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Connecticut's Best Practices in Economic Development & Land Use Planning

CEDAS Best Practices in Economic Development & Land Use Certification Program

This program is intended to drive communities to pursue excellence in land use and economic development practices and to recognize the communities that have established best practices. In pursuit of these best practices, planners and economic developers can use this program to engage community stakeholders in discussions about how to achieve higher standards and develop creative,



community-specific ways to implement them.

The 2026 application period opened July 7.

The Best Practices Certification Program requires an application to be completed documenting various economic development and land use practices, policies, and programs taking place at the local level. The application contains four components:

1. Communications & Marketing
2. Coordination & Collaboration
3. Organizational Capacity & Strategy
4. Policies & Programs

PREPARING TO APPLY?

Check out the following documents:

- [GUIDANCE document](#)
- [APPLICATION QUESTIONS](#)
- [WATCH THE AUGUST 20 CEDAS HOUR ON BEST PRACTICES](#)
- [2026 APPLICATION](#)

CEDAS created the Best Practices Certification Program to:

- encourage best practices in municipal economic development and land use to spur continuous improvement; and

- to create an open resource library of model development examples that can be used by municipalities to update their policies and practices.

Award Year 2026 Best Practices Schedule

April 21, 2025	Application period opens
April 24, 2025	Zoom Application Information Session
May 22, 2025	Zoom Application Information Session
August 31, 2025	Extended! Application Period closes
August 31, 2025 – September 5, 2025	Review of Applications, Selection of Award Year 2026 Certified Municipalities
September 5, 2025	Email of awarded position
October 30, 2025	CEDAS Best Practices Awards Presentation (@ Tyde at Walnut Beach in Milford, CT)

2022
Recipients

GOLD AWARD

2023
Recipients

GOLD AWARD

- Town of Cheshire
- City of Norwalk
- Town of Orange

SILVER AWARD

- Town of Ellington
- Town of Guilford
- Town of Hamden
- Town of North Branford
- City of Torrington
- City of West Haven
- Town of Willington
- Town of Woodbridge

BRONZE AWARD

- Town of Berlin

2024 Recipients

GOLD AWARD

- Town Manchester
 - Town of Southbury
 - Town of Windham
-

- Town of Bolton
- Town of Madison
- Town of Windsor
- Town of Groton
- Town of West Hartford
- Town of Fairfield
- City of Groton

SILVER AWARD

- Town of Canton
- City of Hartford
- Town of Ridgefield
- Town of Tolland
- City of Bridgeport
- Town of East Windsor
- Town of Monroe
- City of New London

BRONZE AWARD

- City of Stamford
- City of Norwich

Thanks to the 2026 Best Practices Sponsors!

Program Sponsors

QUESTIONS?

Questions regarding the program should be directed to the program development committee chairs Sabrina Godeski at sgodeski@norwalkct.org or Aaron Marcavitch at amarcavitch@enfield.org.

Connecticut Economic Development Association
(CEDAS)

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Connecticut Economic Development Association (CEDAS)
BEST PRACTICES IN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & LAND USE PLANNING
A Program for Municipal Accreditation

CEDAS Best Practices Certification Program

CEDAS created the Best Practices Certification Program in 2019:

- To encourage best practices in municipal economic development and land use to spur continuous improvement;
- To create an open resource library of model development examples that can be used by municipalities to update their policies and practices.

This program is intended to drive communities to pursue excellence in land use and economic development practices and to recognize the communities that have established best practices. In pursuit of these best practices, planners and economic developers can use this program to engage community stakeholders in discussions about achieving higher standards and developing creative, community-specific ways to implement them.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS:

The program involves a certification system for good planning and economic development. The Best Practices criteria were developed with significant input from various municipal economic developers and planners, including members of CEDAS and the CT Chapter of the American Planning Association (CCAPA).

The Best Practices Certification Program requires an application to be completed documenting various economic development and land use practices, policies, and programs taking place at the local level. The application contains four components:

1. Communications & Marketing
2. Coordination & Collaboration
3. Organizational Capacity & Strategy
4. Policies & Programs

EVALUATION CRITERIA & SCORING SYSTEM

Presentation of the Application will be scored based on the organization of the application, clarity of narrative, and grammar.

POINTS BREAKDOWN	TOTAL POINTS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Communications	75	30%
Coordination & Collaboration	60	24%
Organizational Capacity & Strategy	70	28%
Policies & Programs	30	12%
Community Choice	5	2%
Presentation of Application	10	4%
	250	100%



Connecticut Economic Development Association (CEDAS)
**BEST PRACTICES IN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & LAND USE PLANNING**
A Program for Municipal Accreditation

The total possible number of points is 250. In 2026 award year, certification will be awarded according to the following levels:

Gold Certification: 200-250 points

Silver Certification: 150-199 points

Bronze Certification: 100-149 points

CERTIFICATION

CEDAS Best Practices certification lasts for three years. We encourage 2021 Certified Communities to recertify in 2025.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Applications will be evaluated by a committee of professionals with broad and expert knowledge in economic development, land use planning, and community engagement. While municipal budgets and community size will be noted, the committee will seek to recognize those submissions that have best exemplified the elements noted in the Best Practices criteria.

We understand that each community is unique, and we encourage your creativity in documenting how you feel your community satisfies the criteria. Communities must respond to each question, even if the answer is N/A. A Community Choice category is provided, and you will have the opportunity to showcase innovative activities you have undertaken that may not be included within the recommended submission criteria.

HOW TO APPLY

Communities interested in applying should go to www.cedas.org

Applications must be submitted by 5:00 pm on Sunday, August 31, 2025. Submissions received after this date and time will not be eligible for consideration.

2025 SCHEDULE:

- April 21, 2025 - Application period open
- August 31, 2025 - Application Period closes
- August 31st - September 5th - Review of Applications, Selection of 2026 Certified Municipalities
- September 5, 2025 - Email of awarded position
- October 2025 - CEDAS Best Practices Awards Presentation

For more information on the program, visit: www.cedas.org.

QUESTIONS?

Questions regarding the program should be directed to the program development committee co-chairs Sabrina Godeski (sgodeski@norwalkct.gov) or Aaron Marcavitch (amarcavitch@enfield.org).



Connecticut Economic Development Association (CEDAS)
BEST PRACTICES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & LAND USE PLANNING
A Program for Municipal Accreditation



2025 CERTIFICATION
QUESTIONS & REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

The Best Practices Certification application must be completed by a team that includes those responsible for both land use and economic development in your community. The application contains four components:

- I. Communications & Marketing
- II. Coordination & Collaboration
- III. Organizational Capacity & Strategy
- IV. Policies & Programs

Each question will require evidence that supports the criteria (for example, a narrative of no more than one paragraph, a hyperlink or URL to a webpage or document, or a PDF).

The following pages document the questions on the online application.

For more information, and the link to the online application, go to:

<https://www.cedas.org/Resources/CT-Best-Practices-In-Land-Use-and-Economic-Development/>

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

1. Offers pre-application meetings to those applying for building, zoning, or other related permits to discuss timeframes, board or departmental requirements, restrictions, or address concerns and follows up with the applicant if necessary.

Provide narrative description no more than one paragraph.

2. Has a website or web page for Planning and Economic Development that is updated regularly at least quarterly.

Confirm date of last update and provide URL.

3. Uses social media and or newsletter to communicate with business community & stakeholders.

Provide evidence of at least one town social media account and one example of a post or newsletter in the previous 6 months.

4. Land Use Regulations are available online.

Provide URL.

5. Communicates within 72 hours to pending applicants and responds to questions within 72 hours regarding application status.

Narrative description of process used, policy if applicable, and average length of permit process. No more than one paragraph.

6. Offers GIS land use and parcel information online to applicants and the public.

Provide URL.

7. Shares applications and renderings online for stakeholders to review during the approval process.

Provide URL.

8. Offers online permitting that allows for electronic signatures and payments.

Provide URL.

9. Community has a written brand identity and marketing strategy.

Provide narrative description no more than one paragraph.

10. Community maintains a "sell sheet" to quickly respond to proposal requests that includes: demographic information, workforce data, largest existing employers, cost of doing business, tax rates, and utility providers.

Upload a PDF of the sell sheet.

11. Community has a plan for communicating effectively across language barriers.

Provide link to plan and/or examples. No more than one paragraph.

Upload additional files supporting criteria above. Please label your files with the criteria number for reference.

COORDINATION & COLLABORATION

12. Coordinates meetings between relevant municipal departments to encourage collaboration on applications and avoid conflicting schedules.

Provide narrative description no more than one paragraph explaining the process or statement of policies.

13. Actively partners with regional economic development organizations and other communities.

Please list economic development organizations you have partnered with in the last year and the projects or activities in no more than one paragraph.

14. Works collaboratively with a diverse group of partners, reflecting the diversity of your community (race, ethnicity, gender, unique perspectives, etc.) that informs inclusive growth and equitable economic development.

Description of organizations town is partnered with or members of and an example of collaboration in no more than one paragraph.

15. Publishes a check list or flow chart demonstrating required permit submittals and it is sent to applicants with steps that must be completed in order to proceed.

Please provide a description or URL of checklist or flow chart and evidence of dissemination (e.g. website or sample communications).

16. Encourages applicants to conduct community and neighborhood meetings in advance of public hearings and provides relevant contacts or support.

Description of process and at least one example in no more than one paragraph.

17. Offers coordinated inspections if applicable; e.g. public safety and building inspector.

Evidence that this is an option available to applicants (emails, general correspondence, or notices of inspection).

18. Hosts interdepartmental staff meetings to address issues related to applications for building, zoning, or other related permits.

Narrative description, evidence of meeting attendance. No more than one paragraph.

Upload additional files supporting criteria above. Please label your files with the criteria number for reference.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY & STRATEGY

19. Has a point person dedicated to economic development who serves as coordinator/ombudsman for on-going communications and has relevant training or experience.

Evidence of point person designated or appointed and description of role. No more than one paragraph.

20. Has a mission statement for economic development that reflects the community's vision and values.

Provide a URL, screenshot or other information as to where the mission statement is published or has been distributed to the public.

21. Supports ongoing training/professional development for economic development and land use staff and commissioners (e.g. orientation and continuing education for new commission members).

Provide a short narrative describing recent training and professional development. No more than one paragraph.

22. Has completed a standardized economic development self-assessment and has a plan for continuous improvement.

Provide a PDF copy of the self-assessment summary or finalized results. If possible provide a URL where results may be accessed online. Otherwise please provide a one-page summary.

23. Asks applicants to provide feedback on the application process and uses feedback to make process improvements (customer satisfaction survey).

Provide URL link to survey tool, short narrative description of process and how results are being used.

24. Reviews zoning and land use regulations at minimum every five years for consistency, best practices in planning and economic development, alignment with the plan of conservation and development, economic inclusion, and vision for economic development.

Provide evidence that regulations are reviewed or updated and narrative describing what updates were made and how this incorporates feedback from businesses. No more than one paragraph.

25. Has an economic development strategic plan current within the past three years.

Provide the URL for the plan or 1-2 page PDF summary and narrative description of its use in shaping economic development policies.

26. Maintains an inventory of available properties.

Provide a URL if possible or screenshot of the current list of properties.

Upload additional files supporting criteria above. Please label your files with the criteria number for reference.

POLICIES & PROGRAMS

27. If the community has municipal incentive policies, they are posted on the community's website.

Provide URL.

28. Publishes design and signage guidelines or design review criteria.

Provide URL.

29. Has a formal Business Retention and Expansion plan/program. Formal programs are systematic approaches to business visits. These must include some strategy beyond occasional visits.

Describe the program goals, activity over the last year, and how it is conducted. Provide a PDF or URL if available.

30. Zoning codes provide reliability, predictability and transparency through tools such as form based zoning.

Provide evidence for use of form-based codes through URL link to codes or PDF.

31. Demonstrates movement towards administrative review.

Provide evidence through URL link to codes or PDF.

32. Engages women and minority-owned businesses to determine specific needs and direct them to specialized resources.

Provide URL or narrative description of evidence, no more than one paragraph.

33. Other innovative and creative ideas not previously accounted for in other criteria.

Upload additional files supporting criteria above. Please label your files with the criteria number for reference.

CEDAS Best Practices 2026

You may save your progress and continue later.

Uploading files: Some questions may require you to provide narrative and upload files. If you have additional files to upload, please do so in the file upload question at the end of each section. Multiple files may be uploaded. If files are uploaded at the end of each section, please be sure there is a reference in the file name to the criteria number.

More information about the program can be found here. Please review the 2026 Guidance Document before applying.

johnvincent@bhhsne.com [Switch account](#)



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*** Indicates required question**

Email *

Your email

Contact Person *

Your answer

Community/Town/City: *

Your answer



Title: *

Your answer

Telephone:

Your answer

Zip Code: *

Your answer

Community website:

Your answer

Additional Team Members: Names, Title, Email Address: *

Your answer

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