



PATHWAYS TO FRIENDSHIP FY2025 Community Bridging Mini Grants

INTRODUCTION

The Arc of Massachusetts, in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services, announces its intention to award several demonstration grants up to \$7000 each to organizations and groups committed to implementing, expanding or refining activities that support relationships and **friendships between people with and without disabilities**. The Pathways to Friendship Project recognizes the value of ALL friendships. However—because of their relative rarity—these mini-grants are dedicated to demonstration projects that bring people with and without disabilities together in relationships that may become friendships. It is anticipated that these grants awards will be made available for a start-up in September 2024, and run through June 30, 2025. Response is due any time before 5pm on August 2, 2024.

BACKGROUND

Widening the Circle; **Pathways to Friendship** is a social inclusion initiative, under the auspices of The Arc of Massachusetts. This project is funded by the MA Department of Developmental Services in response to concerns about social isolation and limited opportunities to develop friendships, expressed by individuals with disabilities and their families. In fiscal year 2024, seven community organizations were awarded these grants.

During the 2025 fiscal year, these **Community Bridging Proposals** will again be made available. Members of the Project Advisory Committee plus representatives from DDS established a process to best utilize funding to foster opportunities for relationships/friendships to develop between people with and without disabilities. The recommendation for these demonstration grants was identified in response to the needs and interests for increased social connections with others in the community identified by the reported loneliness and isolation for many people who receive services through the Department of Developmental Services. Although the financial resources are limited, the committee feels strongly that small demonstration projects, will allow organizations to implement creative strategies that will generate inclusive momentum in communities.



ELIGIBILITY: Applicants must be a Massachusetts community-based organization and proposed activities in the project must be planned as fully inclusive, without presence of congregated or segregated activities.

Additionally, priority will be given to organizations that are working to address inequities, reduce barriers, and improve opportunities for belonging and friendships for people with disabilities in their communities.

Please make sure you submit the electronic grant proposal cover page and include a follow up email with your short proposal and requested attachments, to be considered in our FY2025 grant review process.

Previous 2024 Community Bridging Grant Awardees and Disability Service Provider Organizations are not eligible for this grant cycle.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION APPLICATION DEADLINE

Proposals must be submitted by email **5:00 PM** on **August 2, 2024** at driscoll@arcmass.org (see minimum proposal content further below.)

CRITERIA FOR PROPOSALS AND REVIEW PROCESS

A selection committee will review all proposals. Applicants may be invited before the review committee to discuss their proposals and respond to any questions which may arise. It is anticipated that awards will be made expeditiously to allow an September 2024 start-date for the funded projects. **Grant funds will be paid in 2 installments.** 50% will be paid up-front, near the time the project begins. The final 50% will be paid upon completion of the grant period, in June 2025,, after the grantee's presentation at the "Celebrating Friends" symposium. A minimum of 5 mini grants will be awarded, with at least one award given in each region of the state. The committee is hoping that diversity along with a range of disabilities will be represented in the six awards.

The awards will be based on the following expected proposal contents:



- Projects will intentionally bring people with and without disabilities of **transition and adult ages** together in relationships and support the development of friendships.
- Projects will include people with a **variety of intellectual and developmental disabilities** including significant disabilities.
- Projects will reflect approaches in a **variety of situations where people thrive in community**. These can be based where people may *live, learn, work, play, worship, or find membership and belonging*. (Pathways Toolkits can provide helpful strategies to consider in proposals <https://thearcofmass.org/friendship/>)
- Projects must demonstrate creativity in promoting inclusion.
- Even though Friendships themselves are a proven safeguard against mistreatment, abuse and neglect, each proposal should briefly describe additional **safeguards**, if any, to keep both people with and without disabilities safe from harm. *(Per DDS, a CORI needs to be done for those who are matched up with someone on a continuous basis, but not for all of the people in groups they join. For example, if someone drives John to church and back every week and plays a role in supporting that person, let's say in the choir, that person ought to be CORI'ed, but not the rest of the choir.)*
CORI Link: <https://www.mass.gov/massachusetts-criminal-offender-record-information-cori>
- Each project should **support at least five (5) people with disabilities** in individual relationships with people without disabilities.
- Projects need to address the **social isolation** faced by many people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities and promote those opportunities to develop personal relationships. These relationships should be with people who do not have disabilities and should be based on similar interests or experiences.
- Proposals that **demonstrate the use of funding for general community resources** (ie. YMCAs, health clubs, schools, park and recreation departments, Faith based, Knights of Columbus, etc.)



- Budgets that include a “**match**”, cash or in-kind, will be looked on favorably, but it is not a requirement.
- All grantees must agree to the following items and clearly include them in their proposals:
 - submit a **written midpoint progress report** (March 30, 2025)
 - present your project at the “**Celebrating Friends**” symposium in June 2025.
 - provide **images/video clips** (with proper releases) from demonstration project activities that can be used in The Arc of Massachusetts trainings/website.

MINIMUM PROPOSAL CONTENT

1. Online Cover Page submission which can be accessed here: [Community Bridging Grant Proposal- Cover Page Submission](#)
2. Community Bridging Grant (RFP) Narrative with template available on Pathways to Friendship Grant webpage. <https://thearcofmass.org/friendship/mini-grants/>

Section One:

Narrative description of the project that includes: (1Page Maximum)

- basic philosophy of the project and how it will create pathways to friendship between people with and without disabilities
- brief description of the sponsoring organization (s) and prior experiences and success supporting relationships and friendships between people with and without disabilities

Section Two: (1 Page Maximum)

Narrative description of the people that will participate in this project including:

- How your proposal will reach a diverse group of people
- The number of individuals with disabilities and individuals without disabilities that are expected to participate in the proposed project

Section Three: (1 Page Maximum)

Narrative description of implementation goals that includes:

- timelines and work plan
- plan to measure the outcomes of your proposal
- ability to sustain activities after grant funds expire



3. Budgets (full 9 month), including match and other sources of support, if any. Include a short narrative explaining use of funds with the budget (it can be text box with excel or in word form with RFP response- example templates can be utilized.)
4. Affiliation letter(s) if applicable.

Items listed in “Review process and criteria” above should help you with your proposal. RFP Narrative and Budget need to be attached to an email with subject line Community Mini Grant and sent to driscoll@arcmass.org prior to the August 2,, 2024 proposal deadline.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For any inquiries regarding this RFP please contact: **Pathways to Friendship Director Katie Driscoll 508-208-2700 driscoll@arcmass.org**