



MEMORANDUM

To: The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority Board
From: Alex Levering, Senior Project Manager, and Josh Croom, Project Planner
Date: 1/17/2024
Re: 2023 Forward Fund Capital Grant Round Two Grant Awardees

OVERVIEW

On June 21, 2023, the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) opened the 2023 Forward Fund Capital Grant application process to Cambridge-based nonprofit organizations looking to conduct capital improvement projects. The 2023 Forward Fund Capital Grant program funds projects that advance the CRA's mission to promote social and economic equity and support organizations which provide services meeting the needs of the Cambridge community (Capital Grants). The CRA Board allocated \$400,000 for Forward Fund capital grants in the 2023 budget and \$100,000 toward Feasibility Study grants, with individual applicants eligible for awards of up to \$100,000 (capital grants), and \$10,000 (feasibility study grants), respectively.

As shared with the CRA Board in November, the Forward Fund Selection Committee (Selection Committee) awarded \$241,850 of Capital Grants to three organizations in the first round of review. In addition, CRA staff awarded five Feasibility Study grants in 2023, totaling \$50,000. Organizations funded for feasibility studies include, the Multicultural Arts Center, YWCA, Central Square Theater, Transition House, and World Music Inc. (AKA Global Arts Live). The remaining Forward Fund capital grant budget for the second round of review was \$291,850 after accounting for the inclusion of \$50,000 originally allocated to feasibility study grants that was unspent.

The Forward Fund's second and final application deadline for 2023 closed on November 30, 2023. The CRA received thirteen applications in the second round, including five applications from organizations new to the Forward Fund. On December 12, 2023, the Selection Committee, made up of representatives from CRA staff and city departments and commissions, met to review the capital grant proposals. Based on the quality of their proposals, and organizational alignment with city goals, the Selection Committee awarded the remaining \$291,850 in funds to eight organizations: Brattle Film Foundation, Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, CitySprouts, Harvard Square Homeless Shelter Corporation, Just-A-Start, Maria L. Baldwin Community Center, and the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers.



CAPITAL GRANT EVALUATION DETAILS

The Forward Fund focuses on awarding Capital Grants to mission aligned non-profit organizations to improve the quality, efficiency, and accessibility of organization facilities that provide services that benefit Cambridge residents, workers, or visitors.

The Selection Committee is made up of staff from the CRA, as well as from City Departments including: CDD Community Planning, Department of Human Services, and the Commission for Persons with Disabilities. The Selection Committee evaluated and scored each proposal based on the following criteria:

1. The application included a clear narrative on how the project aligns with the action plans of the Envision Cambridge citywide plan.
2. The applicant demonstrated staff capacity for the organization to successfully implement the project.
3. The project is feasible and can be implemented within a one/two-year timeframe. Additionally, if the project/study costs more than what was requested from the Forward Fund, the applicant had a plan to identify how the remaining cost of the project/study will be paid for.
4. The project had a high level of public accessibility or visibility.
5. The project had an ability to inspire or facilitate other community investments.

The selected awardees and a description of the Capital Grant projects are listed on the following pages.

Brattle Film Foundation

Replacement of digital projector at The Brattle Theatre

\$49,999



Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)

Ivy Molan: Executive Director

Project Location: 40 Brattle Street, Cambridge,
MA 02138

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

The BFF works to enrich our community through cultural engagement. This proposal seeks vital funding to address a pressing issue - our outdated Digital Cinema Projector (DCP). Our current DCP was installed in 2013, thanks to a successful crowdfunding campaign where over 1,000 individuals donated to make the addition of digital projection a reality at The Brattle. With successful funding, we plan to complete this project in the first quarter of 2024 to avoid worse negative impacts on our public programs.

Over the past few years, the projector's functionality has become less dependable—leading to 3 canceled screenings both this year and last— hindering our ability to dependably deliver our film programs to the residents of Cambridge. Above canceled shows, we have had weekly issues with lost files and malfunctioning negatively impacting our overall presentation.

The Brattle has long been a cornerstone of cultural expression in Cambridge, offering a diverse range of films and fostering community connection. However, with the current DCP reaching the end of its operational life, our ability to deliver these experiences is in jeopardy. This project's importance extends beyond a mere equipment upgrade; it's about sustaining and enhancing a vital cultural space that contributes to the educational, recreational, and artistic aspirations of the people of Cambridge. As a cultural hub in Cambridge, MA, The Brattle Theatre is dedicated to providing enriching opportunities for artistic expression and learning. The replacement of our DCP is crucial to ensuring the continued provision of high quality cinematic experiences to our community.





Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee

CEOC Food Pantry Renovations

Awarded \$21,880



Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)

Tina Alu: Executive Director

Project Location: 11 Inman Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

We have begun the process of installing a new walk-in freezer/refrigerator combination unit to replace our old walk-in unit that was not fully functional. However, the funds we had only covered the initial equipment costs and did not cover the installation, labor, or the additional equipment that is needed to complete the installation. Upon removal of the old walk-in unit, the contractors discovered that the doors that were originally made for the freezer/cooler would not fit in our space due to a ceiling beam. Thus, the old walk-in freezer and refrigerator were removed in September, but the new unit has not yet been installed as we await new doors for the unit. For this capital project, we are requesting funds to cover the new doors for the unit, the labor cost to install the doors and the rest of the freezer/cooler unit, and an electrician's time to complete the install and hook up the freezer/cooler to our existing electrical system.

Additionally, we request funds to re-paint the food pantry, as the installation will damage some of the walls. We also request funds to repair an upstairs wall unrelated to the food pantry but included with is proposal because the contracting work will overlap.

Finally, in order to continue maintenance on the basement food pantry, we request funds to help mitigate the flooding that the pantry experiences when it rains. We will contract with Basement Specialists, Inc. to install grates around our ramp into the pantry, install an additional two pumps to pump the water out of the basement.



CASPAR, Inc.

Emergency Services Repaving Project

Awarded \$30,000



Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)

Joelle Nims: Senior Manager of Public & Private Support

Project Location: 240 Albany Street, Cambridge, MA

02139

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

The Emergency Services Center and Shelter is a 60-bed overnight shelter located on Albany Street in the Cambridgeport neighborhood. This shelter, which is on MIT owned property, is in need of parking lot repairs and resurfacing. The most glaring issue at present is a five foot wide pothole in the front of the building. In order to get to the three guest parking spaces in the front lot, one must navigate across this hole. The parking lot wraps around the left side of the building to the back, and the entirety of it is cracked, uneven, and prone to puddling. There are numerous spots in the back where the asphalt is ready to give way to new potholes. We use a private access road on the right side of the building, which is in similar disrepair. Finally, the back lot has no parking spot lines, making it difficult to accommodate all of the vehicles we need for staff and services (which now includes two Street Outreach Vans).

CASPAR's services center on harm reduction for this population, with the goal of keeping people alive long enough to find their path to recovery and permanent housing. Our Cambridge based shelters and street outreach team work on the frontlines of the opioid crisis, providing lifesaving shelter, meals, clothing, weather gear, hygiene products, alongside access to healthcare and referrals that address social determinants of health. We offer these services with no strings attached, no sobriety requirements, and no intake processes, with the hope that each person will return the next day for more help. As unsheltered folks begin to trust CASPAR's staff, we can start to build the relationships that lead to deeper conversations around housing goals, behavioral health challenges, and the barriers they face in building a life in recovery.

CitySprouts

Sustaining Resilient Public School Gardens

Awarded \$49,000



Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)

Susan Diller; Executive Director

Project Location: 1035 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

CitySprouts has been partnering with Cambridge Public Schools since our founding in 2001. In the past 22+ years we have been fortunate to build and maintain school gardens at each of the district's 12 elementary schools. Over the years, the garden classrooms have grown and evolved, each with the consultation of the school principal and often the science coordinator in the district. CitySprouts school gardens are designed to follow a model that maximizes engagement and learning for all ages. Understanding the physical and mental health benefits as well as academic enrichment that outdoor education provides, our goal has always been to ensure that Cambridge students have equitable access to nature and early science lessons right in their schoolyards.

In recent years, a few of our school gardens have suffered significant damage from wear and tear, rodents, and, in some cases, from vandalism. This grant proposal focuses on three of the school gardens most in need of renovation and improvements: the Fletcher Maynard school, the Cambridgeport School and the Kennedy Longfellow School.

The goal of this capital project is to work in partnership with the three schools mentioned above to revitalize these school gardens and outdoor classrooms. The largest anticipated expense is to purchase and install rodent-proof garden beds to replace the beds that have been especially vulnerable and affected by rat and pest damage. We have consulted with Green City Growers and they have shared pricing for rodent-proof beds that include installation and irrigation. We hope to complete the bulk of the work by the start of the September 2024 school year.





Harvard Square Homeless Shelter Corporation

Renovation of Harvard Square Homeless Shelter

Awarded \$35,000

Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)

Julie B. Wilson; President

Project Location: 66 Winthrop Street, Cambridge, MA
02138



HARVARD SQUARE
HOMELESS SHELTER

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

For forty years, Harvard undergraduates have been running a homeless shelter for sober adults in the basement of University Lutheran Church in the midst of the Harvard campus. For the past several decades, each guest has been provided with a bed and meals, as well as some care by a volunteer doctor and support addressing needs such as replacing lost identification, making appointments for health and other care, etc. Until this year, each guest could remain in the shelter for up to 3 weeks.

Starting this year, the State will require that guests be allowed to stay until they find housing, choose to leave or the shelter closes for the season. (The shelter is open from November 1st through April 15th and from mid-June to mid-August.) This will shift the focus from solely providing shelter to helping guests begin to practice self-care and learn skills needed to live independently. To support this change, the students have identified a model of sleeping pod developed for a shelter in Los Angeles. Each pod contains a single bed, small closet, two drawers and partial (7-foot) walls on three sides, providing privacy and safety. The shelter has space for 16 pods.

To prepare for the installation of the pods, students spent several days sanding and painting the walls. A skilled team from Byggmeister (<https://www.byggmeister.com/>), who have been volunteering their construction support to the students for many years, voluntarily built the stabilizing walls and other components to brace the pods so that they will be sturdy and safe. The Corporation provided funds for hospital grade laminated plywood boards for the stabilizing walls. This means the space is currently set. When the pods arrive, they will be easily assembled and installed and guests can begin using them immediately.



Just-A-Start

Rindge Commons Economic Mobility Hub

Awarded \$37,000



Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)
Carmen Chan; Director of Philanthropy
Project Location: 402 Rindge Avenue, Cambridge, MA
02141

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

Just A Start has embarked on an ambitious initiative to build an Economic Mobility Hub at Rindge Commons, adjacent to the Alewife MBTA station. This 70,000 sq ft, 6-story mixed use development includes biomed and IT training labs, a construction training center and wood shop for youth, universal pre-school for 68 children, 24 affordable apartments, Just A Start's headquarters and expanded program space for housing resources and financial empowerment.

Phase one of the project is near completion. The apartments, job training spaces and universal pre-K are in progress and we are on schedule to complete construction in Spring of 2024. We are requesting the Forward Fund to support Phase 2 of the project in the fit-out of Just A Start's program space for our housing resources and financial empowerment programs.

1,500 sq ft of our 4,400 HQ space will be specifically for our housing and financial services programs. This will allow us to serve more people who seek support on homelessness prevention, tenant/ landlord mediation, home improvement loan education, first time home buyer programs and supportive tenant services. Our housing and homelessness prevention programs serve 137 households with case-management, mediation, and eviction prevention services. Our Financial empowerment program serves 394 people every year in fee tax-filing clinic, one-on-one financial coaching and counseling, finance workshops, and the Families Moving Forward program which provides wrap-around services and support to 25 single-parent families such as housing, jobs, healthcare, and financial incentives over a three year period.



Maria L. Baldwin Community Center

Treatment Area for Community Embedded Family
and Mental Health Support

Awarded \$20,025



Agassiz Baldwin Community

A nonprofit corporation that provides programs, services, and events with a focus on children, arts, and community

Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)

Taylor Mortell; Director of Development and Impact

Project Location: 20 Sacramento Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

We request funding to support a renovation of our building that will increase our program capacity and convert under-utilized office space into a treatment area for youth and family mental health counseling and wraparound support services. We first began exploring this project in 2019 with the support of a Feasibility Study grant from the Forward Fund. The original intention of the project was to renovate our space to increase our enrollment, with the goal of serving more Cambridge families and youth. The 2019 feasibility study grant allowed us to hire a consultant who created a new business model and projected the growth of our enrollment capacity that improved program spaces would provide. While the Covid-19 pandemic upended our original renovation plan, the resulting shift in our programs and services to meet urgent community needs has again emphasized the transformative impact that improvements to our building would have on our ability to serve the community more deeply.

Our project will take place in 3 phases and involve reconfiguring and renovating our existing spaces to better meet community needs. Phase 1 of the project is already complete, and we require funding to continue to phases 2 and 3. In phase 1, we moved our administrative offices from the 2nd floor to the 3rd floor. We transformed our 2nd floor conference room into a new kindergarten art classroom, which involved refinishing and repainting the walls, ceiling, and floor, installing child safety guards on the windows, and furnishing the room with furniture and art supplies. In phase 2, for which we are requesting funding, we will move our main reception office from the 2nd floor to the 3rd floor. This will include renovating the 3rd floor bathroom to add a kitchenette to the new reception area. In phase 3, we will transform the former reception office on the 2nd floor into a private treatment area for our full time social worker to provide mental health counseling and individualized wraparound support services. We will need to remove the cabinets installed there, refinish and repaint the walls and ceiling, replace the carpet, install child safety guards equipment, and furnish the space.



Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers

MAPS Cambridge Office HVAC Replacement

Awarded \$48,946

Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)

Paolo Pinto; Executive Director

Project Location: 1046 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA
02138



Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

MAPS seeks to partially support urgently needed upgrading of two HVAC systems, one on each floor, this year at its Cambridge office/HQ at 1046 Cambridge Street.

One of two MAPS offices owned by the private, nonprofit health and social service organization, the Cambridge office has served the Portuguese-speaking community of the city and surrounding areas since opening in 1970. The comfort afforded by a functioning HVAC system is paramount to the success of MAPS as a welcoming and safe space, particularly for our Senior Center. The Center, located on the climatically unpredictable 2nd floor, provides nutritious, culturally competent meals, services, social and cultural activities and more five days per week throughout the year to over 100 seniors. When temperatures reach seasonal extremes, the safety and well-being of these elderly clients becomes a major concern.

New operational HVAC systems will make our offices all the more functional, providing comfortable temperatures for MAPS Cambridge clients, staff, and senior community members utilizing the Senior Center, are essential. Beyond the Seniors, the Cambridge Office is also used by a variety of community members and organizations. This includes use by: the neighboring Miramelinda Montessori School for events with larger crowds, focus groups like Cambridge Focus, Escola Portuguesa for language classes, a DPH HIV/AIDS group, Portuguese language Alcoholics Anonymous, Naveo and other local financial institutions for homebuying and other similar classes, the Boston Portuguese Festival committee, larger organizations like Vinfen and Alnylam, and MAPS' own community health workers for vaccine, testing, and other health clinics. Finally, the new system will improve energy efficiency and related costs, allowing MAPS funds to be allocated elsewhere. The work will be completed by a reputable and experienced company, Lake HVAC, based in Stoneham, MA with whom we have worked before. MAPS staff, including project supervisor/HR director Lucinda Morais, will be on site to ensure work is completed to our needs.