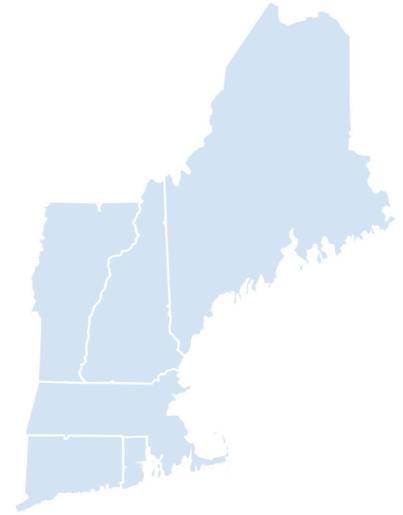




COVID-19: Street Improvements and Interventions

In response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), communities across the country have rapidly made modifications to their streets and public spaces to support public health, safe mobility, renewed commerce, and to allow for more physical distance between street users. Cities have accelerated existing projects or developed new projects that promote the use of streets for pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized users. Additionally, cities have repurposed street space to expand outdoor dining and retail options. However, it is essential that rapid deployment of these projects is conducted in a way that is equitable, especially for communities disproportionately impacted by the health and social impacts of COVID-19. These projects should also be effective transportation solutions that support long-term economic recovery. This document summarizes existing placemaking efforts, resources needed, and challenges. It also provides an overview of a number of federal, state, private, and non-profit funding sources to support these interventions.



Relevant Placemaking Articles/Reports:

[*Transformative placemaking amid COVID-19: Early stories from the field \(April 2020\)*](#)

As COVID-19 [*leaves no place immune*](#) – threatening to destabilize [*urban communities*](#), as well as rural and suburban areas with [*limited resources*](#) and [*infrastructure*](#) to weather the outbreak— the connectivity of people and places matters more than ever. Local responses to the pandemic are revealing that even amid unprecedented distancing, [*the economic, physical, social, and civic structures*](#) of connected communities are laying the groundwork for resilience and recovery.

[*The Recovery Will Happen in Public Space \(May 2020\)*](#)

Last week, 25 million Americans returned to public life. As more and more governors relax their stay-at-home orders and restrictions on businesses, that number will only grow, even as COVID-19 cases around the country remain higher than public health experts consider safe. We are at a precarious moment as a country, where we must balance recovery and caution. Across the spectrum, in large cities and small towns, outdoor public spaces must be a central part of the path forward. People need a way to go back to work, and the world wants to get out of the house. Constituents are desperate to hear new messages from political leaders, not just about whether or not to return to public life, but about how.

COVID-19: Street Improvements and Interventions-resources

The [*NACTO Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery*](#) implementation toolbox provides an overview of common street strategies that communities have implemented. The document compiles emerging practices from around the world and includes a set of core principles; policy options; materials and resources; planning and engagement tools; and specific design criteria for a wide variety of street interventions.

The [*Smart Growth America: Complete Streets and COVID-19 Tracker maps several examples of community responses and where these interventions have been implemented in the United States.*](#)

[Placemaking as an Economic Development Tool: A Placemaking Guidebook](#)

The Placemaking Guidebook seeks to assist neighborhoods and communities with quickly reshaping their thinking and acting on how effective placemaking can greatly enhance community and economic development.

FEMA's Role:

FEMA Region I established the COVID-19 Long-Term Recovery Task Force under the [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#) (NDRF), which promotes effective recovery from large-scale incidents and enables orchestrated support to impacted states, tribes and local jurisdictions. The NDRF focuses on how best to restore, redevelop and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural and environmental fabric of the community as well as build a more resilient nation.

This COVID-19 Long-Term Recovery Task Force works in tandem, but separately from other FEMA Short-Term Recovery Support programs such as Public Assistance and Individual Assistance. The Long-Term Recovery Task Force coordinates access to funding from federal agencies but does not provide direct funding.

About this Resource Guide:

This Resource Guide has been developed to provide businesses and individuals who work in economic recovery and community building in New England with a summary of federal agency partners, how they might be able to assist, and the resources available (funding and technical assistance) to support a resilient recovery.

Intended Audiences:

This Resource Guide is meant to provide useful information and resources for states to use with their municipality stakeholders (list is representative, not comprehensive)

State agencies (with links)

Active references operating in the placemaking space

<p>Vermont <u>Agency of Commerce and Community Development</u></p> <p>New Hampshire <u>Department of Business and Economic Affairs</u></p> <p>Connecticut <u>Department of Economic and Community Development</u></p> <p>Rhode Island <u>Rhode Island Commerce Corporation</u></p> <p>Massachusetts <u>Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development</u></p> <p>Maine <u>Department of Economic and Community Development</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Project or Public Spaces</u> • <u>Local Initiatives Support Corporation</u> • <u>American Planning Association</u> • <u>National Endowment for the Arts</u> • <u>National Consortium for Creative Placemaking</u> • <u>Placemakingx</u> • <u>Citizens' Institute on Rural Design</u> • <u>Mayor's Institute on City Design</u>
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Federal Agency Partner Overview:

This next section of the Resource Guide gives a description of the key federal agency partners that can support placemaking in long-term recovery. Included are examples of how to engage with these agencies, what types of programs and support can be leveraged for recovery, along with helpful links and regional contact information.

Through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and several other agencies, the federal government offers numerous funding opportunities that could be used to support street improvements and interventions. Key funding programs include:

<i>Funding Source</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Description</i>
<u><i>National Endowment for the Arts: Our Town Grants Program</i></u>	National Endowment for the Arts	Creative placemaking grants program that supports projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. The National Endowment for the Arts <u>offers other grants</u> that may also be applicable to placemaking programs and projects. <u>NEH Placemaking guide link</u> . “How to do Creative Placemaking”
<u><i>Choice Neighborhoods Program</i></u>	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	The Choice Neighborhoods program includes both <u>planning</u> and <u>implementation</u> grants to address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. The program helps communities transform neighborhoods by revitalizing severely distressed public and/or assisted housing and catalyzing critical improvements in the neighborhood, including vacant property, housing, businesses, services and schools. Many funded projects have included placemaking activities/efforts.
<u><i>Community Development Block Grants</i></u>	HUD	Provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. These grants have a broad scope, and include provisions for public infrastructure, such as streets and neighborhood centers, in low-income communities. Includes several sub-programs, including an insular areas program; state program for distributing to smaller units of government; and disaster recovery program.
<u><i>HOME Investment Partnerships Program</i></u>	HUD	Provides grants to state and local governments to create affordable housing for low-income households. Includes funding for site improvements.
<u><i>Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program</i></u>	U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. Includes street improvements and community gardens. Prioritizes communities with a population of \$5,500 or less, or low-income communities.
<u><i>Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge</i></u>	USDA	Provides planning support and technical assistance to foster placemaking activities in rural communities. Funds will help enhance capacity for broadband access; preserve cultural and historic structures; and support the development of transportation, housing, and recreational spaces.

<u>Rural Business Development Grants</u>	USDA	Provides technical assistance and training for small rural businesses. Can be used for rural transportation improvements and community economic development.
<u>Build to Scale Program</u>	U.S. Department of Commerce	Provides grants to accelerators, universities, and non-profits supporting new business ventures related to job creation, economic opportunity, and technology-based initiatives. Could include scalable interventions related to transportation or public space.
<u>Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)</u>	U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)	The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant program, provides a unique opportunity for the USDOT to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve national objectives.
<u>Useful References for Placemaking</u>	Suggested by National Endowment for the Arts	<p><u>Rural Arts, Design, and Innovation in America</u> Report provides much-needed descriptive statistics about rural arts organizations and, apparently for the first time, uses data at the business establishment level to explore the nexus of arts, design, and innovation in rural communities.)</p> <p>Rural Prosperity Through the Arts & Creative Sector AN ACTION GUIDE offering research insights and lessons learned from states that are harnessing the power of the arts to drive rural prosperity.</p>

[U. S. Economic Development Administration \(EDA\)](#)

Mission: To lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy.

Types of Support:

- **Public Works:** Empowers distressed communities to revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private sector jobs and investment. [Printable Public Works Program \(PDF\)](#)
- **Economic Adjustment:** Assists state and local interests in designing and implementing strategies to adjust or bring about change to an economy. The program focuses on areas that have experienced or are under threat of serious structural damage to the underlying economic base. Under Economic Adjustment, EDA administers its [Revolving Loan Fund \(RLF\) Program](#), which supplies small businesses and entrepreneurs with the gap financing needed to start or expand their business. [Printable Economic Adjustment Program \(PDF\)](#)
- **Planning:** Supports local organizations ([Economic Development Districts](#), Indian Tribes, and other eligible areas) with short and long-term planning efforts.
- The [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\) Content Guidelines](#), provides suggestions, tools, and resources for developing comprehensive economic development strategies. [Printable Planning Program \(PDF\)](#)
- **Build to Scale:** (formerly known as [Regional Innovation Strategies](#)) The [Build to Scale \(B2S\) Program](#) builds regional economies through scalable startups and includes three competitions supporting entrepreneurship, acceleration of company growth and increased access to risk capital across regional economies.

- **Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms:** A national network of [11 Trade Adjustment Assistance Centers](#) to help strengthen the competitiveness of American companies that have lost domestic sales and employment because of increased imports of similar goods and services. [Printable Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms Program](#) (PDF)
- **University Centers:** A partnership of the federal government and academia that makes the varied and vast resources of universities available to the economic development community. [Printable University Centers Program](#) (PDF), Report: [Making Connections, Evaluation Project to Assess Best Practices in EDA's University Center Program](#) (PDF)
- **Research and National Technical Assistance:** Supports research of leading edge, world class economic development practices and information dissemination efforts. [Printable Research and National Technical Assistance Program](#) (PDF)
- **Local Technical Assistance:** Helps fill the knowledge and information gaps that may prevent leaders in the public and nonprofit sectors in distressed areas from making optimal decisions on local economic development issues. [Printable Local Technical Assistance Program](#) (PDF)

Small Business Administration (SBA)

The [U.S. Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#) helps small business owners and entrepreneurs pursue the American dream. The SBA is the only cabinet-level federal agency fully dedicated to small business and provides counseling, capital, and contracting expertise as the nation's only go-to resource and voice for small businesses.

Type of support:

- **Economic Injury Disaster Loan program (EIDL)** EIDL is designed to provide economic relief to businesses that are currently experiencing a temporary loss of revenue. EIDL proceeds can be used to cover a wide array of working capital and normal operating expenses, such as continuation to health care benefits, rent, utilities, and fixed debt payments.
- **Targeted Webinars** for community development to expand knowledge and use of SBA loans and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) are available upon request
- **Boots to Business (B2B) Funding Opportunity:** This funding opportunity is addressed exclusively to Boots to Business (B2B) grantees. Through this program, the SBA supports your organization for a period of 5 years.
- **Federal and State Technology (FAST) Partnership Program:** This is a one year funding opportunity for organizations to execute state/regional programs that increase the number of SBIR (innovation)/STTR (research and development) proposals; increase the number of SBIR/STTR awards; and better prepare SBIR/STTR awardees for commercial success.
- **Veterans Business Outreach Centers:** The [Veterans Business Outreach Centers](#) Cooperative Agreement provides quality counseling assistance and training events, particularly B2B events to transitioning service personnel and spouses of veterans, veteran and service-disabled small business owners and entrepreneurs.
- **Service-Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program (SDVETP):** This Cooperative Agreement aims to support organizations that currently deliver entrepreneurship training programs to service-disabled veteran entrepreneurs who aspire to be small business owners or currently own a small business.
- **SCORE:** This is a funding opportunity for a current recipient of an SBA SCORE award. To be eligible, you must be a current recipient of SBA funding to SCORE. For-profit businesses are not eligible for this award.
- **State Trade Expansion Program (STEP):** The purpose of this Funding Opportunity is to invite proposals for funding from eligible state entities interested in and capable of providing assistance and guidance to eligible small business concerns to increase the number of such firms that export and the value of small business exports.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Smart Growth Partnerships

EPA partners with federal and regional agencies and nonprofit organizations to help communities identify and use smart growth approaches.

- [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) Partnership](#) – EPA and FEMA partnership to help communities prepare for and recover from natural disasters in safer, healthier, and more resilient ways.
- [Local Foods, Local Places](#) – EPA, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Transportation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Appalachian Regional Commission, and Delta Regional Authority partnership to help communities develop and implement action plans promoting local food enterprises and downtown revitalization.
- [Making a Visible Difference in Communities](#) – In more than 50 environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed communities, EPA is listening to community leaders and residents to understand their needs and then working with local, state, and other federal partners to use our collective resources more efficiently and effectively to support local goals.
- [Smart Growth Network](#) – Partnership of more than 40 national organizations that promote smart growth and offer resources to help communities.
- [Area-Wide Planning Grants](#) provide funding to communities to research, plan and develop implementation strategies for cleaning up and revitalizing a specific area affected by one or more brownfield sites.

State-based Resources:

There are several existing state-level funding opportunities that could be used to support street improvements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically through state offices of arts and culture. This list provides samples from states in FEMA Region 1.

<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Description</u>
<u>Connecticut Office of the Arts</u>	Connecticut	Offers the Supporting Arts grant program that provides unrestricted funding to help support Connecticut’s arts organizations and municipal arts departments as they pursue their missions.
<u>Massachusetts Cultural Council</u>	Massachusetts	Offers a variety of grants to support artists, cultural programs, and <i>cultural facilities</i> . Check out the website for more information on eligible applicants, funding, and deadlines.
<u>Massachusetts Department of Transportation</u>	Massachusetts	Offers Shared Streets and Spaces quick-launch/quick-build grant program that provides grants as small as \$5,000 and as large as \$300,000 for cities and towns to quickly implement or expand improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce in their communities.
<u>MassDevelopment Grants</u>	Massachusetts	Provide grant money for programs that are specifically designed to improve economic development and competitiveness across Massachusetts. The Commonwealth Places program provides a creative funding mechanism to advance community placemaking projects throughout Massachusetts. The TDI Creative Catalyst is a competitive grant program through which individuals and organizations in current and graduated Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) districts can apply for grants to support public-facing projects that serve to enhance local arts and cultural infrastructure.
<u>New Hampshire State Council on the Arts</u>	New Hampshire	Offers Arts for Community Engagement Grants to support community enrichment and public benefit by providing access to

		high quality arts performances, activities, and programs presented by community-based organizations, Main Street programs, and municipalities.
<u>RD-RPIC-2020 Rural Placement Innovation Challenge (RPIC)</u>	Rhode Island	Offers funding to public and private groups for planning and/or implementation technical assistance to rural communities to foster placemaking under the Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC).
<u>Rhode Island State Council on the Arts</u>	Rhode Island	Provides several grant opportunities for artists, non-profits, and health organizations. See the website for more detailed information on eligibility, funding availability, and deadlines.
<u>Vermont Arts Council</u>	Vermont	Offers multiple grant programs to support creative placemaking including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Art in State Buildings Grants</u> invest in and promote the work of Vermont artists, and are designed to preserve and enrich the state's cultural landscape for its citizens and visitors. • <u>Animating Infrastructure Grants</u> support community projects that integrate art with infrastructure improvements. • <u>Artist in Schools</u> residencies engage students and teachers in creative placemaking activities.
<u>Vermont Community Development Program</u>	Vermont	VCDP provides federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for a variety of projects. The most applicable in terms of placemaking are Implementation Grants that assist businesses to create or retain jobs, build infrastructure, etc. and Planning Grants to conduct feasibility studies and marketing plans, produce architectural and engineering plans, etc.
<u>Vermont Municipal Planning Grant</u>	Vermont	The program encourages and supports planning and revitalization for local municipalities in Vermont. Check out the website for more information on eligible applicants, funding, and deadlines.
<u>Vermont Downtown Transportation Fund</u>	Vermont	The fund supports revitalization efforts in designated downtowns each year with over \$300,000 in funding. It is a financing tool which assists municipalities in paying for transportation-related capital improvements within or serving a Designated Downtown. Past projects include streetscape improvements, bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements, parking facilities, rail or bus facilities, utility relocation, street lighting and wayfinding signage.

Private and Non-Profit Resources:

There are several private and non-profit funding programs that may support community interventions in response to COVID-19. This list provides a sample.

<i>Funding Source</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
<u>AARP Community Challenge</u>	Non-profit	Provides small grants to fund "quick-action" projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages. Eligible projects include improvements to housing, transportation, public

		space, technology ("smart cities"), civic engagement, and more. AARP offers other grant opportunities.
<u>Ford Foundation Grants</u>	Private	Offers grants in seven interconnected areas that can help challenge inequality. Grants have supported diverse arts spaces, civic engagement and participation, and more.
<u>Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities Partners for Places</u>	Non-profit	Creates opportunities for cities and counties in the United States and Canada to improve communities by building partnerships between local government sustainability offices and place-based foundations.
<u>The Kresge Foundation Creative Placemaking Initiative</u>	Private	Supports multiple funding opportunities to increase creative capacity to shape healthier neighborhoods, catalyze creative change in cities, and strengthen the equitable creative placemaking field.
<u>National Association of City Transportation Officials Pandemic Response and Recovery Grant</u>	Non-profit	Offers grants to projects that are directly and demonstrably related to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts; center the needs of populations disproportionately harmed by COVID-19's public health, social, and economic impacts; demonstrate a high level of project readiness with political support, community partnerships, and implementation within two months; and participate in a knowledge-sharing cohort.
<u>New England Foundation for the Arts Grant Programs</u>	Non-profit	Offers a variety of grants to support expeditions, public art, theater work, and dance projects. Check out the website for more information on eligible applicants, funding, and deadlines.
<u>National Association of Realtors</u>	Private	NAR's Placemaking program provides technical and financial assistance to help REALTOR® Associations, and their members, become engaged in placemaking in their communities.

Resource Contact Information:

FEMA Region 1

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Dr. Josh Laufer, FEMA Liaison for MA j.laufer@northeastern.edu

Federal Agency Coordinators

EDA:

Please refer to the Regional Office Section on the website below to find the state by state contact, <https://eda.gov/contact/>

Vermont | New Hampshire
Anthony Linardos, State Director
(802) 828-6000
www.rd.usda.gov/vt
www.rd.usda.gov/nh

EPA:

Information and contacts for EPA programs in New England can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/epa-region-1-new-england>

USDA Rural Development:

Maine
Tim Hobbs, State Director
(207) 990-9160
www.rd.usda.gov/me

HUD:

<https://www.hud.gov/states/shared/working/r1/cpd>
David Tille, Regional 1 Administrator (617-994-8223)

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