FUNDING FACT SHEET

EARMARKS 101

NEW ENGLAND environmental finance center

WHAT ARE EARMARKS?

Earmarks, also called Congressionally Designated Spending (CDS) in the Senate or Community Project Funding (CPF) in the House, allow state and local governments and nonprofits to request federal funds for local projects through their congressional delegation. After a decade-long moratorium, they returned in FY22 as a key source of community investment.

$16B
FY26 total funding

~$1M
Median project award

$10K–$461M
Award range

FUNDING PRIORITIES

- **Community & regional development**
- **Natural resources & environment**
- **Transportation**
- **National security**

In FY26, nine of twelve Senate subcommittees and seven of twelve House subcommittes accepted earmark requests.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

✓
- State & local governments
- Eligible nonprofits

✗
- For-profit businesses
- Museums, memorials & commemoratives

THE PROCESS

Applications typically open in early spring (March-April). The full timeline from application to recieving funds can take multiple years.

1. **Apply to your delegation.** Submit to your Senator(s) and/or Representative(s) during the application window. Include project details, budget, timeline, and letters of support.
2. **Delegation review.** Senators and Representatives review applications and submit a limited number of requests to the Appropriations Committee.
3. **Appropriations Committee.** Requests are reviewed by the relevant subcommittee. Approval at this stage can take up to a year. A small share of discretionary funds is reserved for earmarks: 1% in the Senate and 0.5% in the House.
4. **Annual Appropriations Bill.** Funding is confirmed when Congress passes the bill. Note: if a Continuing Resolution passes instead (as in FY25), earmarks are excluded.
5. **Federal agency review.** If approved, *a separate application* process with the relevant agency or department is *required* before funds are released.

MATCH REQUIREMENTS

Some earmarks require a cost-share match, but the specific amounts differ for projects within each agency/department.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Start early! Connect with delegation offices before applications open - familiarity with your project builds crucial buy-in.
- Apply to all members of your federal delegation, not just one.
- Review prior awards to understand the scale and scope of projects in your focus area.
- Plan for a lengthy review process with the federal agency once funds are appropriated.
- The New England Environmental Finance Center provides free support to organizations throughout this process. Visit neefc.org to learn more.

EXAMPLE FUNDED PROJECTS

MUNICIPAL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE (ME)
Sen. King (D-ME) secured FY26 CDS for clean water, drinking water, and wastewater improvements in Fort Kent, Presque Isle, Windham, and others.

EMERGENCY RESILIENCE FACILITIES (ME)
Sen. Collins (R-ME) secured FY23–26 CDS for buildings serving as emergency shelters/ warming centers in Eagle Lake, St. Agatha, and Northport.

TRANSPORTATION & URBAN DEVELOPMENT (RI)
Sens. Reed & Whitehouse (D-RI) secured FY26 CDS for traffic improvements, bike lanes, and a river greenway in Woonsocket, East Providence, and Smithfield.