



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

MEMO

To: Marybeth Chichester, Colrain Planning Board

From: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG Director of Planning

Date: November 8, 2023

Subject: Potential Comprehensive Plan Funding Sources

The following is a review of potential funding sources that could be used to advance the creation or update of a municipal Comprehensive Plan/Master Plan. Please note that FRCOG Planning staff are all grant funded, so any substantive work asked of staff requires a funding source.

Recent discussions in the Massachusetts planning community estimated that the typical cost to complete a full Comprehensive Plan is \$90,000 to \$150,000+, depending on the scope of the plan and size of the community. It is not uncommon for towns to complete a plan over a period of years in phases. For example, a recent scope of services we prepared for another town was for a first phase that included: supporting the formation of a Planning Committee, conducting a town-side survey, developing a draft vision statement and goals & objectives, and coordinating community vision sessions, which was estimated to cost \$40,000.

FRCOG Services: FRCOG Planning staff can provide some initial assistance to the town about potential funding sources (i.e. this memo) and can draft a scope of work with cost estimate to help the town pursue funding. This is done at no cost to the town.

District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA): The DLTA program is a state grant that comes directly to the FRCOG, so that we may provide defined, targeted assistance to municipalities. In January, a letter will be sent to each Select Board Chair in the county offering a variety of services FRCOG staff can perform on behalf of the town or region. The Select Board then selects & ranks the services they are most interested in and submits it to FRCOG. Examples of these services include: conducting a town-wide online survey & report; conducting a village center parcel analysis or targeted economic development action plan; initiating elements of a Housing Production Plan; and other small, defined tasks (for example, providing a socio-demographic & economic data profile for the town). Unfortunately, FRCOG receives more requests for services than can be provided, so not every town receives services each year. If selected, there is no cost to the town for these services and no match required.

Community Planning Grant through the Commonwealth's One Stop for Growth Program: This grant is one of over a dozen different grant programs that can be applied for through the One Stop portal. If the timing for the next round is similar to the last round, towns will be invited to submit an Expression of Interest in winter/early spring to describe the types of projects they are seeking funding

(which can include Comprehensive Plan development). The State will then give feedback and guidance on what programs to apply for through the One Stop. The period to submit a full application is expected to be May into the first week of June. Again if the next round's guidelines are the same as the last the round's, a town can apply to the Community Planning Program for \$50,000 to \$100,000 with an optional 10% cash match that earns the town bonus points in the application. If the project is funded, the award would be announced in fall 2024, with the contract being received 1-3 months later, and with a scope of work to be completed by June 30, 2026.

Link to last round's timeline: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth>

Link to last round's grant guidelines: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/community-planning-grant-program>

MA EOEEA Planning Assistance Grants. The MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) offers a Planning Assistance grants. In past funding rounds, this program has been used to pay for zoning revisions, Housing Production Plans, chapters of a Master Plan, and more. In the last round, responses to the offer (made through a CommBuys Bid) were due in late May and were submitted via email. The maximum grant request per community was \$50,000, and the budget had to include a 25% non-state funded match.

Link: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/planning-assistance-grants>

MA Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) Action Plan. As Colrain completed a MVP Action Plan in 2020, it is considered an MVP Community and is eligible to apply for MVP Action Grants. The purpose of these grants is to “advance priority climate adaptation actions to address climate change impacts resulting from extreme weather, sea level rise, inland and coastal flooding, severe heat, and other climate impacts.” As a result, this funding source could help fund a portion or all of the development of a Climate Resilient Comprehensive Plan. For example, Montague received \$80,000 of MVP funding for Phase II of their project to incorporate climate resiliency into the development of their new Comprehensive Plan. Other towns in Western Massachusetts have been successful in doing similar work with MVP funding. If the MVP requirements stay the same as last round, Colrain would be required to contribute 10% match, reduced from 25% required for larger towns. The period to submit Expressions of Interest for the next round (FY25) are due no later than Friday, December 15, 2023. This process opens an opportunity for towns to discuss their project, scope of work and budget and receive feedback on a potential application.

Link: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mvp-action-grant>

Woodlands Partnership of Northwest MA. According to the Partnership's website, Colrain is within the Partnership's region but has not opted in. As a result, the town is not eligible to apply for the annual grant round that provides funds to increase economic development focusing on the conservation and sustainable management of forests. If the status of the town changes, then this could be a source for some funds.

Link: <http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandpartnership.org/about.html>

Town Funds. As you can see several of these grant programs require a match. The town may need to provide resources to provide this match and/or supplement the creation of the plan, if grant funds are not secured.