

Technical Assistance Bureau

We advise cities and towns on opportunities to improve their financial management operations. Our project management team brings real-world experience and practical advice to every assignment. We also collaborate with our colleagues within the Division of Local Services and other state agencies to provide comprehensive guidance and self-service tools.

Whether your community is facing a particular issue, would like to implement a best practice, or could benefit from a general assessment of its financial condition, we can assist.

For more **information**, contact:

Zack Blake
Bureau Chief

(617) 626-2358
blakez@dor.state.ma.us

www.mass.gov/dls



DLS

DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES
MA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

The Technical Assistance Bureau has been working closely with municipalities across the Commonwealth for over 30 years to implement best practices, build efficiencies, and enhance transparency and collaboration. To achieve these objectives, we offer guidance and other tools to assist local officials in their efforts to improve municipal operations:

Financial Management Reviews

Our comprehensive operational review of local accounting, treasury, collection, assessing, and overall administrative functions is designed to improve day-to-day management practices and procedures through specific, hands-on tools, guidance, and strategies for improving local government.

Strategic Planning, Analysis, and Benchmarking

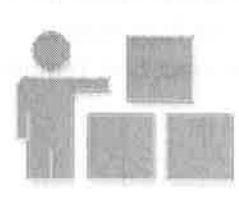
Our assistance highlights strategies and opportunities to strengthen municipal financial operations by analyzing data, policies, procedures, workflows, staffing levels, job descriptions, and shared-service opportunities.

Best Practices, Calculators, and Tools

Our financial management resources are built on national standards of excellence, extensive local government knowledge, and the collective wisdom gained from visiting over three-quarters of communities across the state.

Early Intervention Support

Our evaluation process measures communities across various quantitative and qualitative metrics to address financial, professional development, and regulatory issues.



Financial Management Best Practices

Governance

- Legal Services
- Financial Management Team
- Home Rule

Financial Planning

- Financial Policies
- Annual Budget Process in Towns
- Formal Budget and Municipal Calendar
- Quarterly Budget Projections
- Revenue and Expenditure Forecasting
- Free Cash
- Reserves
- Retirement Costs
- Special Purpose Stabilization Funds
- User Fees
- Financial Trend Monitoring

Departmental Procedures

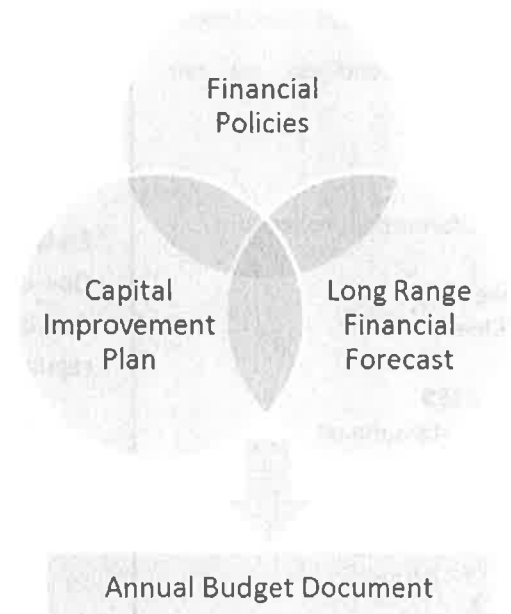
- Annual Audits
- Revenue and Appropriation Deficits
- Cash Flow Budgeting and Short-term Borrowing
- Cash Book
- On-line Bill Payments
- Reconciling Cash and Accounts Receivable
- Property Sales Inspections
- Employee Performance Evaluations
- Enforcing Collections

Other

- Statutory Treatment of Municipal Revenues
- Understanding Municipal Debt
- Presenting and Funding Major Capital Projects
- Enterprise Funds
- Costing Municipal Services
- Intermunicipal Agreements
- Overrides and Exclusions

Tools, Templates and Calculators

- Debt Service Estimator
- Tax Impact
- Residential Exemption
- Tax Levy Shift
- Collector Receivable Control
- Employee Time Sheet
- Department Payroll Summary Voucher
- Debt Service Schedule
- Treasurer Cash Book
- Cash Flow Budget
- Indirect Cost Template



Supporting a Commonwealth of Communities

**FY25 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant
Information Paper**

The MVP Action Grant is currently CLOSED to applications. MVP is anticipating the release of its next RFR for MVP Action Grants in mid-March 2024.

+++++

All projects are required to provide monthly updates, project deliverables, and a brief project case study communicating lessons learned. The municipality is also required to match 25% of total project cost using cash or in-kind contributions (see RFR for exceptions). All proposals must include the following:

Completed application - completed via online form, see RFR for details

Project scope/budget

MVP yearly progress report describing any relevant work toward advancing community priorities since earning MVP designation

Statement of match

Letters of support from 1) the landowner for projects of any type (e.g., feasibility, design, permitting, or construction) on land the applicant does not own 2) related municipality/ies for eligible non-municipal applicants (except eligible Tribes) 3) other partners and the public demonstrating support 4) all municipalities if regional project

A "Design, Permitting, and Construction" attachment, if applicable

Draft Town Meeting or City Council vote language for land acquisition projects, if applicable

Appraisal for land acquisition projects, if applicable

Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool attachment, if applicable

The MVP program has 10 MVP Core Principles that should be incorporated into MVP Action Grant applications.

MVP FY25 Bernardston-Leyden Wildfire Assessment Grant

David Pomerantz and John Lepore
February 21, 2024

Project Overview

The FY25 Municipal Vulnerability Program Action Grant (**Wildfire Risk Assessment and Mitigation**) will identify specific areas in Bernardston and Leyden that are vulnerable to wildfires. Along with identifying high-priority potential wildfire areas in the two towns, work under the grant will focus on determining off-road emergency access routes and water sources to help first responders with emergency planning, including evacuation, to address wildfires.

Work conducted during the first year of the two-year project will include gathering essential information from:

- Local stakeholder engagements with landowners and emergency management personnel
- State and Federal resources and non-profits, including the Northeast-Midwest Fire Assessment Portal
- Site visits to key locations throughout the two towns
- The use of drones and GIS (geographic information services) for mapping

Without question, addressing climate change vulnerabilities remains a moving and potentially costly target for all towns like Bernardston and Leyden. Grant work will strive to create low-cost methodologies and procedures that can be adopted by other communities and replicated to assist with wildfire focused climate resilience and emergency management planning. Specifically, the grant will identify and utilize low-cost/no-cost software and hardware, which will include step-by-step instructions, that will help other communities successfully use the wildfire assessment and mitigation model that is created.

Second-year funding, which will require filing a grant application, will focus on the following::

- Expand and improve overall emergency management capacities as they relate to wildfire mitigation
- Work with priority landowners to incorporate forest management practices that can reduce wildfire risks on their land
- Develop a group of Citizen Scientists trained to monitor soils and forests over time to identify areas of critical wildfire risk

The Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry under the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation works with the U.S. Forest Administration to create Fire Adapted Communities (FACs) in the state. Incorporating this program into ongoing emergency management work would greatly help Bernardston and Leyden. Working with DCR throughout the second year of the grant would help ensure the project's success.

The state recently released the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan (2023) and the Forests and Climate Solutions Initiative (2023). The Healthy Soils Action Plan discusses initiatives and funding to address healthy soils for climate adaptation and mitigation. Similarly, the Forests and Climate Solutions Initiative contains diverse strategies and calls for technical assistance for landowners and municipalities to improve land and forest management practices to address climate impacts. These timely efforts by the state will directly help with second-year grant work.

Operational Components

The wildfire action grant team will cover both technical implementation and project management.

Tasks under technical implementation will include:

- Outreach to stakeholders (local citizens, emergency management personnel and responders, and other local officials) through formal and informal meetings to gather indigenous knowledge and information
- Development and conducting of meetings, including the development of graphics and information
- Utilization of low-cost/ no-cost resources necessary for field and GIS assessments
- Provide monthly updates to the Select Boards
- Oversight and outreach with media
- Coordination with professional foresters and drone operators who will assist with technical assessment work

The project manager's role will encompass:

grant administration / project manager

- Being the point person with the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) for grant administration
- Oversight of the grant budget, development of monthly progress reports, creation and submission of reimbursement documentation to EEA, and administrative coordination with town officials.
- Coordination with town officials concerning facility use for stakeholder meetings and equipment storage and use
- Identification of sources for materials and technical equipment procurement
- Organization covering the production and dissemination of direct mailings, communication, etc, with Bernardston and Leyden residents and officials
- Procurement of materials and supplies

Ideally, a local person who understands the nature of Leyden and Bernardston would be best suited for the project manager's position.

Estimated Timeline

March 6, 2024-	Overview of the Request for Grants Webinar
May 2024-	Application and Budget Submitted to EEA
August 2024-	Estimated award announcements from EEA
September 2024-	Contract documents and commencement of work
June 2025-	End of Year 1 grant
May 2026-	Apply for Year 2 funding

Next Steps

- Discussion between Bernardston and Leyden Select Boards to discuss possible joint town MVP project (who will be the lead applicant; project management structure; etc.)

Subject **Meeting on Feb 21st**

From Sandra Vecchio <sandravecchio@theunitedarc.org>

To Christina Slocum-Wysk <townclerk@townofbernardston.org>, Karen Kelly <bos@townofbernardston.org>

Cc Michelle Collings <michellecollings@theunitedarc.org>

Date 2024-01-30 10:09



Hi Karen and Christina,

Yes, we will be available and present for the meeting on Feb 21. Myself, Michelle Collings (Financial Director), and Fred Warren (Exe Director) will be attending. We may also have others on the planning committee attending as well.

In the meantime, I will be reaching out to the Police Department for information and ideas for the route.

Thanks so much for the opportunity,

Sandi

Sandra Vecchio | sandravecchio@theunitedarc.org

Event & Community Generalist | The United Arc

294 Aveune A

Turners Falls, MA 01367

T 413.834.3865 | F 413.863.5219

<http://www.theunitedarc.org/> | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

Subject **RE: Information pertaining to a 5K**
From Sandra Vecchio <sandravecchio@theunitedarc.org>
Christina Slocum-Wysk <townclerk@townofbernardston.org>
Karen Kelly <bos@townofbernardston.org>, Michelle Collings
<michellecollings@theunitedarc.org>
Date 2024-01-30 09:32



Good morning,

This is exciting news! When is the next town meeting or Board of Selectperson meeting? We can certainly attend the meeting and present if necessary. I will definitely reach out to the Police Department. As of today, our thoughts were working with the Police Department to find the best and safest route for all participating. As we support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, there will be some participating in wheelchairs. Of course youngsters. We are also hoping to have the Hitchcock Brewery participate as well as a food truck or two.

Thanks so much for considering this event. Anything we raise benefits The United Arc immensely.

Have a great day,

Sandi

From: Christina Slocum-Wysk <townclerk@townofbernardston.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 9:24 AM
To: Sandra Vecchio <sandravecchio@theunitedarc.org>
Cc: Karen Kelly <bos@townofbernardston.org>
Subject: Re: Information pertaining to a 5K

*Appointment
2/21/2024*

Good Morning Sandra,

What a great event! You need to contact our Town Administrator, Karen Kelly, whom I have cc'd on this email. Events such as the 5k fundraiser will need to be approved by our Select Board. You may also need to reach out to our Police Dept. for safety concerns. Good Luck!

Christina

----- Original Message -----

Subject:Information pertaining to a 5K
Date:2024/01/29 03:44 PM
From:Sandra Vecchio <sandravecchio@theunitedarc.org>
To:"townclerk@townofbernardston.org" <townclerk@townofbernardston.org>

Dear Ms.Slocum-Wysk,

My name is Sandra Vecchio. I am the Event and Communication Generalist at The United Arc in Turners Falls. This Spring we are hosting a 5K run, walk, roll benefit fundraiser for our agency and the individuals we support. The 5K is for all ages and abilities. We are reaching out to ask what we would need to run the event in Bernardston. We feel Bernardston is a great place for a 5K.

If interested, please contact me either by phone at 413.834.3865 or email at sandravecchio@theunitedarc.org.

Best,

Sandra