FY 2026 CAREER PATHWAYS GRANT APPLICATION (RFR)

Issue Date:	April 3, 2025
Grant Application (RFR) Number:	RFR #: 325
COMMBUYS Bid Number:	BD-25-1037-1CEN0-METRO-114842
Procurement Contract Person:	Summer Lu
Email Address:	EECSubmission@mass.gov

ABOUT EEC

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is part of the Executive Office of Education, one of the Executive Offices under Governor Maura Healey. Education Secretary Dr. Patrick Tutwiler oversees the Executive Office of Education and is Governor Healey's top advisor on education.

An eleven member Board of Early Education and Care sets policies and regulations related to early education and care programs and services in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Board of Early Education and Care is chaired by Paul Belsito.

"Early education and care" includes formal programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children during out-of-school time; group homes; foster care and adoption placement agencies; and residential schools for children with special needs; as well as programs in informal settings such as home visiting, and community-based family engagement networks.

EEC licenses approximately 9,000 child care programs, residential facilities, and foster care/adoption placement agencies that have the capacity to serve an estimated 257,000 children. On a daily basis, EEC supports an average of 62,000 children from low-income or at-risk families to attend a high-quality family or group child care program.

EEC also provides technical assistance to licensed programs on complying with safety and best practice standards, and assists programs in advancing to higher levels of quality through a system of standards and support, including professional development for early educators.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCUREMENT

As per the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Appropriations Act, EEC is releasing this competitive procurement to award grants to a maximum of **fifteen (15)** applicants to support the early education workforce in obtaining higher education certificates and degrees. The funding is intended to support institutional infrastructure for early childhood education student support and to assist students in leveraging a range of financial aid sources to support the cost of attendance. Given the diverse ethnic, linguistic and educational backgrounds of the early care and education workforce, the support and services provided are vital to the field and integral to sustaining and enhancing high quality early education programs throughout the Commonwealth. The Career Pathways programs have deep connections with the early childhood workforce and local employee partners.

Massachusetts community colleges are uniquely positioned to meet the needs of the early childhood educators and the communities they serve through the following activities:

1. Managing and facilitating student intake and student support services by developing college-wide infrastructure to leverage college resources and services.
2. Implementing a higher education pathway to support and diversify the early childhood education workforce in Massachusetts in alignment with EEC's credentialing levels and related competencies. This consists of an EEC-endorsed, sixteen-credit Early Childhood Education Foundational Certificate in alignment with the new EEC credentialing criteria and competencies.
3. Supporting students with enrollment and matriculation at the college, including comprehensive support for accessing financial aid.
4. Providing comprehensive support services and college-readiness activities for early childhood educators in pursuit of higher education in alignment with the new EEC credentialing system.
5. Developing courses and certificates in a range of modalities and in languages other than English.
6. Engaging in data collection and student progress reporting.

Applicable Procurement Law

Type of Purchase: Grants
Applicable Laws: M.G.L. c. 7A, § 7; St. 1986 c. 206, § 17; 815 CMR 2.00

Acquisition Method

This is a closed Competitive Grant. The Grant Application/RFR and appendices are posted on COMMBUYS. The application will be submitted to an online grant application through EEC.

Estimated Number of Awards

EEC expects to award **up to $309,375** to each applicant with an expected **maximum number of fifteen (15)** grantees. Subject to appropriation and grantee performance, these grants are subject to renewal in FY 2027, FY2028, FY2029 and FY2030. EEC may award more or fewer grants, if it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth. COMMBUYS vendors are hereby referred to as applicants for the purpose of this procurement.

Adding Applicants after Initial Grant Award

If, over the life of the grant, the Funding Department (EEC) determines that additional applicants may be added, these may be drawn from qualified applicants which responded to this Solicitation but were not awarded grants. If necessary to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth, the Solicitation may be reopened to obtain additional Bids.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The FY 2026 Career Pathways Grant is a competitive grant that is open to the **public community colleges** that can demonstrate, through the submission of a successful grant application, that they are able to meet the priorities and required services as outlined in this grant application.

To be eligible for this grant opportunity, applicants must …
1. **Represent** one of the fifteen (15) public community colleges located in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
2. **Offer** the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) approved and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) eligible early childhood education Foundational Certificate (16 credits, aligned with EEC Credential) by Fall 2025.
3. **Offer** an associate degree program in early childhood education in alignment with Mass Transfer 2+2 state-wide agreements.
4. **Have** a current higher education program accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and demonstrate alignment with the EEC's Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Credentialing competencies. If the institution does not have National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation, the applicant must demonstrate programmatic alignment with the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards and EEC's ECE Credentialing competencies.
5. **Agree** to the creation, management, and maintenance of a cross-departmental Career Pathways Team at their respective institutions as outlined in grant deliverables.
6. **Agree** to support and facilitate articulation agreement development and credit for prior learning processes as outlined within their respective institutions.

If an applicant proposes subcontracting some of their required services, the applicant must submit the proposed subcontracted services for any subcontractor as part of the applicant's grant application response. Please note that all such subcontracts must be in writing and approved by EEC prior to their execution.

EXPECTED DURATION OF GRANT

GRANT DURATION	NUMBER OF OPTIONS	NUMBER OF YEARS/MONTHS
Initial Duration		**One (1) Year** July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026
Renewal Options	4	**Four (4) One-Year Options** July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027 July 1, 2027, to June 30, 2028 July 1, 2028, to June 30, 2029 July 1, 2029, to June 30, 2030
Total Maximum Grant Duration		**Five (5) Years**

EEC shall have the sole discretion to determine whether to renew the grant. Renewal options are subject to State and Federal budget allotment and appropriation; the availability of funding; and the applicants' satisfactory grant performance.

Failure of the Applicant to comply with any of the specifications in this Grant Application (RFR) shall be considered grounds for termination. The Applicant shall be liable for any costs incurred by EEC relating to the fulfillment of this Grant should it be terminated because the applicant failed to perform.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

REQUIRED SERVICES

Grant awardees will integrate consultation, advising, and support services into their existing institutional frameworks. This approach ensures that prospective students receive continuous engagement from initial interest through to certification and degree completion, fostering a supportive environment conducive to academic success.

Internal Operations

CAREER PATHWAYS TEAM: FORMATION

Funding requires a college-wide approach to program design and implementation.
Representatives responsible for the facilitation and implementation of a broad range of college services must be identified to form a dedicated Career Pathways Cross Departmental Team ("CP Team") to establish and ensure a coordinated approach to supporting ECE students in pursuit of a higher education pathway.

Each of the following representatives must be identified and commit to participating in team activities by October 1, 2025. One member of the team must be identified as the EEC point-of-contact and is

responsible for scheduling and convening the team within the prescribed cadence to ensure team priorities are established and completed by deadline dates as outlined within grant deliverables.

DEPARTMENT	RESPONSIBLE FOR
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	**Department Chair:** • Coordination and implementation of the Foundational Certificate, curricular alignments, institutional academic program requirements and processes (governance structures), ongoing collaboration and integration with grant staff • Support and develop articulation and transfer agreements in alignment with state-wide efforts • Attend the EEC grant-related meetings • Attend the institutional grant team meetings
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	**Student Navigator and/or Grant Director:** • Oversee and facilitate all grant activity in partnership with identified cross departmental CP Team, institution, and community at large, and EEC • Schedule and facilitate the CP team meetings • Attend all EEC grant meetings Awardees are required to have at least one (1) Full Time Equivalent (FTE), but no more than the equivalent of two (2) FTE dedicated to the grant activities. Job descriptions for the Grant Director and Student Navigator are outlined in Appendix E. Each position may be held separately, or one (1) FTE may serve in both roles. Awardees are encouraged to consider the incumbent Career Pathways personnel for these positions; however, new staff may be hired if appropriate. Awardees are encouraged to employ staff with language proficiency that meet the needs of the community.
SENIOR ADMINISTRATION	**Dean or Assistant Dean:** • Support the Department Chair, faculty, grant staff, and the CP Team • Provide institutional representation and participation in state-wide agreements and curricular alignments • Support and facilitate processes related to institutional governance and program/grant related approvals • Responsible for hiring and managing grant funded positions • Attend the EEC grant-related meetings • Attend the institutional grant team meetings as needed or as appropriate
ACADEMIC ADVISING	**Academic Advisor:** • Coordinate and provide academic advising and transfer support to ECE students in alignment with academic requirements and workforce initiatives • Confer with and update the CP Team regularly • Attend the institutional grant team meetings

DEPARTMENT	RESPONSIBLE FOR
FINANCIAL AID	**Financial Aid Specialist:** • Coordinate student support with financial aid applications and provide data to grant coordinators as requested, participate in reporting requirements related to grant activity • Attend the institutional grant team meetings
ADMISSIONS	**Admissions Specialist:** • Ensure potential ECE majors are connected with the grant initiatives and grant staff, are made aware of funding sources and admissions processes related to matriculation in an ECE certificate or degree program • Attend the institutional grant team meetings
STUDENT FINANCIAL SERVICES	**Student Financial Services Specialist:** • Attend the EEC grant-related meetings as appropriate/requested • Attend the institutional grant team meetings as needed or as appropriate
GRANTS OFFICE/ COMMBUYS	**College-Wide Grant Specialist:** • Attend the EEC grant-related meetings as appropriate/requested • Attend the institutional grant team meetings as needed and/or as appropriate
REGISTRAR'S OFFICE	**Registrar's Office Member:** • Support the development of ECE course schedules (range of modalities, times, dates, languages as proposed within grant application and in response to student need), program and course registration (drop/add processes and related activity) • Attend the institutional grant team meetings

CAREER PATHWAYS TEAM: RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the Career Pathways Team is to ensure college-wide knowledge and understanding of the Career Pathways Grant, such that students have a seamless and consistent experience in their interactions with various college departments.

The CP Team is responsible for the following:
1. **MEETINGS FREQUENCY:** the CP Team must meet monthly during the academic year and at least once during the summer.
2. **ECE STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN:** create and implement a college-wide plan for supporting ECE students from application to certificate or degree completion within the parameters of a higher education pathway.

3. **CP TEAM ROLES:** identify the role each department will play in supporting ECE students.
4. **INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PLAN:** develop and determine a communication plan for internal grant updates and awareness (for CP Team and internal college community).
5. **EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION PLAN:** develop and determine a communication plan for external entities and community partners with pathway opportunities, new student recruitment efforts, funding updates and opportunities, relevant enrollment deadlines and due dates, as well as targeted communications for enrolled students. The communication plan must include a dedicated webpage to serve as a central information hub for new and returning students. The plan must also include a description of the process to be used to ensure ongoing and timely review of necessary content updates (timeline and update cycle).
6. **STUDENT SUPPORT:** identify students in need of support, review Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) each semester and prior to registration in subsequent semesters, identify academic interventions as necessary, monitor student course, certificate, and degree completion.
7. **COURSE DEVELOPMENT:** collaboratively develop course schedules and course modalities to meet the needs of the students and in response to student enrollment trends.
8. **EEC COLLABORATION:** meet and collaborate with EEC as required.
9. **CAREER PATHWAYS GRANT LANDSCAPE:** remain up to date with enrollment trends, matriculation efforts, and funding sources as they relate to Mass Educate, Mass Reconnect, Pell eligibility, and ECE Scholarship awards.
10. **MONITORING:** develop monitoring mechanisms to ensure that students meet the eligibility and programmatic enrollment requirements both academically and financially to ensure that grant activity is administered with fidelity.
11. **REPORTING:** demonstrate how the CP Team will effectively implement these responsibilities to support ECE students in achieving their credential goals. *EEC will provide the data collection and progress monitoring templates*.

Communication and Partnerships

The Grant Director plays an important role in sharing information about grant priorities and services. The Grant Director serves as the single point of contact with EEC and facilitates the communication plan developed by the CP Team.

INTERNAL COLLEGE-WIDE COMMUNICATION	• Ensure pertinent information is shared between the CP Team and EEC
COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS	• Serve as the single point of contact with students interested in the Foundational Certificate • Respond promptly and appropriately to student inquiries • Provide information regarding all aspects of available supports and college offerings • Refer students to college departments or outside entities as appropriate

| EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION | Establish partnerships and work in coordination with EEC Regional Offices and regional Professional Development Centers (PDCs) Serve as a representative of the CP Team at regional convenings as scheduled Provide information, in various ways, with the early childhood workforce regarding the higher education pathway option and the evolving EEC credentialing system as information becomes available Host regularly scheduled Director's Meetings and share up-to-date information about the Higher Education pathways as well as information pertaining to enrollment at the college. Awardees may choose to attend an already existing regional Director's Meeting if one exists or partner with regional community colleges to host one regional meeting a month. |
| COMMUNICATION WITH EEC | Meet monthly with EEC Program Specialist for an individual college check-in Meet monthly with Career Pathways Grantees for a Community of Practice Attend the trainings on the EEC Credentialing System as information and opportunities become available |

Student Support Services

Funding must develop, or leverage existing, infrastructure to support targeted academic services aimed at successful college enrollment, student retention strategies, course and certificate completion, tutoring and English language learning. Additional targeted support includes student mentoring, academic advising, financial literacy, FAFSA completion and submission, ECE Scholarship, Mass Educate and Mass Reconnect application and submission.

Under the guidance of the Student Navigator, the awardee **MUST** provide support services, including but not limited to, the following:

| ORIENTATION | **Initial Orientation:**
All students must participate in an initial orientation where they will learn about the EEC credential, specifically the higher education and professional development pathways. Students will be provided information about the options to obtain an initial credential and then supported through making an informed decision as to their preferred pathway. Should students choose the **HIGHER EDUCATION PATHWAY**, they may enroll in the first course of the Foundational Certificate (or Child Growth and Development until the new credential is fully adopted by EEC) Should students choose the **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY**, they may be referred to a regional entity offering the professional development training for the EEC Credential **Academic Orientation:** |

	Students who select the **HIGHER EDUCATION PATHWAY** will be provided orientation into the college application and financial aid processes. This shall be offered concurrently with participation in the first course.
SUPPORT FOR FIRST-TIME COLLEGE STUDENTS	Tailored resources, including workshops and mentorship programs, for students who are the first in their families to attend college.
ACADEMIC ADVISING	Personalized academic advising to help students select courses, understand degree requirements, and plan their educational pathways including transfer counseling for students planning to move to a four-year institution.
FINANCIAL AID COUNSELING	Assistance in navigating financial aid options, including completing the FAFSA, applying for the ECE Scholarship or other state aid, and relying on Career Pathways Grant funding as the last source of aid.
TUTORING	One-on-one and group tutoring sessions to support academic success with the courses required for the Foundational Certificate.

Early Childhood Education Coursework

Funding must also support continued cross collaboration activities and initiatives between EEC, DHE, and the fifteen community colleges. Funds support and engage early childhood education department chairs, faculty and other college staff in the design and implementation of future academic programming in alignment with EEC's certification requirements and future credentialing system and higher education pathway.

1. The Early Childhood Education Department at each awarded institution will offer all the courses required for completion of the ECE Foundational Certificate each academic semester:
    a. Introduction to Early Education
    b. Child Growth and Development
    c. Curriculum
    d. Positive Behavior/Special Education
    e. Practicum[1]
2. Foundational courses must be offered in a variety of learning modalities, and languages to meet the needs of the community served by the college.

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[1] Practicum may be offered less frequently depending on student need.

3. Awardees are required to determine the need in the community for offering the Foundational Certificate in a language other than English. If there is demonstrated need, the awardee is encouraged to develop and offer the Foundational Certificate in that language.
4. Until EEC has fully adopted the new credentialling system, colleges must continue to offer Child Growth and Development as the required course towards current Teacher certification requirements, and Administration in Early Childhood as the required course towards current Director certification. Child Growth and Development must be offered, as a funded course, or Career Pathways section, at least once each semester until the EEC regulations are revised. Administration in Early Childhood may be offered as a funded course, or Career Pathways section, at least once each semester until the EEC regulations are revised.
5. Awardees are required to collaborate with higher education workforce development departments, apprenticeship programs, and professional training entities to develop articulation, transfer, and credit for prior learning agreements.

Tuition

Career Pathways Grant funding used for tuition must prioritize students who are enrolled in the Foundational Certificate. As EEC moves towards the launch of the new credentialing system, the Foundational Certificate will become the higher education gateway to becoming credentialed at Level 1.

All students must complete a **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA) and an application for the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Scholarship before being considered for Career Pathways Grant tuition funding. Upon completion of these applications, students must use all federal and state aid for which they are eligible.

Career Pathways Grant funding:
- **MAY BE USED** for students who do not qualify for state or federal financial aid but otherwise meet all the requirements for full acceptance and matriculation at the college
- **MAY NOT BE USED** to excuse outstanding balances, or to fund tuition to circumvent the approved college admissions and acceptance procedures
- **MAY ONLY BE USED** for students making satisfactory academic progress
- **MAY BE USED** for other tuition related purposes in limited specific circumstances with prior approval from EEC
- **MAY BE USED** to fund Child Growth and Development when it is the educator's first higher education course and is needed for EEC Teacher certification. Educators who have completed Child Growth and Development may enroll in the Foundational Certificate to receive continued financial assistance
- **MAY BE USED** to fund Administration in Early Education for educators who are already EEC Lead Teacher Certified and intend to pursue EEC Director Certification

Student Tracking and Data Collection

Grant staff are required to track student interest in the Foundational Certificate through an initial interest form. Students who express interest in the Foundational Certificate will complete an initial interest form, generating a "case load" of students for the Student Navigator to track. The purpose of student tracking is for grant staff to follow and support individual students through their journey and to report specific aggregated outcomes to EEC.

At the end of each semester, grant staff will be required to report on the following metrics.

EEC will provide the templates and forms that grantees will be required to use for submitting the requested data.

STUDENTS, SUPPORTS, AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT	- Number of students who complete an intake form - Avenues through which students get referred to the college - Number, dates, and modality of orientation sessions offered. Include number of attendees - Number, dates, and modality of financial aid sessions offered. Include number of attendees - Number, dates, and modality of sessions for first time college students offered. Include number of attendees - Number of students who complete the FAFSA and qualify for a PELL Grant, Mass Educate or Mass Reconnect - Number of students who complete the Early Childhood Educator Scholarship Application - Number of students awarded the Early Childhood Educator Scholarship - Number of students provided Career Pathways funding for tuition and the reason other funding was not available - Number of students enrolled in the Foundational Certificate - Number of students completing the Foundational Certificate - Number of students enrolled in an associate degree program - Number of students completing an associate degree program
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CAREER PATHWAYS TEAM	- Up-to-date list of participants - Meeting dates and agenda topics - Challenges the CP Team faces in supporting students "Best Practices" for supporting students
PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION	- Number and dates of Director's Meetings - Topics discussed: challenges faced by Directors
COURSEWORK	For each section of Child Growth and Development, Administration in Early Childhood, and all Foundational Certificate courses, provide the following information:

	o Name, modality, and language o Number of students enrolled o Number of students completed

Note: EEC reserves the right to request other appropriate data.

ANTICIPATED EXPENDITURES, FUNDING OR COMPENSATION

Funding

Estimated Value of Procurement: Up to **$4,640,625** in FY 2026.

The Career Pathways Grant is funded from a State appropriation for Account **3000-7066** and the FY 2026 Career Pathways Grant funding is subject to the FY 2026 final State budget appropriation for Account **3000-7066**.

A projected budget reflecting services for FY 2026 (July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026) is required for submission with this grant application. Please be advised that the FY 2026 projected budget may be amended if necessary.

EEC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or any portion of the proposals submitted if it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth to do so. EEC shall have the sole discretion to determine whether to renew the grant, and renewals are also subject to appropriation, the availability of funding, and a grantee's satisfactory performance.

Funding is subject to State and Federal budget allotment and appropriation. EEC reserves the right to increase or decrease the maximum obligation to the selected Applicant, or to execute grants with Applicants not funded in the initial selection process, subject to available funding, satisfactory grant performance and service or commodity need. Should additional funds become available, EEC reserves the right to make additional awards based on the responses received, the needs of the Commonwealth, identified professional development needs, if applicable, and/or best value to the Commonwealth. EEC reserves the right to reduce grant allocation and reallocate funding in the event one or more grant is terminated or ended prior to the grant term. EEC also reserves the right, in the event additional funding becomes available, to add additional required services and/or extend the existing services.

Funding Use

Funds associated with this grant must be used to support the grant objectives, goals, and priorities. EEC reserves the right to approve, deny or request modifications on planned fund use. Programs that do not

submit complete applications or request fund use for non-approvable expenditures may be subject to not having their grant awarded and/or awarded funding reduced.

Note: Awardees may not commit more than 70% of the grant award towards salary, stipends, and fringe benefits.

Career Pathways Grant funding may be used for the following purposes:
1. Wages and fringe for grant staff
2. Stipends for college faculty to participate in Career Pathways meetings and requirements that fall outside of their contractual obligations, including development and translation of courses in languages other than English.
3. Supplies and materials for successful implementation of the grant priorities
4. Textbooks, technology, and other materials for early childhood education students
5. One entry-level class for each educator, after which they must matriculate into the college and apply for federal and state aid to fund the completion of their certificate or degree program.
6. Courses that meet the requirements for EEC Director Certification.
7. Credit for prior learning and/or articulation agreements
8. Development of new coursework and/or professional training
9. Revision of existing coursework to be delivered asynchronously
10. Transcript translation
11. Indirect costs up to 10% with a letter of rate approval from DESE
12. Other jointly agreed upon materials or services with prior permission from EEC

Underutilization or failure to meet contractual requirements may result in termination or non-renewal of the contract.

Please see *Appendix B: FY 2026 Career Pathways Grant Budget Guidelines*, which is incorporated into this RFR, for specifics on allowable and unallowable fund use.

REPORTING

Quality Reporting

The Federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Regulations at 45 CFR 98.53 require that states receiving CCDF funds allocate at least nine (9%) percent of the CCDF award total toward quality activities designed to improve the quality of child care. In fulfillment of this federal mandate, Massachusetts has identified this grant as part of Massachusetts' overall quality activities allocation.

Programmatic Reporting

Program data will be required from grant-funded Applicants to measure the outcomes of this grant. Applicants must submit reporting information to EEC as outlined below:

1. EEC will provide forms and templates for required data
2. EEC will collect data at the end of each academic semester

EEC, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to modify reporting requirements and/or add additional reporting requirements not found in this RFR. EEC may withhold funding to any grantee or to terminate or reduce funding to any grantee, if the grantee fails to submit quarterly reports and/or annual reports, as required, or otherwise fails to comply with the reporting requirements within this RFR or with any modified reporting requirements. Any changes to reporting requirements shall be made with at least 90 days' notice to Grantees.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

All questions regarding this Grant Application **must** be submitted in writing via email to EEC *no later than* **12:00 PM** ET on **April 22, 2025**. The email should be addressed to EECSubmission@mass.gov and should contain the Grant Application Title/Fund Code in the Subject Line of the email.

In response, EEC will develop a Questions and Answers (Q&A) document to address the questions received from the applicants. If applicable, questions that are presented in a Webinar will also be included in the Q&A document. EEC anticipates posting the Q&A document on COMMBUYS on or around **April 24, 2025.**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to maintain an active registration in COMMBUYS (e.g., the applicant must keep a current email address for the applicant's contact person and prospective grant manager, if awarded a grant). The applicant/applicant's contact person must monitor that email inbox for communications from EEC, including requests for clarification. EEC and the Commonwealth assume no responsibility if an applicant's designated email address is not current, or if technical problems arise, including those with the applicant's computer, network, or internet service provider (ISP) cause email communications sent to/from the applicant and EEC to be lost or rejected by any means including email or spam filtering.

APPLICATION AMENDMENTS

EEC reserves the right to make amendments to the application after initial publication. It is each applicant's responsibility to check COMMBUYS for any amendments, addenda or modifications to this Bid, and any Bid Q&A records related to this Application.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

In accordance with the submission requirements detailed below, the online application with all required documents must be submitted electronically to the *EEC Finance* portal *no later than* **4:00 PM** ET on **May 8, 2025.**

EEC will disqualify all incomplete grant responses or grant responses that are submitted after the submission deadline. Grant responses will be considered incomplete if any of the sections of the online application are not received by the submission deadline. **Incomplete or late grant responses will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Please see the charts below for the submission requirements.**

Note: For any submission that fails to meet the submission requirements of the Grant Application, EEC reserves the right to allow an Applicant to make minor corrections to its submission, if the evaluation team, at its sole discretion, determines that such non-compliance is insubstantial, and can be easily corrected and/or was due to technical error.

Online Application Submission

To complete and submit the grant application, please click the following link:
https://masseec.egrantsmanagement.com/

PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY HARD COPIES OF THE GRANT APPLICATION TO EEC.

Prior to submission, to ensure that the online application is completed fully and accurately, please see **Appendix A***: Online Grant Application Instructions.*

Components of application: Sections 1-5 (Required)

1. Program Contact Information
2. Narrative Questions
3. Letter of Commitment
4. Budget
5. Subcontractor Excel Workbook (If applicable/needed)
6. Budget Overview (Review only)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

This is a competitive grant. EEC will first prioritize proposals by determining if they meet the eligibility requirements and then will score proposals that meet all eligibility requirements by priority category, according to the general evaluation and rating criteria articulated in *Appendix F: Evaluation Criteria*, which is incorporated into this RFR. Scores will be used to assess the strength of proposals received and to determine whether a performance/monitoring plan should be developed and implemented for an applicant if they are awarded a grant. EEC reserves the right to set the amount of funding, available to, or awarded to an applicant, based on the applicant's score. Additionally, EEC reserves the right to decline to award a grant based on an applicant's proposal score.

ESTIMATED AWARD CONTRACT START DATE

July 1, 2025: this is the approximate start date. The actual start date will be the Contract Effective Date which is the date the Contract for the Award is executed by the parties.

SUBMISSION OF GRANT PROPOSALS/APPLICATIONS

See the Responses Deadline Date and Time indicated in the Estimated Procurement Calendar (below).

Estimated Procurement Calendar

PROCUREMENT ACTIVITY	DATE	TIME
Grant Application Release/Posting	**April 3, 2025**	
Virtual Bidder's Conference Link to **REGISTER:** **https://zoom.us/meeting/register/Ge66tYYAQPyjeZSD5_6iiw**	**April 8, 2025**	**1:00-2:30 PM**
Virtual Office Hours Link to **REGISTER:** **https://zoom.us/meeting/register/M9QlHiI_Qxm2LW90eOmMHw**	**April 15, 2025**	**10:30-11:30AM**
Submission of Written Inquiries (Q&A) Applicants must submit written inquiries to: EECSubmission@mass.gov Inquiries may be submitted in advance of the webinar and after the webinar, up to the deadline.	**April 22, 2025**	**12:00 PM**
Response to Written Inquiries	**April 24, 2025**	
Submission Deadline for Grant Applications Applicants must submit electronically through the *EEC Finance* portal https://masseec.egrantsmanagement.com/	**May 8, 2025**	**4:00 PM ET**
Contract Start Date (Estimated)	**July 1, 2025**	

Applicants are required to monitor COMMBUYS for changes to the procurement calendar for this Bid.

MA ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

All applicants will be required to submit the MA Administrative Forms listed in the chart below when requested.

Form/Document	Location	Notes/Instructions (If any)
Request for Taxpayer Identification Number & Certification (Massachusetts Substitute W-9 Form)	COMMBUYS/Online Application	Wet Blue Ink Signature Required, when requested
Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing	COMMBUYS/Online Application	Wet Blue Ink Signature Required, when requested
Authorization for Electronic Funds Transfer	COMMBUYS/Online Application	Wet Blue Ink Signature Required, when requested
Standard Contract Form and Instructions	Emailed to Approved Grantees	Wet Blue Ink Signature Required, when requested
Federal Funding and Accountability and Transparency Act Reporting Requirement (FFATA)	COMMBUYS/Online Application	When requested

APPENDICES

All Applicants are required to review all the appendices listed below:

Appendix A: FY2026 Career Pathways Online Application Instructions
Appendix B: FY2026 Career Pathways Budget Guidelines
Appendix C: FY2026 Career Pathways Eligibility Amounts
Appendix D: FY2026 Career Pathways Payment Information
Appendix E: FY2026 Career Pathways Job Descriptions
Appendix F: FY2026 Career Pathways Evaluation Criteria

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

EEC reserves the right to adjust the timeframe above. It is the responsibility of the applicant to keep up to date on changes to this Grant Application by checking COMMBUYS.

EEC reserves, in its sole discretion, the right to request additional information regarding any responses/applications received. EEC shall have the right to specify the amount of time for submission of such additional information. EEC shall have the right to disqualify responses where such information is not submitted within the updated timeframe specified by EEC.

EEC shall have sole discretion in determining whether to provide an opportunity for an unsuccessful grant Applicant to request a debriefing regarding their grant application. EEC may limit the time period in which debriefing requests are to be submitted and the manner in which debriefings will be conducted (e.g., by telephone, e-mail, and/or in-person). In general, a debriefing involves providing an Applicant with a copy of their own scorecard and accompanying comments created by the evaluation team that reviewed

their grant application, along with a brief discussion around those comments and scores. The purpose of a debriefing is for the unsuccessful Applicant to learn the strengths and weaknesses that EEC found in their application. A debriefing shall not include any comparisons between grant applications, nor any discussion of any other grant applications. If debriefings are to be permitted for a specific grant, EEC will include such information along with the grant award(s) notification.

The receipt of grant funds is contingent upon the grantee being able to certify that it will comply with the Massachusetts General Laws, including G.L. c. 40A, § 3A, the MBTA Communities Act. Compliance with the MBTA Communities Act is determined by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

Please note: there are no rights to appeal EEC's grant award decision.