



PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces \$500,000 in Urban Agenda Program Grants

Awards support community-based workforce solutions in nine cities

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Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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FITCHBURG — Today, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito announced \$500,000 to nine projects through the Urban Agenda Grant Program. The program emphasizes community-driven responses to local obstacles, and promotes economic development through partnership-building, problem solving, and shared accountability in urban centers.

Lt. Governor Polito joined Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale, Fitchburg State University President Dr. Richard S. Lapidus, and local community and business leaders to announce the awards at Fitchburg State University’s ideaLab, located in the renovated Main Street theater block. The ideaLab includes space that serves as an intellectual playground for FSU students, faculty and community members, and also represents an important step in revitalizing downtown Fitchburg.

Launched by the Baker-Polito Administration in 2016, the [Urban Agenda Grant Program](/service-details/urban-agenda-grant-program) offers competitive awards offer flexible funding for local efforts that bring together community stakeholders to pursue economic development initiatives. The awards announced today will fund projects supporting workforce development, small businesses, and entrepreneurship initiatives across eight communities: Barnstable, Boston, Chelsea, Fitchburg, Lawrence, Lowell, Springfield, and Worcester.

“Our administration is committed to supporting local leadership and high-impact projects that support collaboration and a shared goal of enhancing vibrant urban

communities,” **said Governor Charlie Baker.** “The Urban Agenda program is one of the ways we invest in innovative partnerships that help residents re-enter the workforce, provide technical assistance to small businesses and support local entrepreneurs.”

“When we empower local leaders and projects that thoughtfully address the unique issues facing our urban centers, we have an outsized impact on the lives of residents,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** “The Urban Agenda Grant Program relies on the strong partnerships between local government, non-profits and the business community that are critical to fostering economic success and building stronger neighborhoods in every region in Massachusetts.”

The Urban Agenda Grant Program provides grants to communities working to provide residents with economic opportunities and workforce training. The program prioritizes projects that are based on collaborative work models that feature a strong partnership between community organizations and municipalities. Awards prioritize collaboration, shared accountability and building leadership capacity at the local level.

“Today’s awards address tough challenges in our urban centers by empowering these important coalitions to identify their resources, work together towards shared goals and create new opportunities for residents,” **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy.**

The Commonwealth’s Urban Agenda is focused on promoting economic vitality and cultivating safer, stronger urban neighborhoods across Massachusetts. The Baker-Polito Administration recognizes that urban centers face unique economic and quality-of-life challenges, and that their success lies in tapping into the unique local assets they already possess, rather than in one-size-fits-all directives from government.

“This Urban Agenda Grant is wonderful news. The grant will be used to support the implementation of programs at Fitchburg State University’s newest off-campus asset, the ideaLab, which is located in the Theater Block across from City Hall on Main Street,” **said Fitchburg Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale.** “It will help to establish FSU’s ideaLab as a center for inspiration, ideas, and action.”

“We are grateful for the Baker-Polito Administration’s support of the ideaLab, where we hope to continue linking the university’s facilities and faculty and student expertise to the community’s needs,” **said Fitchburg State University President Richard S. Lapidus.** “This project embodies the collaborative spirit that will help renew downtown Fitchburg and supports the continued growth of its creative economy.”

“As someone who worked in the private sector for over two decades, I know the importance of creating jobs. It is wonderful to see state government giving its support to the development of businesses,” **said Senator Dean Tran.** “The Activate Fitchburg initiative will allow local innovators and entrepreneurs to get the startup resources they need in order to start their businesses. I am excited to see the entrepreneurial spirit that this money will unleash and I thank the Baker-Polito Administration for selecting Fitchburg as one of the recipients.”

“I am pleased that the Office of Housing & Economic Development has awarded Activate Fitchburg an Urban Agenda Grant in the amount of \$60,000. In particular, the award will support Fitchburg State University’s ideaLab. This grant will be used to provide creative entrepreneurs the necessary tools and assistance they need to turn their unique ideas into viable businesses. This is yet another example of what can be accomplished when the state partners with the city of Fitchburg, private sector businesses, and our University system to enhance opportunities for the creation of new and innovative business ideas,” **said Representative Stephan Hay.**

In 2016, the Baker-Polito Administration awarded \$3 million in grant funding to 13 communities for the inaugural round of the Urban Agenda Grant Program, with an additional \$1 million awarded since the program’s inception. Urban Agenda is administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), and offers flexible grant funding to support creative local partnerships.

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2019 Urban Agenda Awards:

Barnstable - \$10,000 for the Cape Cod Culinary Incubator to establish a food service education program for at risk youth. The program will develop skills for young people with an interest in food service professions and ultimately bolster the workforce in an area with a major tourism economy.

Boston, Back Bay - \$25,000 for the African Bridge Network to provide orientation for skilled immigrants who have recently arrived in Boston. Working with the Mayor's Office for Immigration Advancement, African Bridge will hold quarterly workshops at the Boston Public Library and set up information centers at branch libraries to provide career counseling and related support for recently arriving job seekers.

Boston, Roxbury - \$50,000 for English for New Bostonians to offer support for immigrant entrepreneurs that speak English as a second language. ENB will provide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) small-business intermediaries that will help small business owners with marketing, customer service, finance and technological skills.

Chelsea - \$65,000 for the Chelsea 500, which engages the city, businesses, and non-profits to create a workforce pipeline so that 500 or more residents can gain the skills necessary to apply for positions at Encore Boston Harbor, with a goal of at least 200 of them gaining employment. Although initial efforts are focused on the casino, the long term goal is to sustain workforce development that will extend to other businesses.

Fitchburg - \$60,000 for Fitchburg State University's Activate Fitchburg initiative. The funding will support programs at FSU's ideaLab, which will provide resources for creators, innovators and entrepreneurs, creating a business development pipeline and ultimately revitalizing the downtown area.

Lawrence - \$75,000 for Lawrence Community Works' Working Family Initiative. The Initiative will advance infrastructure to support public and nonprofit service providers and develop targeted training programs to build employer-workforce pipelines.

Lowell - \$75,000 for the Coalition for a Better Acre's STEP UP program. The award will allow CBA to add a nonprofit staffing agency component, expanding the list of

manufacturing companies reached by CBA, while generating revenue to make the program self-sustaining. The program will also protect low-income individuals, immigrants and employers from predatory staffing agencies, and strengthen the impact of CBA and its partners in Working Cities Lowell.

Springfield – \$75,000 for the Economic Development Council of Western Mass’ Springfield Works and Head Start to launch a Whole Family Approach to Jobs initiative. This will be the first two-generation pilot and will include early education and workforce development components. Overcoming the family challenges posed by poverty will act as a catalyst to the region’s economic growth.

Worcester – \$65,000 for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce’s Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs program. The program builds on existing partnerships created through the Regional Food Hub project, but Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs will add targeted, in-depth support to urban food entrepreneurs. Supports will include ServSafe training, access to a commercial kitchen, business plan development and seed money.

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Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

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Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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