



Local Cultural Council Program Guidelines

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
Local Cultural Council Management	3
Overview	3
Membership Basics.....	4
Local Cultural Council Duties	5
Local Cultural Council Funds Management.....	6
Use of Funds	7
Local Cultural Council Grant Cycle	8
Eligibility	8
Grant Review Criteria.....	9
Grant Decisions	11
Grant Award Disbursement	11
Grant Cycle Timeline	13
Appendix A – Open Meeting Requirements.....	15
Appendix B – Conflict of Interest Requirements	17
Appendix C – Public Records Law	18
Appendix D – Reconsideration Requests	19

Introduction

This document provides guidance to local and regional cultural councils on the policies and procedures Local Cultural Councils (LCCs) must follow when awarding and disbursing revolving account dollars to grant recipients to ensure a thoughtful and fair process for distributing public money.

These guidelines are issued by Mass Cultural Council (the Agency) in accordance with its authority under [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 10 sections 52-58](#).

Please note that the Agency may issue additional guidelines in response to emerging situations. LCCs will be notified if any guidelines are changed.

Background

In Massachusetts, public funding for the arts, humanities, and sciences is provided through a central state agency, Mass Cultural Council, and through a network of LCCs that serve every city and town in the state. LCCs also receive support for programs from donations, fundraising events, and their local municipality.

Mass Cultural Council receives funding from the Massachusetts Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts and distributes these public funds through two channels:

1. Direct grants to individuals and organizations, available through statewide competitive grant processes; and
2. Distributions to LCCs, which then regrant funds to individuals and organizations in their own communities.

There are currently over 330 Local, Regional, and *Tribal Cultural Councils in Massachusetts that form the most extensive system of public support for community cultural programs in the country. Collectively, these councils fund thousands of cultural activities in all 351 cities and towns in the state as well as tribal governments. The LCC Toolkit's [Program Background section](#) covers the Agency's programs and services and the history of the LCC Program.

**The [Tribal Cultural Council \(TCC\) Program](#) is an expansion of the LCC Program that supports Native American and Indigenous communities. These councils follow the [Tribal Cultural Council Program Guidelines](#).*

Local Cultural Council Management

Overview

Local decision-making is an integral element of this system. LCCs have the right and responsibility to award grants that address cultural needs specific to their communities.

Allocation Formula: LCC yearly allocations are determined by a funding formula based on

population size and equalized property values, among other conditions, and distributed to LCCs by the Agency. The [Program Background section](#) elaborates further on this process.

Regionalization: Cities and towns may join forces to establish [regional cultural councils](#), which are eligible to receive a total allocation equal to the combined individual allocations of each community participating in it. If two or more towns wish to form a regional council, there must be at least one representative appointed from each community in the consortium. Regional consortia must also be approved by Mass Cultural Council (LCCs may consult the provisions of M.G.L. C.10, §58).

Membership Basics

LCCs must consist of at least five, but no more than 22 members, appointed by the top appointing official in the municipality (i.e., Select Board, Mayor, City Manager, or Executive Officer). LCC members should have a demonstrated interest in the arts, humanities, or sciences. The chief appointing authority and members of the local appropriating authority cannot serve as members (i.e., the mayor of a city, the city council, the city manager, the board of selectmen, the executive officer).

Membership Terms: LCC member terms are three years and appointments should be staggered so that not all members' terms end at the same time.

- **Maximum Terms:** LCC members can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms, or a total of six years, unless the appointing authority removes an LCC member before their term expires. (Only the appointing authority can remove members before their terms expire).
- **Ex-Officio Members:** After completing two consecutive terms, LCC members must step down from being a voting member for one year before serving additional terms. During this "time-off" period, they may still participate as an ex-officio member by assuming duties or responsibilities essential to the LCC's operations. However, they have no voting privileges under this status.
- **Safe Harbor Provision:** Per M.G.L. C.10, §58, an LCC member with an expired term shall continue to "serve until the qualification of such member's successor." This provision is intended to avoid quorum problems for LCCs when waiting for new appointments to be made. LCCs and municipalities must not abuse this rule to allow members to serve endless or greatly extended terms. Membership and leadership transitions must be handled in a responsible and timely manner.

Member Removal Policy: LCCs may establish participation requirements for members to ensure the ability to meet quorum and conduct business. The policy can set forth a period of inactivity (i.e., 1 year, or 3 missed meetings, etc.) that could then trigger a vote to either request the member resign or that the appointing authority remove them.

Member Restrictions:

- **Residency:** State guidelines do not require LCC members to live in the city or town served by the LCC. Some municipalities, however, do have their own residency requirements.
- **Age:** State guidelines do not stipulate a minimum age requirement. Some

municipalities, however, do have age restrictions. The [Working with Youth section](#) has tips and strategies on recruiting youth members.

Member Elections: LCCs must elect a chair, secretary, and treasurer annually. LCCs are strongly encouraged to distribute the work and leadership of these key positions among multiple LCC members (e.g., co-chairs, treasury subcommittee, etc.). All members can take responsibility for aspects of LCC operations. Sharing responsibility is the most effective way to ensure long-term stability. The [Membership section](#) has suggested roles and responsibilities for each key LCC member role.

Training: Members are encouraged to complete the [LCC Basics Training](#) once every 3-year term.

Local Cultural Council Duties

LCCs have the following duties and requirements.

State Laws: Abide by all state laws pertaining to local government bodies.

- **Open Meeting Law:** Massachusetts law states that all meetings of local government bodies, including those held by LCCs, must be open to the public. For additional requirements and guidelines on the Open Meeting Law, **see Appendix A.**
- **Conflict of Interest Law:** The conflict of interest law seeks to prevent conflicts between private interests and public duties. LCC members must complete the [Conflict of Interest Law Online Training](#) program within 30 days of their LCC (re)appointment and then every 2 years. Each municipal appointing authority administers the training requirement. For additional requirements and guidelines on the Conflict of Interest Law, **see Appendix B.**
- **Public Records Law:** All records of the actions of LCCs are considered public information. LCCs must respond to requests to view these materials with a maximum delay of 10 days from the day of the request. For additional requirements and guidelines on the Public Records Law, **see Appendix C.**

Local Criteria: LCCs annually, develop and post [Local Guidelines and Priorities](#) that are informed by their community's needs and the types of applications received in the last cycle. LCCs are strongly encouraged to create their own local criteria (based on community input). If local criteria are not created, LCCs must follow the Agency's guidelines for decision making.

- **Guidelines** clearly communicate any local application instructions or restrictions.
- **Priorities** and local review criteria help LCCs to support projects that best meet the needs of their community and are determined by an LCC's community input.

Community Input: LCCs are encouraged to engage with residents and other local stakeholders to assess and understand cultural needs within their community by obtaining community input at least once every three years. Bigger cities with larger populations or communities that experience large swings in demographic changes should consider

collecting community input annually. More information on collecting input is in the [Community Input section](#).

Grant Cycle: Promote and complete the [grant cycle](#) by [reviewing](#) and [recommending action](#) on submitted applications. Advertise the LCC's contact info on its public webpage and monitor the communications.

Reports: Complete the LCC Annual Reporting requirements by each deadline.

- **New Cycle Report** – where an LCC's information, member list, local guidelines & priorities and grant payment type are submitted to start the grant cycle. **Due August 28.**
- **Financial Report** – an effort between the municipal fiscal officer and the LCC's treasurer to find out how much money is available to grant. **Due October 9.**
- **Grant Decisions Report** – where the amount available from the financial report is matched with the LCC's awarded grants and council program. **Due January 16.**

Compliance: LCC members and municipal staff must comply with all Agency guidelines, rules, and rulings. The fundamental operations of LCCs are reviewed and approved by the Agency annually before allocations are released. Agency staff will check the following before releasing allocation funds:

- All Annual Reporting requirements to Mass Cultural Council were submitted.
- All allocation funds from the given year were granted or encumbered.

Failure to Comply: If the Agency finds that an LCC has not adequately complied with its duties, it may suspend all or part of the LCC's allocation. The Agency may also specify timeframes for corrective actions before the LCC can begin receiving allocations again. If an LCC fails to take these corrective actions within the specified time frame, the Agency may redistribute the LCC's allocation. If an LCC appears unable to comply with its duties or specified corrective actions, the Agency may determine that a partial or complete change in the LCC's membership is required to enable the LCC to receive its allocation again. In these extraordinary cases, the Agency may authorize an LCC's appointing authority to remove LCC members and appoint new ones.

State Reviews: The Agency may conduct periodic reviews of LCCs, which can include the review of applications and supporting documentation, payment requests submitted by grantees, and adherence to following the procedures outlined in the LCC Program Guidelines. It may also employ third-party experts to conduct these periodic reviews.

Local Cultural Council Funds Management

The [Managing Funds section](#) elaborates on the following topics and the [Resources for Municipalities](#) page has guidance on establishing clear financial processes.

Account Requirements: Each LCC must keep **all funds** (state funds from Mass Cultural Council, interest earned, and locally raised funds) in the LCC's municipal account. **The LCC's municipal account must be a revolving account kept separate and apart from all**

other monies administered by the city or town treasurer as specified by M.G.L. C.10, §58. Separate checkbooks or non-municipal accounts are not permissible. LCCs are entitled to interest on their municipal account and to regular financial reports from the municipality.

- **State Allocation Accumulation:** LCCs may not accumulate unspent state funds. Any unspent or unencumbered state funds (e.g., from unrequested grants, unused administrative expenses, under-budgeted Council Programs, etc.) from prior grant cycles must be treated as unencumbered money and be regranted during the next grant cycle.

Local Funds: [M.G.L. C.10, §58](#) states that LCCs may accept grants, contributions, gifts, bequests, devises, and other donations from all sources, including governmental bodies. LCCs are encouraged to leverage funds from sources other than the state, including private contributions, local government allocations, program revenues, event fees, etc. LCCs should communicate with their municipality to ensure proper procedures when receiving funds.

Donors of such funds may qualify their gift as deductible for federal income, gifts, and estate tax purposes. Funds received by gift to a Local Cultural Council are considered to be donated to a political subdivision of the Commonwealth exclusively for public purposes as defined in Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. LCCs may also apply for and receive grant funding through sources such as the state, federal government, and public and private foundations. For questions from municipalities on fundraising, reference the [Municipal Guide to Managing LCC Funds](#).

Unlike state allocations from Mass Cultural Council, prior Agency approval for expenditure of locally raised funds and interest earned is NOT required.

Use of Funds

All LCC monies must be used as the LCC directs, to support programs in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences in Massachusetts. This includes locally-raised funds, which at the LCC's discretion, can be used to cover LCC grants, administrative expenses, Council Programs, etc.

All LCC expenditures must be consistent with Agency guidelines, and otherwise in accordance with local procedures for the expenditure of public funds. The [Municipal Guide to Managing LCC Funds](#) provides detailed guidance on common questions and scenarios related to LCC accounts.

The state allocation LCCs receive are spent in the following ways:

- **Granting:** LCCs must grant out at least 75% of their state allocation.
- **Administrative Expenses:** LCCs may spend up to 5% of their state allocation on [administrative expenses](#). Municipalities are tax-exempt, and LCC members should provide the municipal certificate when purchasing supplies.
- **Member Reimbursement:** Although LCC members cannot receive compensation, they can receive reimbursement for expenses. Together, the LCC and their municipality

should determine specific policies and procedures for reimbursing LCC member expenses.

- **Restrictions:** While LCCs may use administrative funds to purchase refreshments for public events such as grantee receptions, LCCs cannot use administrative funds to purchase refreshments for regular LCC meetings, such as grant cycle voting meetings. LCCs cannot purchase alcoholic beverages, under any circumstance per [Mass General Laws governing municipal finance](#).

Council Program: LCCs may spend up to 20% of their state allocation on Council Programs they develop in response to their community's unmet cultural needs or to support their local priorities. LCCs that choose to set aside these funds for their Council Programs must complete the Council Program section of the Grant Decisions Report in the grants management system.

Council Program funds can be used to cover administration, staffing, and other expenses related to the project or event (e.g., marketing, catering, etc.). Council Program funds cannot be used for:

- An LCC's general administrative expenses, such as paid administrative staff, printing panel books, or standard LCC publicity efforts.
- LCC member salaries or stipends.
- Funding late or ineligible grant applications. These funds are intended for use in programming and activities organized by the LCC itself

Council Program funds cannot be set aside "just in case" and must be encumbered by June 30. Unspent funds must be treated as unencumbered funds and must be granted out during the next grant cycle, following Mass Cultural Council's timeline and process. The [Council Program section](#) includes planning guidance, requirements, potential conflicts of interest, and other details to consider regarding Council Programs.

Local Cultural Council Grant Cycle

Applicants submit directly to specific LCCs using the online grants management system. Paper or mailed applications cannot be accepted. Applicants who need assistance completing an application should attend an [Info Session](#) or contact a [Community Initiatives Program Officer](#).

Application deadline: All applicants must submit completed applications by the statewide deadline, October 16. **Late applications cannot be accepted.**

Accessibility Services: The Agency can offer translation, interpretation, alternative formats, and other services individuals may need to participate fully in Agency programs. [Learn more about requesting an accommodation for accessibility or requesting translation services](#). The Agency makes every effort to provide support to LCCs to meet any such request should the municipality not be able to provide the accommodation.

Eligibility

Applicants must reside or be located in Massachusetts. LCCs can prioritize eligible applicant types or limit which types of applicants they fund; if they do so, they must publish these details in their local guidelines before the LCC application opens. All applicants must show that a public benefit results from their project. LCCs may accept applications from anyone included in the following list.

- **Individuals:** Individual applicants, including sole proprietors.
- **Non-Profit Organizations**
- **Unincorporated Groups:** A group of individuals coming together for a common purpose (e.g., local community band, theater group) that do not have a formal legal status.
- **For-Profit Organizations**
- **Tribal, federal, state, and municipal government organizations:** This includes any governmental entity such as public schools, libraries, other municipal agencies, and LCCs.
- **Religious organizations:** LCCs cannot fund activities that are “inherently religious” such as religious worship, instruction, and proselytization. Religious organizations or groups with a religious affiliation are eligible to apply for funding for a project or program that:
 - is available to the general public.
 - has the purpose of benefiting the public, not the religious organization.

Here are the most common [FAQs regarding the LCC Program](#). The [Applicant Outreach & Engagement](#) section includes strategies for encouraging and supporting applicants.

What LCCs can fund: LCCs may approve grants for a broad range of projects and programs including but not limited to operating support, ticket subsidies, field trips, artist residencies, public art, fellowships, community events/programs, site specific projects, and other activities, based on local priorities. Each LCC determines its own local eligibility requirements based on the community engagement process.

- **Restrictions:** Grant funds received from an LCC may not be used to purchase alcoholic beverages of any kind per [Mass General Laws governing municipal finance](#).

Grantee Project/Program Timeline: Applicants may apply for grants for projects and programs that take place during an 18-month window from July 1 (before the application deadline in October) through December 31 of the following year. This means that applicants may apply for projects that have already happened or which happen prior to grant announcements of the current fiscal year cycle, with the knowledge that funding is not guaranteed. LCCs can establish a smaller window of eligibility; if they do so, they must publish these details in their local guidelines before the LCC application opens.

Grant Amounts: Grant sizes vary and are determined by each LCC. The Agency strongly encourages granting no less than a minimum of \$250 to each approved application. To get a sense of typical award amounts, applicants should review the [LCC's funding list](#).

Grant Review Criteria

Each application is reviewed based on the following four elements. The first three are required across all LCCs, and the fourth is optional and customizable for each LCC.

1. Arts, Humanities, and Sciences
2. Public Benefit
3. Non-Discrimination
4. Local Guidelines & Priorities

Arts, Humanities, and Sciences: LCC funds may only be used to support the creative and cultural sector through programs in the broadest sense.

- **Arts** refer to the creation of work in the crafts and performing, visual, media, folk, design, literary, and inter-disciplinary arts. They also include the presentation, preservation of, and education about works in these disciplines.
- **Humanities** are types of learning that deal with human values and aspirations, human thought and culture, language, and creativity. Examples include, but are not limited to, history, social studies, philosophy, criticism, and literature.
- **Science** is limited to its cultural, interpretive, and educational expression and refers to types of learning that deal with nature, science, and technology in ways that explain how they relate to people's lives. Some organizations that conduct this type of activity include aquariums, botanical gardens, nature centers, natural history museums, planetariums, and science centers.

Public Benefit: LCC funds must support activities that contribute to the cultural vitality of the community rather than benefiting any private individual or group. However, this does not mean that a large crowd of people needs to participate to satisfy the public benefit requirement. Whenever possible, activities funded by LCCs should be available to the public or community by exhibit, performance, demonstration, reading, or other means. An important component of public benefit is advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. Programs do not need to be in-person to provide public benefit. Virtual and remote programming are also effective ways to make programming available to the public.

In looking at the requirement of applicants to offer public benefit to a community, LCCs should look towards responses from their community engagement process to better inform their local priorities.

Non-Discrimination: In accordance with state law, LCCs may not discriminate against applicants and/or programs based on age, ability, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, nationality, geographic origin, or immigration, military, or socio-economic status. Nor may LCCs fund projects that discriminate based on these attributes.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that persons with disabilities have access to public programs or services on an equal basis with the rest of the public. Federal law mandates that any programs or services that receive federal or state funding must be accessible to persons with disabilities and there must be reasonable accommodation made to provide an accessible environment. All events and programs funded by LCCs must consider access for persons with disabilities, including the facility or event location, as well as the content of the program. To ensure equitable access, an applicant's first step is

a candid assessment and identification of barriers (physical, virtual, cultural, communication) followed by a bold and innovative plan for improvement.

If an applicant puts forward a proposal for a project with strong potential for public benefit, but the LCC has concerns about access for persons with disabilities, the LCC may choose to award a conditional approval (see the "Grant Award Process" section). This would allow the applicant the opportunity to address the concerns and improve access as a condition of receiving the grant.

For further information on ensuring accessible programming, please refer to the [Accessibility Compliance Tools for Grantees](#) section and the [Agency's Access Policy](#).

Local Criteria (Guidelines & Priorities): LCCs can develop additional guidelines and priorities to reflect local concerns and community cultural needs. Local criteria should be informed by the community input process and will be posted on the Agency's website by noon on September 2. While the Agency can provide guidance, LCCs have the authority to determine their own local guidelines and priorities. These details must be published to the [LCC's profile on Mass Cultural Council's web site](#) to be used as criteria for granting decisions. The [Local Guidelines and Priorities section](#) includes additional guidance.

Grant Decisions

Denials: Following the grant cycle voting meeting, LCCs must notify denied applicants of their decision via the grants management system.

Reconsideration Period: After sending out denial notifications, LCCs must allow for a 15-day reconsideration period before notifying approved applicants. For information on the process for handling reconsideration requests, **see Appendix D**.

Approval Letters: After the 15-day reconsideration period has passed and the LCC has submitted its Grant Decisions Report, approval notifications are automatically sent via the grants management system. LCCs must then send grantees a full approval letter outside of the system, which includes the details of their award and grant disbursement forms. The [Grant Decisions section](#) includes approval letter templates.

- **Credit and Publicity Requirements:** All grantees are required to acknowledge the financial support of the LCC that approved their grant and Mass Cultural Council in published materials and announcements about their project. More information about the [credit policy for LCC grant recipients](#) can be found online.

Grant Award Disbursement

LCCs choose and must post whether they make Reimbursement or Direct payments on their [LCC Profile](#) before the opening of the grant cycle.

- **Reimbursement:** This process reimburses the grantee for funds they have expended. Once the project is complete, the grantee submits a [reimbursement request form](#).
- **Direct Grant:** This process authorizes municipalities to make grant money available in full and up front to grant recipients once the grantee submits their [grant agreement form](#).

Below are the requirements and procedures pertaining to both the reimbursement & direct-granting disbursement methods. The [Reimbursement & Direct Grants section](#) includes additional guidance on these processes.

Payment Request Deadline for Grantees: All grant recipients have one year from the date of their approval notification to request reimbursement (or submit a completed grant contract). Late requests, made outside the valid payment period, risk loss of funds as LCCs are required to regrant unspent funds each year. If the funds have not already been regranted, it is up to each LCC's discretion whether to honor a grantee's late request (or submission).

- **Grant Extensions and Modifications:** Grant recipients also have one year from the date of their approval notification to request a grant extension or modification. These requests must be made in writing (email or hard copy) and responded to in the same manner. Grant recipients need the LCC's written permission (email or hard copy) to make changes to their projects. At their discretion, LCCs can approve reasonable project extensions and modifications, although these requests should not significantly alter the original purpose of the approved application.

To review an extension or modification to an approved grant, a subcommittee of a minimum of two LCC members can review and approve the request. The joint decision should be documented and later reported to the full LCC at the next meeting. If the subcommittee is unsure whether to approve the request, the LCC must convene a quorum of LCC members and vote. The LCC must inform the applicant of their decision in writing and ensure that the vote is reflected in the meeting minutes.

Disbursement Procedure: To make a payment, a sub-committee of a minimum of two LCC members must first approve the payment. Both members can sign the form to indicate approval, or one member can sign the form on behalf of both members. The form is then forwarded to the municipal treasurer, who will authorize the release of funds to the grantee. The decision should later be documented and reported to the full LCC at the next meeting. The LCC must retain a copy of the documentation provided by the applicant with the application as part of the LCC's records. LCCs should check with their municipality to determine how they ought to retain copies of applicant documentation.

LCCs should review payment requests as they arrive and forward copies to the municipal fiscal officer as soon as possible to ensure timely release of funds to grantees. LCCs should communicate with their local municipal fiscal officer early to verify that funds can be released within four weeks of receiving a payment request from the LCC.

Third-Party Vendors: Payments may be made either directly to the grantee or to third party vendors who have provided goods, materials, or services to the applicant. In either case, the LCC must retain a copy of the documentation provided by the applicant as part of their records.

Incomplete Projects: If a project was not completed or if an LCC does not believe that a grantee has completed their project as promised, they must contact the grantee with

their concerns and allow them the opportunity to respond. Two LCC members and the grantee may work out a solution, which should be finalized in writing (email or hard copy). If a compromise cannot be reached, the LCC must convene a quorum of members to decide how to proceed. The LCC may vote to issue full or partial payment (or no payment at all), or have the grantee return the funds. Results should be reflected in the meeting minutes, and the grantee should be given final notification in writing of the outcome of the vote.

Tax Implications to Grantees: LCCs and grantees should be advised that grant payments can be considered taxable income depending on a variety of factors. Most grant payment recipients will be required to complete a W-9. Recipients should discuss the impact of any grant payment on their tax filings with a tax professional. Individuals who are the recipient of income-based benefits should not receive payment without first contacting the agency or agencies providing the benefits, as one-time payments can disrupt benefits.

Reimbursement Payment Specifics:

- To request payment, the grantee must complete a [reimbursement form](#), which is provided by the LCC.
- Progress payments may be made at the discretion of the LCC but should be proportionate to the percentage of the project that has been completed.
- Because the payment is made after the project is completed, a final report is not required of grantees unless the LCC has local guidelines specifying this requirement.

Direct Payment Specifics:

- To request payment, the grantee must complete a [Grant Agreement Form](#) and W-9 Form, which are provided by the LCC. The LCC **WILL NOT** keep a copy of the W-9.
- [A final report for direct grant recipients](#) is due to the LCC within two weeks of completing the funded program. Grantees should send Final Reports to the LCC. LCCs may require grantees to submit additional materials with their Final Report, if so, those requirements must be stated in the approval letter.
- If a LCC has determined that a grantee has not completed their project as promised and has voted to have the grantee return the funds, then the grantee is required to repay the funds to the LCC. Grantees that do not repay the grant funds to the LCC will jeopardize future funding. LCCs can state the penalties that will occur if grant funds are not repaid within their Grant Agreement Form. (For example, the grantee would not be able to apply for funding for a certain amount of time.) LCCs should request repayment in writing and make a good-faith effort to secure the funds. If the grantee is not responsive, the LCC should institute the penalties as outlined in the Grant Agreement Form.

Grant Cycle Timeline

July

- LCCs conduct Community Input and use the results to craft updated Local Guidelines and Priorities.

- LCCs begin to recruit new members - to maintain the minimum of five - including youth, and people willing to take on leadership responsibilities.

August

- **Thursday, August 28, 2025:** New Cycle Report is due in GMS.

September

- **Tuesday, September 2, 2025:** Application opens in GMS at 10am.
 - LCC's local criteria become visible on the Council's Profile on Mass Cultural Council's website.
- LCCs meet with their Municipal Fiscal Officer to receive their LCC Account form and calculate the amount available for granting for the new fiscal year no later than **September 30.**

October

- **Thursday, October 9, 2025:** Financial Report is due in GMS. This includes TWO tabs:
 - The LCC Account Form
 - Calculate Amount Available for Granting
- **Thursday, October 16, 2025 @ 11:59pm:** Cycle and online applications close.

November – December

- **Wednesday, December 31, 2025:** Last day to enter denials into GMS.

January

- **Friday, January 16, 2026:** Grant Decisions Report due in GMS.
 - A brief approval notification is sent through GMS, but LCCs must send a detailed approval letter to grantees outside of the system.

For a broader overview, view the [Grant Cycle Timeline section](#).

Appendix A - Open Meeting Requirements

On March 28, 2025, Governor Healey signed into law a bill that extends the temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to **June 30, 2027**, which contain two primary sections.

First, the temporary law allows public bodies to continue providing live “adequate, alternative means” of public access to the deliberations of the public body, instead of holding meetings in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public. “Adequate, alternative means” may include, without limitation, providing public access through telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body in real time.

Second, the temporary law authorizes all members of a public body to continue participating in meetings remotely; the Open Meeting Law’s requirement that a quorum of the body and the chair be physically present at the meeting location remains suspended.

This means that your LCC does not need a quorum of members **physically present** to hold a decision meeting, however it does not eliminate the requirement for a quorum.

However, the public must still have access to the virtual meetings. As a result, do not hold any virtual meetings until you seek and receive permission and guidance from your city/town. The municipality will determine the process by which municipal boards and commissions can hold virtual meetings, and/or if they can hold them at all. All other aspects of Open Meeting Law are still in place such as the requirement to give notice, post an agenda, and keep minutes of the meeting.

Review the [updated guidance on holding meetings pursuant to the Act Extending Current COVID-19 Measures for additional information](#).

Under Massachusetts law, meetings of a local “government body,” including an LCC must be open to the public (M.G.L. C.30A, 18-25). The Massachusetts Attorney General has all interpretation and enforcement authority over open meeting law. More information about open meeting law can be found on the [state's website](#).

The Open Meeting Law applies to every meeting of a quorum of a government body if any public business over which the government body has jurisdiction is discussed or considered. A quorum is a simple majority of the members of the LCC. Because violation of the Open Meeting Law can result in the invalidation of the action taken, the following summary is designed to help LCCs comply with the Open Meeting Law.

A notice of any meeting of a LCC must be filed with the city or town clerk at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, not counting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays. Example: a Monday night meeting must be posted before Thursday night. Notices must (1) include a list of topics the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed, i.e., agenda, and (2) be

posted in or on a municipal building to be visible to the public at all hours.

Minutes must contain the date, place, time, and matters discussed and shall include summaries of matters discussed, list of documents used, all decisions made/votes taken.

Emails are expressly included in the definition of "deliberation," which is prohibited outside of meetings; but distribution of agendas, scheduling information, or reports to be discussed at the next meeting is permitted. While the law specifically refers to "email" as constituting deliberation, similar types of electronic communication, such as blogging, electronic chatrooms, and social networking sites also fall within the scope of the definition of "deliberation" if a quorum of the public body is involved.

Meetings may be recorded on audio or video tape. The person desiring to record a meeting must notify the chair, and the chair must inform everyone in the room of the recording.

No person may address a public meeting of an LCC without permission of the presiding LCC member, and all persons shall, at the request of the presiding officer, be silent.

The [Meetings section](#) includes additional guidance on running meetings.

Appendix B - Conflict of Interest Requirements

Conflict of interest law, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 268A, ensures that public employees' private financial interests and personal relationships do not conflict with their public obligations. LCC members must avoid conduct which creates an appearance of conflict of interest or a reasonable impression that they will act with bias. The Conflict of Interest Law considers LCC members as special municipal employees, therefore LCC members are required to complete the [Conflict of Interest Law Online Training program](#).

This information is not legal advice; it is general guidance on how to comply with the Conflict of Interest Law. If a conflict arises for an LCC member, they should obtain legal advice prior to engaging in any conduct which might violate the Conflict of Interest Law. The State Ethics Commission's Legal Division is available to provide free, confidential legal advice to LCC members during business hours every weekday at (617) 371-9500.

Depending on the scenario, members may need to abstain and/or file disclosures with their municipality's appointing authority. LCC members must abstain from participating in the review of an application due to a conflict of interest. If the application is awarded a grant, LCC members who abstain from reviewing the application should also abstain from participating in the review of project modifications or extension requests and should not review or approve payments to that same grantee.

LCC Toolkit: The [Conflict of Interest section](#) contains many specific examples of common situations in which LCC members may find themselves and how to navigate them.

- An LCC member applying for a grant from their own council.
- An LCC member applying for a grant on behalf of someone else.
- An LCC member, their immediate family, or organization they are affiliated with has a financial interest in a grant.
- An affiliate of an LCC member or non-immediate family member has a financial interest in a grant.
- Restrictions for former members.
- An LCC is faced with an application from a former member.
- Using one's LCC position to obtain benefits for oneself or others.
- Holding another municipal position in addition to the LCC position, including second positions that are part-time and unpaid.
- Giving, requesting, or receiving "gifts" related to LCC work.
- Acting in a manner that suggests one can be improperly influenced.
- Abstentions affecting the quorum.

Appendix C - Public Records Law

All records of the actions of LCCs are considered public information and are subject to the state's [Public Records Law](#). LCCs must be available to respond to requests to view these materials "without unreasonable delay." The Public Records Law establishes a maximum delay of 10 days from the day of the request.

At least six years' worth of records must be kept in a secure space identified by the city or town clerk. Records include but aren't limited to minutes of all meetings, disclosure forms, applications and approval and denial letters. All applications are stored in GMS. LCCs should seek guidance from their city or town clerk as to whether this should be an electronic or hard copy. Records more than six years old should be archived using the same procedures employed by the municipality. City or town clerks can reference Massachusetts Statewide Records Retention Schedule (L13 24) for additional information.

To facilitate access to the current year's records, the chair may keep records in their home; however, the city or town clerk should be informed of their location. Information on members should be entered directly into GMS. The town clerk's office should also be provided with up-to-date LCC member contact information so potential applicants can find LCC members and get assistance when needed.

Appendix D - Reconsideration Requests

An applicant may request reconsideration of an LCC decision on their application if the applicant can demonstrate that the LCC failed to follow published Mass Cultural Council guidelines and/or LCC local guidelines or priorities. Dissatisfaction with the denial of an application or with the amount of an award does not constitute grounds for reconsideration.

Denial notifications are sent automatically through GMS once the LCC marks the application as denied in the system. The notice will provide a clear reason for the denial based on state guidelines or local priorities. "Insufficient funds" does not provide applicants with adequate rationale for the denial decision. LCCs cannot decline an application for the sole reason that an applicant was unable to attend an interview.

Reconsideration requests must be made via email. The request must be sent to Mass Cultural Council at our email address (communities@mass.gov) within 15 days of the denial notification date (timestamp on email). Business days, weekends, and holidays count toward the 15-day limit. The applicant should also send a copy of the request to the LCC. The request should include:

- The LCC's denial notification to the applicant.
- The applicant's reason for requesting reconsideration, stating how the LCC failed to follow published state guidelines or local priorities.

Within 15 days of receiving a reconsideration request, the Agency will review the application components, the LCC's posted priorities and guidelines, denial reason, and the denied applicant's argument for reconsideration. The Agency will determine if the applicant has grounds for reconsideration and will notify both the applicant and LCC of its decision.

If the Agency determines that the applicant has grounds for reconsideration, the LCC must convene a quorum of members and review the application, as if for the first time. Following all published state guidelines and local priorities, the LCC must decide whether to approve or deny the grant request and must notify the applicant of the final determination.

A decision on any requests for reconsideration should be made before LCCs finalize funding decisions and complete their Grant Decisions Report. Only after the Grant Decisions Report is submitted to the Agency can successful applicants be notified of their approval. The [Grant Decisions section](#) has additional guidance on navigating reconsideration requests.