



Massachusetts Cultural Districts Initiative Site Visit Guide

Introduction

The Massachusetts Cultural Districts Initiative staff will review applications on a rolling basis. If an application is incomplete, or ineligible, staff will contact you with further instructions.

If your application is complete, clears all the eligibility criteria, and passes the MCC's internal review process, MCC staff will contact you to set up a site visit. The site visit is an opportunity to demonstrate the district's readiness to obtain state designation, and is central to the designation process.

Review Criteria

Applications with a strong management plan; well-defined strategic goals; a plan to fully utilize local cultural assets through creative programming and marketing; and inclusion of the community's unique history and topographic features, are likely to be the most successful.

Applications will be assessed based on the following categories:

- Management & Budget
- Cultural Assets
- Public Infrastructure & Amenities
- Marketing
- Incentives & Evaluation

Site Visit Protocol

Each site visit is in three parts, and must include:

- A meeting with the town or cities municipal leaders and relevant department heads, which must include the management organization if there is a third party management agreement in place, then:
- A tour of the district by the MCC's Cultural District site advisor and staff to meet with district stakeholders and business owners on a semi-formal basis. The applicant may decide who accompanies the tour from the community, but representatives of the municipality are expected to be present throughout the tour to answer questions and make introductions, then:
- After the tour, a meeting must be arranged with partnering organizations or individuals, and district stakeholders

NOTE: If the partnership and stakeholder meeting is more than 25 people, then the meeting should be split into two parts. Each meeting will last no longer than 45 minutes. The applicant and the district partners should be prepared to respond to questions about the proposed district, the district goals and plan of action during the meeting. Stakeholders are expected to be fully apprised of the district's plan of action.

Every site visit is unique; the agenda will be negotiated with the applicant, **but must be confirmed at least two weeks prior to the site visit, and a list of attendees forwarded to the MCC.**

The visit should total no more than four (4) hours.

Site Visit Team

Each site visit is conducted by a team comprised of MCC staff and the Cultural District Site Advisor. MCC executive staff and board members may also attend. If this is the case, advance notice will be given.

MCC Staff

MCC staff will make arrangements for the visit, serve as the meeting facilitator, and take notes to document the visit. Meri Jenkins, Cultural Districts Initiative Manager is available to answer any questions and work with you to help organize a successful site visit that provides value for all concerned.

Cultural District Site Advisor

The Cultural District Site Advisor is contracted by the MCC to assess the readiness of a district for designation. Site advisors are experts in community and economic development issues, particularly in regards to creative economy development and place making. The site advisor allocated to your visit will have been cleared of any conflict of interest prior to the visit.

Preparation for Site Visit

The MCC and the Cultural Districts applicant each have responsibilities in preparing for the site visit.

The MCC will:

- Work with you to set a visit date that is convenient for as many of the partnering organizations as possible.
- Assemble the site visit team and notify the applicant of attendees and site advisor.
- Provide other information as requested in a timely manner.
- Coordinate with the applicant to finalize meeting arrangements

The Partner organization will:

- Invite participants for each component of the site visit
- Prepare name tags for all participants
- Provide meeting space and refreshments for the site visit
- Provide necessary tickets/access to performances/exhibitions
- Coordinate with the MCC on confirming the site visit agenda

After the site visit

The Cultural District Site Advisor will create a site visit report based on the information presented and his /her observations that will be reviewed by the board of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The report will be sent to the district representative. The MCC board will make all final decisions regarding the state designation of a district. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application following the board meeting.