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Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT)

Sports and Entertainment Events Fund Grant Program Monthly Report to the Legislature March 2026

Background of Grant Program

The Sports and Entertainment Events Fund (“the Fund”) was established by Chapter 73 of the Acts of 2025 (“the Act”) to support major sports or entertainment events through a competitive grant program. The Fund is administered by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT). The same Act funded the grant program with \$10 million to support costs related to the 2026 FIFA World Cup. This is the first round of grants for this new program.

By law, no more than 50% of the balance of the fund may go to one recipient in a calendar year. Priorities of the Fund include direct and economic impacts on the Commonwealth’s tourism industry, promotion of the Commonwealth in national and international media, and geographic equity.

This report is submitted pursuant to the requirements set out in the Act.

Outline of Application and Award Process

This round of funding was open to municipalities and non-profits to support FIFA World Cup matches and the official Fan Festival, as well as public safety costs supporting team home bases, base camps, and watch parties. Eligible expenses, which must be matched 1:1 by the grantee, include transportation, public safety, wayfinding, services for persons with disabilities, volunteer support, event services, sports marketing, and construction, functioning, or operation of an event.

The Request for Response was released on February 2, 2026 and a webinar with 136 attendees was held on February 11, 2026. Two question and answer documents were produced by MOTT to help applicants best craft their submissions. Fifty-one applications were received prior to the deadline of March 4, 2026. The total amount of grant funding requested was \$22,957,065. The total amount of grant funding requested specifically for watch parties totaled \$12,783,046.

MOTT staff members scored the applications using the rubric below, while also screening for applicant eligibility. During the review process, MOTT reviewing staff met with other state agency staff who have been closely involved in FIFA World Cup planning and could provide helpful feedback and context (EOPSS/MEMA, DCR, MassDOT, and MBTA).

Scoring Rubric:

Viability (35%)

- Thoughtful budget
- Ability to provide matching funds
- Appropriate timeline
- Has held relevant meetings and secured or made progress on local, state, or federal permits required to implement the proposal
- Applied for viewing license
- Demonstrated local support (can include up to two letters of support—a letter of support is strongly encouraged if the event does not have all necessary permits in place and/or is being held on property that the applicant does not own. Non-municipal applicants are required to provide a letter of support from the municipal CEO.)
- Public safety and security plan in place and reviewed by authorities
- Transportation and parking plan in place and reviewed by authorities
- Alignment/partnership with local and regional agencies and organizations

Economic Impact and Need (35%)

- Articulation of need
- Avoidance of state costs
- Risks if funding is not awarded
- Expected return-on-investment for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Direct and indirect economic impacts on the tourism industry (Note: A tourist is defined as somebody who travels more than 50 miles or spends a paid overnight at their destination)
- Promotion of Massachusetts in national and international media
- Marketing plan

Clarity and Vision (20%)

- Clarity and vision of how the proposal is a good fit for the inaugural rounds of Sports and Entertainment Events Fund Grants
- How success will be measured
- Unique attributes of proposal

Geographic Equity Other State Priorities (10%)

- Location of proposal within a Designated Cultural District (Chapter 10, Section 58A)
- Includes commemoration of the 250th anniversary of American Independence in Massachusetts
- Sustainability elements
- Equity and inclusion efforts, including for persons with disabilities

Grant Awards and Expenditure Timelines

Below are the proposed Sports and Entertainment Events Fund grant program recipients and dollar amount of the award, as announced on March 23, 2026.

Once contracting is complete, awardees have until August 31, 2026 to make grant expenditures and spend matching funds. MOTT will work with grant award recipients to refine their budgets based on actual grant amounts, produce the required paperwork and grant reporting throughout the grant period of performance,

and maintain compliance with FIFA public viewing rules including securing a viewing license, if applicable.

| Awardee | Grant Award | Locations | Project Name |
|---|--------------------|--|---|
| Boston Soccer 2026 | \$4,225,000.00 | Boston and Foxborough | FWC26 Boston Host City Authority events delivery |
| City of Boston | \$100,000.00 | Boston | City of Boston Celebration & Neighborhood Activation Proposal |
| City of Brockton | \$175,000.00 | Brockton | City of Champions Fan Zone |
| City of Cambridge | \$65,000.00 | Cambridge | Cambridge United - Where the World Comes Together |
| City of Chelsea | \$175,000.00 | Chelsea | Fiesta Fútbol '26 Chelsea |
| City of Easthampton | \$100,000.00 | Easthampton | Millside Park Watch Party & USA250 Festival |
| City of Everett | \$10,000.00 | Everett | Everett Community Watch Party |
| City of Greenfield | \$10,000.00 | Greenfield | Greenfield Watch Party |
| City of Worcester | \$120,000.00 | Worcester | Worcester Watch Parties |
| Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association | \$120,000.00 | Barnstable, Brockton, Fall River, Fitchburg, Lawrence, Leominster, New Bedford, Northampton, Pittsfield, and Worcester | 2026 Mass Youth Soccer Festivals |
| Meet Boston | \$4,600,000.00 | Boston | FWC26 Boston Event Production Costs |
| MetroWest Tourism and Visitors Bureau | \$120,000.00 | Franklin and Marlborough | MetroWest Regional Fan Zone |
| Revolutionary Valley Regional Tourism Council and the Latinx Center of Lowell | \$75,000.00 | Lowell | The Lowell-Watch Party Series |
| Town of Burlington | \$15,000.00 | Burlington | Gather on the Pitch: Community Watch Party 2026 |
| Town of Lexington | \$25,000.00 | Lexington | Lexington Watch Party |
| Town of Weymouth | \$40,000.00 | Weymouth | Weymouth Watch Party |

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| U.S. Haitian Chamber of Commerce | \$25,000.00 | Boston, Canton, Everett, and Randolph | Massachusetts Haitian Community-Multi-Game Watch Party Series |
| Total | | \$10,000,000.00 | |