



### A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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BRPC welcomes **Wylie Goodman, M.R.P.**, to our team as Economic Development Senior Planner. Wylie will join the newly formed Economic Development Program working with Program Manager Laura Brennan to support the Shared Economic Development Planner program and work on regional economic recovery efforts.

### Grant Opportunities

#### May 7, 2021 [Conservation Assistance for Small Communities](#)

May 21, 2021 [MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program](#), \$5,000 - \$200,000. All municipalities and transit authorities are eligible to apply for projects to improve plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce. In light of increases in speeding-related crashes and fatalities, projects that improve safety for all road users will be given priority. For assistance with applications, contact **Clete Kus**, 413-442-1521 x20, [ckus@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:ckus@berkshireplanning.org).

May 21, 2021 [Destination Development Capital Grant Program](#) Applications will be accepted for projects that include plans to expand, construct, restore or renovate Massachusetts tourism destinations and attractions. DDC grants are focused on capital improvements with a direct relationship to tourism, and other physical/structural items with a greater than five year lifespan.

June 2021 [Department of Housing and Community Development Community Planning](#) grants for technical assistance on planning and zoning projects. Maximum award is \$75,000.

June 30, 2021 [FFY 2022 Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Competitive Grants Program](#) Contact **Melissa Provencher** [mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org) for more information or assistance with a proposal. Description [here](#).

Rolling applications: [Community Development Block Grant Microenterprise Assistance](#) for Northern & Southern Berkshires income-qualifying small businesses. More details below.

**SBA Community Navigators** A new grant funding opportunity will soon be open to states, tribes, units of local government and other non-profit organizations to conduct outreach to underserved businesses. Read more [here](#).

### Community One Stop for Growth

The Community One Stop for Growth, a single application portal and collaborative review process for Commonwealth grant programs was launched in January 2021. This site allows municipalities, public entities, community non-profits, and private companies to use a single portal to access ten different grant programs. [www.mass.gov/onestop](http://www.mass.gov/onestop)

### Community Development, Housing & Regional Services

#### Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) recently launched the [Emergency](#)

**Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**, a new funding mechanism to disburse state and federal funding for tenants and landlords to avoid evictions and maintain household stability throughout the COVID-19 emergency. ERAP is available to households earning less than 80% AMI, and includes enhanced benefits such as:

- Renters and landlords may receive up to 12 months of assistance with past due rent, plus up to 3 months of future rent.
- Please call 2-1-1 or connect directly with your regional agency through the online portal [here](#). More information at [website](#).
- Renters may also receive up to \$1,500 for overdue utilities accrued after March 13, 2020.

Along with the enhanced ERAP benefits, tenants and landlords may be able to access free legal and mediation services offered through the Eviction Diversion Initiative.

- Free legal services are available to eligible tenants and low-income landlords in owner-occupied 2-3 family homes through the [COVID Eviction Legal Help Program \(CELHP\)](#).
- Free community mediation services for eligible tenants and landlords who need help in reaching agreements that work for both of them. More information available [here](#).

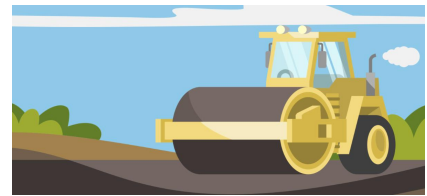
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## FY22 Group Purchasing

BRPC would like to thank all 26 towns that completed the Product Surveys that were due April 2, 2021. This year we transitioned to Jotforms for our surveys, and our participating communities seem to have found the new platform more user friendly. We were also happy to announce we added a few new products this year:

- Geotextiles, we chose two woven and two non-woven fabrics that are DOT approved.
- MA DOT 2017 Guardrail Products
- Catch Basin Cleaning and Line Jetting Service.

Bid packages are currently being assembled, and we expect to begin issuing solicitations within the next month. For additional information, contact **Rebecca Slick**, MCPPO, Program Coordinator, 413-442-1521 x 54, [rslick@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:rslick@berkshireplanning.org).



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**The CDBG-CV Microenterprise Grant Program** continues to accept and process applications for up to \$25,000 (recently increased from \$10,000) in awards for Northern and Southern Berkshire micro-enterprise businesses.

Any business in operation and established prior to March 10, 2020, the date of the Governor's declaration of the Covid-19 emergency, may be assisted, so long as the owner family households meet all low to moderate income eligibility requirements.

Please refer to our website for application and additional information, <https://berkshireplanning.org/initiatives/cdbg-cv-assistance-to-lmi-microenterprise-business-owners/> or contact **Christie Lewis** at 413-442-1521 x 23, [clewis@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:clewis@berkshireplanning.org).

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The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) has initiated an **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation Transition Plan** on behalf of Becket. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) provided the town a grant for the plan. BRPC will assist to identify barriers for people with visual and/or mobility impairment that exist throughout municipal facilities, and to form a plan for remedial action.

The majority of the population is unaware of the importance of accessibility. Many people move about this world without thinking twice about navigating entry to a building or a public restroom. It is not until you, or someone you know, has a mobility impairment that such simple tasks are recognized as a hardship and a barrier to accessing municipal functions and services. There are over 54 million Americans who have a disability, including one in every five residents. This number continues to grow as a more significant percentage of our population ages, and veterans are returning from combat where they have incurred disabling injuries.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) aims to make it possible for everyone with a disability to

live a life of freedom and equality. In order to lead the way and promote that equality, it is essential for all municipalities in Massachusetts to have a Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan, and to move from a state of non-compliance with the Act to a state of compliance and accessibility for all residents.

For additional information on assistance with ADA Self-evaluation and Transitions Plans, please contact BRPC Project Specialist James Woods at [jwoods@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:jwoods@berkshireplanning.org).

## Community Planning

### Marijuana Delivery Update

On November 30, 2020 the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) voted 3-1 in favor of creating two classes of adult-use marijuana delivery licenses. These regulations were promulgated on January 8, 2021. Previously, Marijuana Transporters were utilized to transport, temporarily store, sell, and distribute marijuana from one marijuana establishment (ME) or medical marijuana treatment center (MTC) to another. The newly enacted legislation permits the delivery of marijuana and marijuana products directly to the consumer's residence.

The Marijuana Delivery-Only license application is currently available for applicants to fill out and submit. The Delivery-Only license has since been changed to "Marijuana Courier", but the aspects of the license remain the same. The CCC anticipates the name change will be executed in the coming weeks. The Marijuana Delivery Operator is a new license that will allow entities to wholesale and warehouse marijuana products for delivery. The CCC also anticipates opening the application in the coming weeks.

Currently, applicants may become "pre-certified" for both licenses. This allows applicants to submit some portions of the Commission-application but does not require them to have a location or Host Community Agreement (HCA) at this stage. Cities and towns may enter into HCA's either before or after pre-certification, if the parties so choose. Before submitting the full application, applicants will need to have a location and signed HCA.

For now, Delivery-Only licenses are limited, on an exclusive basis, to businesses controlled by and with majority ownership comprised of, Certified Economic Empowerment Priority Applicants or Social Equity Program Participants for a period of at least 24 months from the date the first Delivery-Only licensee receives a notice to commence operations.

The CCC has an extensive list of *Frequently Asked Questions* posted on their website that provides clarity on the application process, requirements for pre-certification, application and license fees, along with the requirements of both Delivery-Only licensees and consumers. Please see the link below.

<https://masscannabiscontrol.com/applicants-licensees/frequently-asked-questions/#delivery>

## Data & Information Services

### Where do we get our data?

We often get asked where we get the data we use at BRPC. Here are several sources we frequently use for the latest data:

**Berkshire Benchmarks**, which BRPC manages, has a data clearinghouse containing the newest data from many of the below sources. Berkshire Benchmarks is always an excellent spot to start your search. [www.berkshirebenchmarks.org](http://www.berkshirebenchmarks.org)

**The US Census Bureau** releases several surveys, including the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey. Census data includes socio-economic and demographic data.

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

**Massachusetts Department of Revenue** releases data relating to local government finance, such as local budgets, tax rates, and average tax bills.

<https://www.mass.gov/municipal-databank-data-analytics-including-cherry-sheets>

Massachusetts Department of Education reports statistics for school districts, including enrollment, graduation rates, and standardized testing.

[https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state\\_report/](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/)

Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance reports on local unemployment, industries, and labor market areas. <https://www.mass.gov/find-unemployment-rates>

## Economic Development

### Berkshire Economic Recovery Project - Business and Non-Profit Needs Assessment Survey

As part of the [recently-awarded EDA investment](#) in economic recovery and resilience in Berkshire County, BRPC and 1Berkshire are conducting a business and non-profit needs assessment. Feedback to this survey will help to shape technical assistance offerings over the next year, which may include one-on-one consulting as well as webinars and workshops in group settings. Please encourage businesses and organizations in your area to complete the survey [here](#).

### Shared Economic Development Planner - Call for Enrollment

The Shared Economic Development Planner program allows each participating town to access services and assistance that fit their specific needs and budget. Participating towns receive assistance with creating a welcoming environment for businesses and residents through a range of tactics, as well as support in developing economic development-related grant applications and/or collaborations with neighboring towns. All municipalities in Berkshire County are invited to contact BRPC to learn more about enrolling in the Shared Economic Development Planner program for FY22. Contact Laura Brennan, [lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org).

## Environmental & Energy

### Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program FY22 Funding

#### Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Planning Grants

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is seeking proposals for Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning Grants, which provide support for Massachusetts cities and towns to complete climate vulnerability assessments and develop action-oriented climate resiliency plans. The program helps communities define extreme weather and natural and climate related hazards; understand how their community may be impacted by climate change; identify existing and future vulnerabilities and strengths; and develop, prioritize, and implement key actions. State-trained MVP providers offer technical assistance to communities in completing the assessment and resiliency plans. Communities that complete the MVP planning grant program become certified as an MVP community and are eligible for MVP Action Grant funding. The link to the RFR and required forms can be accessed through the new [MVP program website](#) or directly on [COMMBUYS](#). Planning Grant applications are due on **June 4, 2021 by 4:00 p.m.** (via email, see RFR for details) for MVP planning processes that must be complete by June 30, 2022.

BRPC is a certified MVP Provider and staff are available to answer questions or provide direct assistance. Please contact **Courteny Morehouse**, Senior Planner, 413-442-1521 x26, [cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org).

#### Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Action Grants

EEA is also seeking proposals for MVP Action Grants, which provide designated MVP Communities funding to implement priority climate adaptation actions identified through the MVP planning process or similar climate change vulnerability assessment and action planning that has led to MVP designation after EEA review. Projects are required to use climate data and projections. Projects that propose nature-based solutions or strategies that rely on green infrastructure or conservation and enhancement of natural systems and that have robust community engagement plans are preferred. Applicants can request up to \$2 million in funding (regional proposals may request up to \$5 million), and a 25 percent match of the total project cost is required. EEA recommends reading the RFR in full as there have been several updates to the Action Grant RFR from the last round; significant changes are outlined on page 1. The link to the RFR and required forms can be accessed through the new [MVP program website](#) or directly on [COMMBUYS](#). Action Grant proposals are due

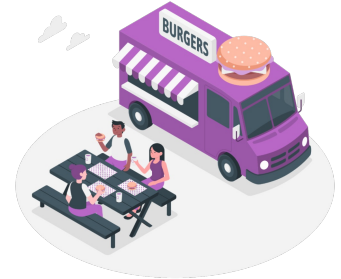
by 2:00 p.m. on **May 7, 2021** (via online form, see RFR for details) for project proposals that must be completed by June 30, 2022, or June 30, 2023.

The MVP team also hosted a recent webinar about this FY22 funding round. The recording can be accessed [here](#). The slides can be accessed [here](#). BRPC has also worked with communities and partnering organizations in Berkshire County to develop, apply to, and administer MVP Action Grants. Please contact **Courteny Morehouse**, Senior Planner with ideas and questions, 413-442-1521 x26, [cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org).

## Public Health

### Food Safety

The Berkshire Public Health Alliance in coordination with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Public Health Program conducted an advanced training series for Berkshire County food inspectors based on the FDA Retail Program Standards for food safety. This advanced training was funded by a grant from the FDA and ran for six consecutive Wednesday afternoons. This training is part of a comprehensive food safety training series sponsored by the Alliance that meets the classroom requirements for local inspectors to become standardized FDA certified food inspectors. Five inspectors completed the training and now qualify for the advanced in-person field training to be held as conditions permit.



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### Governor Baker & Lieutenant Governor Polito Visit Berkshire Community College Vaccine Clinic

Governor Baker & Lieutenant Governor Polito visited the COVID vaccination clinic at Berkshire Community College (BCC) on Thursday, April 22. The team, organized and led by BRPC's Public Health Program, including Public Health Nurse Leslie Drager, Public Health Program Manager Laura Kittross and Planner

Christine Ector, were pleased to show off their operation that has received much praise for its efficiency and cost effectiveness. The BCC, St. Elizabeth's in North Adams and W.E.B. DuBois Middle School vaccination clinics are a collaborative effort with Berkshire County Boards of Health Association/Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Berkshire Medical Center, Fairview Hospital, Northern Berkshire EMS, the Medical Reserve Corps, County Ambulance and the City of Pittsfield, as well as other local Boards of Health, Fire and Police throughout the county and many volunteers. To date the Berkshire Vaccine Collaborative has provided more than 60,000 vaccinations. Please contact [Laura Kittross](mailto:Laura Kittross) or go to [www.getvaccinatedberkshires.org](http://www.getvaccinatedberkshires.org) for more information.

## Regional Initiatives

The **Berkshire County Education Task Force (BCETF)** is pleased to announce that it has secured funding from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Barr Foundation to continue efforts into 2021 and 2022. BCETF is a non-partisan group of committed community members dedicated to strengthening public education in Berkshire County, in light of shrinking enrollment, stretched resources, and constrained educational opportunities. We remain dedicated to developing community-informed solutions to regional challenges facing public education, and in doing so hope to help schools make better what current exists and explore what could be.

Funds will support the 2021-2022 work plan, including: 1) ongoing research and planning pertaining to county K12 reorganization and consolidation models; 2) continuation/advancement of existing collaborative projects and expansion of new collaborative cross-district solutions, and 3) engagement and outreach in order to raise awareness, solicit input, and partner with a wide range of community partners.

Our research platform will focus on subregional solutions (south and north county) as well as an analysis of career vocational technical education needs across the Berkshires. Our goal is to use case studies and data to test assumptions, identify value propositions and assess feasibility within these subregions.

We are excited to launch Phase II of the Barr Foundation sponsored Portrait of a Graduate work with partner schools. Activities will include school level alignment, the development of a signature experience, asset mapping, and the drafting of rubrics that reinforce those competencies, we believe, will ensure our graduates are successfully prepared for college, career and community life.

Finally, we are honored to receive funding to support the ongoing efforts of the Berkshire Remote Learning Initiative. This effort led to an eight-district consortium designed to address the learning disruptions, immediate and ongoing, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the coming year, we will continue to support coordination and collaboration across our districts, ongoing professional development and training, school-district specific technology leads, a comprehensive audit of technology tools, and a commons/object repository that will allow for fluid sharing of resources across districts and our community.

BCETF is pleased to be supported by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Our group meets approximately once a month. We encourage those interested to visit our comprehensive website at [www.berkshireducationtaskforce.org](http://www.berkshireducationtaskforce.org) and/or contact us for more information.

## Transportation



### MassDOT Community Transit Grant Program- Applications being Accepted

The MassDOT Transit Division has announced the next round of the [Community Transit Grant Program](#) for State Fiscal Year 2022. The Community Transit Grant Program is the consolidated competitive opportunity for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities funds and State Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) funds.

The application opened on **Friday, April 30, 2021** and will close at 5:00pm on **Friday, June 25, 2021**. The grant application is submitted through the MassDOT Transit Division's online grants management system, GrantsPlus+.

The FTA Section 5310 program is intended to enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services. Towards this goal, this grant funds mobility management activities, operational costs, and the purchase of capital equipment to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable.

The State Mobility Assistance Program helps fund transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. MAP funds are often used for purchase of accessible vehicles that meet a set of minimum standards. To learn more please contact **Jennifer Henning** at [jennifer.n.henning@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:jennifer.n.henning@dot.state.ma.us) or visit <https://www.mass.gov/community-transit-grant-program>