

AAPI Communities Across Massachusetts

What the 2026 Grant Applications Reveal — From Need to Investment

142

Total Applications

\$627K

Total Requested

27

Funded Projects

\$102,650

Total Awarded

6

Regions Served

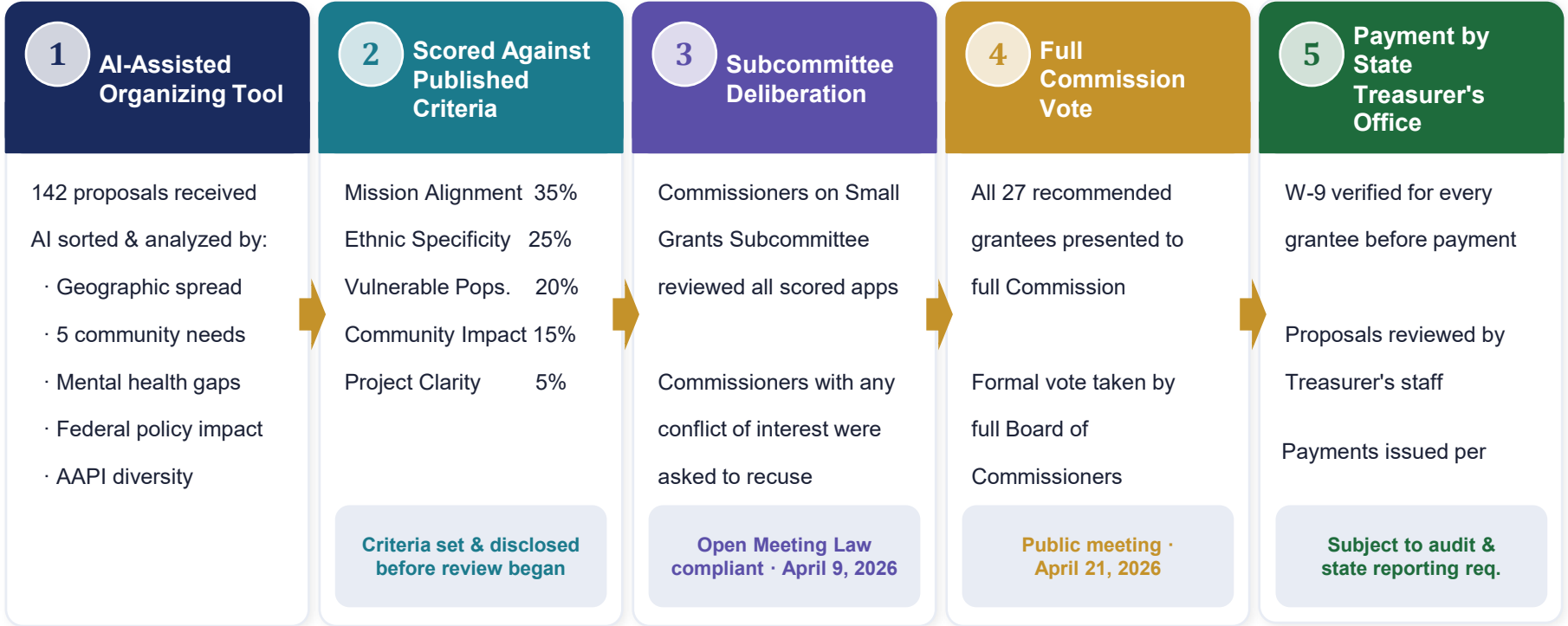
2026 Small Grants Program

Every application represents community members whose voices may often go unheard. They offer valuable insights into the realities faced by AAPI communities across Massachusetts.

The 2026 Small Grants Program was not just an investment in community projects — it was also an opportunity to listen. These 142 applications serve as a form of community-generated data: a self-reported map of where AAPI communities across Massachusetts are, what they need, and what they are already doing to address those needs. That kind of ground-up intelligence is difficult to capture any other way.

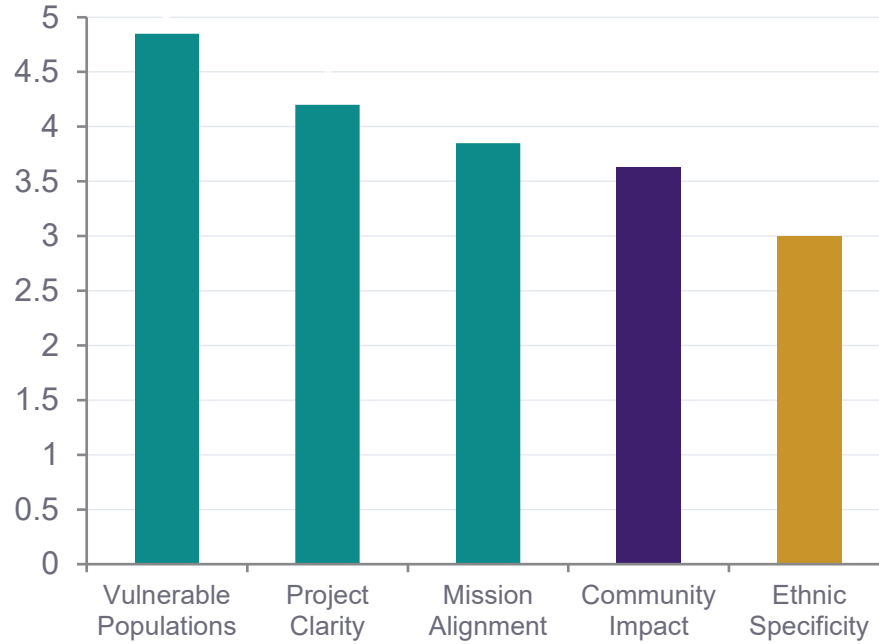
2026 Small Grants: Grantee Selection Process

A transparent, multi-stage process compliant with Massachusetts law and state appropriations requirements



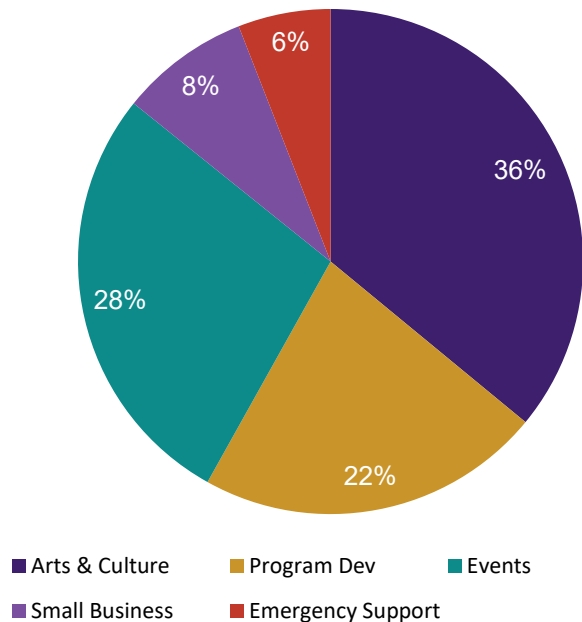
✓ Compliant with M.G.L. c. 268A (conflict of interest) · ✓ Open Meeting Law (publicly noticed subcommittee) · ✓ State appropriations transparency & audit requirements · ✓ W-9 verified payments via State Treasurer

Funding Criteria

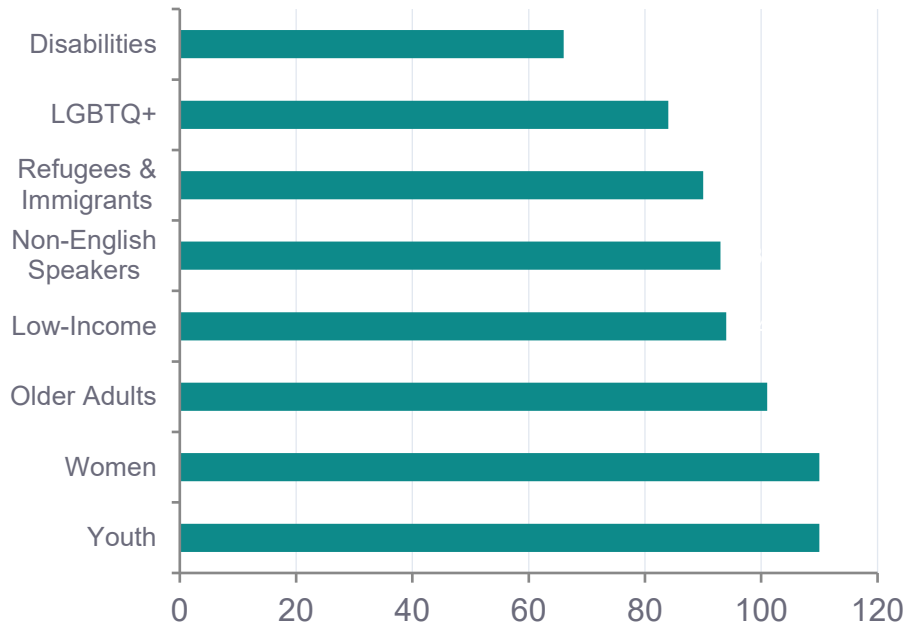


Who Applied — The Landscape of AAPI Community Action

What They're Doing

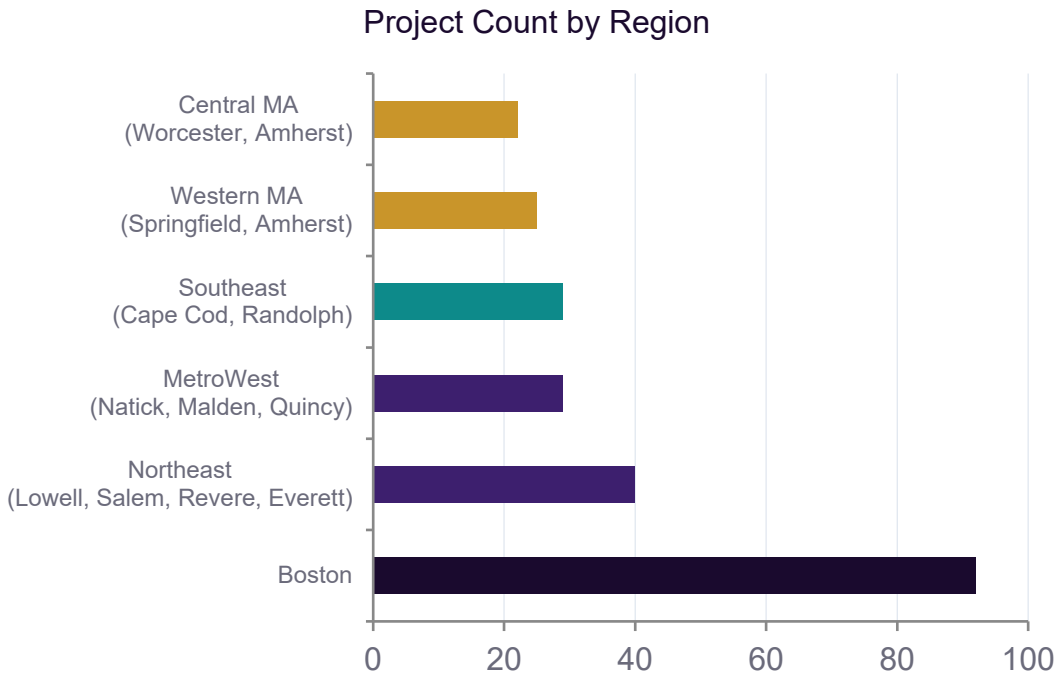


Populations Served (# of projects)



Nearly every application serves multiple overlapping vulnerable groups — these are not single-issue communities.

Where: Applications from the following Regions



Boston / Northeast

Largest concentration — Chinatown, Dorchester, Lowell's Cambodian community, Salem North Shore, Revere, Everett

Western MA (Underserved)

Vietnamese & Lao communities in Springfield and surrounding areas face significant resource limitation and fewer resources

Cape Cod (Isolated)

Documentary 'Uneraser' addresses community invisibility.

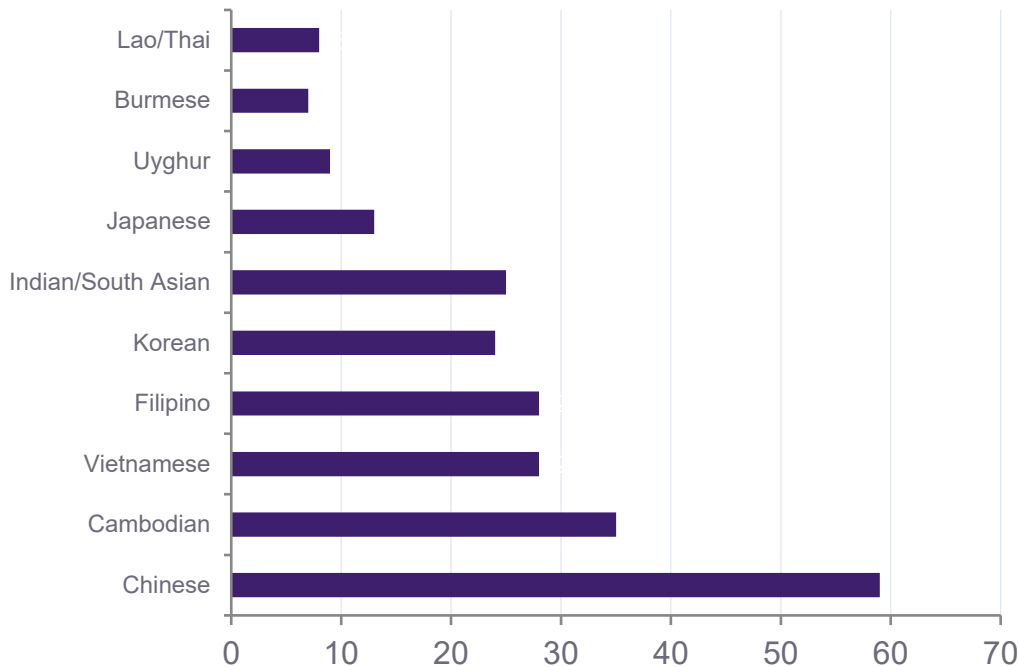
Greater Lowell/Merrimack Valley

Afghan, Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, and other immigrant communities continue to experience language barriers, economic barriers, and social service access barriers.

AAPI communities exist statewide — not just in Boston.

The Diversity Within 'AAPI' — Who Is Applying and Why

Ethnic Group Presence in Applications



Hidden Communities — The Underrepresented Within the Underrepresented

Uyghur

Lexington & Boston

Fleeing active persecution; cultural survival is literal, not metaphorical

Burmese

Lowell

2nd-generation youth losing connection to identity amid Myanmar civil war

Hmong

Western MA

50th anniversary of US resettlement — no institutional support

Afghan Women

Lowell

Training needed for economic independence post-displacement

Lao American

Springfield

Secret War refugees using food to bridge generations

A Closer Look: Mental Health

The most urgent gap — the fewest resources

62%

of Cambodian refugees
have PTSD

MindSpire, Lowell

50%+

of older Asian immigrants
have limited English

SVCA, Springfield

19

projects cite trauma
or mental health

Across all regions

"Growing up, I witnessed the stigma, silence, and lack of culturally appropriate mental health care that many immigrants experience... Cambodian community faces stigma, language access barriers, and financial limitations."

— MindSpire Mental Health & Wellness, Lowell

"62% of Cambodian refugees experience PTSD and over 50% experience major depression. Recent events — the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and immigration enforcement — have resurfaced fear, grief, and historical trauma."

— Khmer, Dorchester

The Five Strongest Community Needs — In Their Own Words

1 Cultural Preservation & Identity

49 projects

Many communities racing to preserve what displacement nearly erased.

2 Mental Health & Trauma Healing

19 projects

62% of Cambodian refugees have PTSD. Afghan women lack psychiatric access. Uyghur artists in survival mode. Culturally responsive care is nearly non-existent.

3 Language Access & Civic Navigation

13 projects

Vietnamese, Khmer, Nepali — residents cannot access housing, benefits, or healthcare without language support.

Food Security & Emergency Aid

SNAP cuts hit directly. Filipino elderly food boxes, Cambodian restaurant meal vouchers for elders, Worcester feeding 500 meals/week — all under-resourced and urgent.

5 Economic Access & Small Business

21 projects

AAPI entrepreneurs are locked out of traditional capital.

Thank You

The Massachusetts AAPI Commission extends its sincere gratitude to the **Massachusetts Legislature** and the **Governor** for their continued investment in the Commission through annual state appropriations. Your support makes programs like the **AAPIC Small Grants Program** possible and strengthens our ability to serve AAPI communities across the Commonwealth. We are especially grateful to the **Massachusetts Asian Caucus** for its steadfast leadership, partnership, and unwavering advocacy for AAPI communities and the Commission's mission.

A special thank you to Senator Vanna Howard for joining us today and for your inspiring remarks. We deeply appreciate your continued leadership, your longstanding commitment to AAPI communities, and your support of the Commission. Finally, we thank our commissioners, community partners, nonprofit organizations, volunteers, and all those who work alongside us to build a stronger, more inclusive, and more equitable Massachusetts.

Together, we are creating lasting impact for AAPI communities across the Commonwealth.