evaluated further.

Attachment B: Grant Agreement