



Innovation Places Planning Grant Application Guidance & Resources

Guidance

The Innovation Places program, part of Public Act 16-3, builds on the successes of entrepreneurs and intends to further support their work to grow the innovation community in Connecticut. The program has three parts:

1. Planning Grants to help communities develop an Innovation Places Master Plan and Implementation Application
2. Implementation Grants to provide a portion of the funding required to implement the Master Plan
3. Agency alignment: Encouragement for State agencies and offices to favor applications for financial and technical assistance for projects and initiatives in areas designated as Innovation Places.

1. Planning Grants

A community may apply for a grant to conduct a strategic planning process to discover and understand the relevant emerging conditions, risks and opportunities they face; to decide which capabilities the community needs; and to plan catalytic actions to build and leverage their capabilities to take advantage of those conditions, risks and opportunities. These processes should result in an Innovation Places Master Plan and Implementation Grant Application from the community. Awards will be up to \$50,000.

2. Implementation Grants

An amount of \$4,900,000 has been allocated each year for five years to augment private and public investments in programs and infrastructure likely to attract talented people and increase knowledge sharing that leads to innovation. This is a competitive, merit-based application process intended to make the greatest use of highly limited funds. Grant fund uses may include but are not limited to:

- a. Attracting and directing support to startup businesses and attracting anchor institutions;*
- b. Developing, in collaboration with private partners, a business incubator, co-working space, business accelerator or public meeting space;*
- c. Events, community building, marketing and outreach; and*
- d. Open space improvement, housing development, bicycle paths and improved technology infrastructure, including broadband.*

In the development of the Master Plan and Implementation Application, applicants will be encouraged to think creatively, beyond the example uses listed above, about what will catalyze a growing culture of innovation in their community.

Note that though the intent of the program lends itself to density-focused applications, applications from smaller communities will be considered.



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Talented people are drawn not only to communities but to regions, with their job markets, transportation systems and access to amenities. Due to this connection, the extent to which Innovation Places applications leverage regional assets and relate to their larger region matters.

3. Agency Alignment

The Innovation Places program invites alignment among State agencies and offices whose programs relate to Innovation Places goals. These agencies include Connecticut Innovations, the Department of Housing, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Economic and Community Development’s offices of Business Development, Brownfield Remediation and Development, Arts, Innovation and State Historic Preservation. These agencies are currently exploring ways to collaborate and to provide enhanced consideration for projects occurring within or in partnership with Innovation Places awardees.

Timeline

Applications may be submitted and reviewed according to the following schedule.

Phase I: Planning Grants	Timeframe
Open Planning Grant application process	July 1–Sept. 12, 2016
Planning Grant awardees notified	Oct. 24–28, 2016
Master Planning process	Nov. 1, 2016–Feb. 28, 2017

Phase II: Implementation Grants	Timeframe
Request to apply for Implementation Grant due for applicants that did not apply for a Planning Grant	Nov. 1, 2016
Invitations to apply for Implementation Grant provided	Dec. 5–9, 2016
Due date for optional Technical Review submission	March 1, 2017
Technical Review feedback provided	March 15, 2017
Master Plan and Implementation Grant Application due	April 1, 2017
Public hearings on applications	April 1–30, 2017
Application review period	April 1–May 30, 2017
Announcement of grant winners	June 2017
Anticipated start date	July 1, 2017

Note: All funding is dependent on approval of the CTNext Board of Directors. Timeframe above subject to change due to CTNext Board of Directors schedule.



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Application Process

The application process has two key steps. Interested applicants must first submit a Planning Grant application or a Request to Apply for Implementation Grant. Applications and requests that meet the requirements will be reviewed and scored in a strictly merit-based way by a Selection Advisory Committee, which will make recommendations to the CTNext Board of Directors for final approval. The applications that most strongly align with the CTNext Innovation Places intent will be invited to submit an Implementation Grant application. Only invited Implementation Grant applications will be accepted.

The ideal applicant would be an entity, preferably private, serving as the lead in a multi-party, highly collaborative consortium involving many players working to make their locale a destination of choice for entrepreneurs and innovative people. Each application will need to be endorsed by a municipality, and a municipality may only endorse one application.

The application is intended to measure the quality of the applicant's vision, team, process and place. Each application question is an independent opportunity to achieve points, which will be aggregated for a final score. Please review the application to understand what will be evaluated. Sections that are highly weighted are noted.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include corporations, associations, partnerships, limited liability companies, benefit corporations, nonprofit organizations, municipalities, institutions of higher education or any other similar entity. This excludes individuals. Applications must focus on one or more compact geographic areas within the same municipality having entrepreneurial and innovation potential. To be eligible for an Implementation Grant, applicants must have been invited to apply. Selected awardees must be based in Connecticut and be willing to reside in Connecticut for the duration of the contract.

Funding Particulars

The first installment of funds will be disbursed following contract signing, with additional installments transmitted when agreed-upon milestones are met. Awardee expenditures may be subject to audit. Awardees must keep and submit accurate records and proof of expenses. Awardees will submit semiannual progress reports.



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Resources for Inspiration

There are several great resources out there for applicants looking to submit a proposal. Here are just a few that provide context around the emergence of the Innovation Places concept, how to develop and implement a strong idea, and the economics around job creation in the 21st century.

- Steven Johnson, Where Good Ideas Come From. New York: Riverhead Books, 2010.
- Bruce Katz and Julie Wagner. *The Rise of Innovation Districts: A New Geography of Innovation in America*. Brookings Institution, May 2014.
(<http://www.brookings.edu/about/programs/metro/innovation-districts>)
- Enrico Moretti, The New Geography of Jobs. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.