

Department of Environmental Conservation

Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program

Q. Can a non-profit apply for a CSC Grant?

A. No, a non-profit is not an eligible applicant. However, the non-profit may join with a municipality to complete a project. The municipality would be the applicant, sign the contract with the state, and receive the grant funds.

Q. Can the grant cover solar panels that will be placed on a building to upgrade it as a cooling center?

A. No, solar panels are not an eligible expense under the CSC grant program; this program covers non-power sector emission sources. However, other components of the building conversion may be eligible, such as upgrading to a more efficient air conditioning system that uses an alternative refrigerant that is less harmful to the climate.

Q. Does the grant include the purchasing of electric vehicle(s)?

A. No, rebates for purchase or lease of electric vehicles are available through the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Rebate Program. The second round of the ZEV Rebate Program closed on May 31, 2018. The third round is expected to open in summer 2018. Check the grants announcement page regularly for announcements:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/109181.html>

Q. Does the project have to show the breakdown of how the grant will be utilized?

A. Yes, the application must describe the project in detail, list all tasks, cost per task, a budget summary, and the breakdown of local match funds vs. state grant funds. Templates for work plans and budgets can be found on the Climate Smart Communities Grant page at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/109181.html>. Scroll down to the Project Work Plan/Budget section to access the links to the work plan and budget templates.

Q. Is volunteer time, such as serving on sustainability committees or climate smart task forces, an appropriate use for local match for the CSC Grants Program? If so what is the acceptable hourly volunteer rate?

A. Yes, volunteer time is an eligible form of local match. For “general work” the industry standard is to use <https://www.independentsector.org/resource/the-value-of-volunteer->

time. However, if an individual with a specific skill set, such as legal or engineering, were to apply that skill set to your project and offer those services in-kind to the project, their time may be valued at the standard professional billing rate. Volunteer hours, both general and professional, should clearly correspond to specific tasks within the work plan and be properly tracked and catalogued in a time sheet format (date, time, task performed, signature, etc.).

Q. Please clarify what the required climate change mitigation easement is intended to ensure.

A. If the municipality does not own the property where the grant funded project will take place, the Climate Change Mitigation Easement will be required for a period of no less ten years or the anticipated life of the project. The easement will guarantee 1) that the property will provide the funded public benefit; 2) the property will be accessible to the municipality for the purpose of erecting and maintaining the funded use; 3) the property will be used to achieve climate protection and mitigation goals pursuant to Environmental Conservation Law Article 54 Title 15, Climate Smart Community Projects; and 4) the property will provide data and information to the municipality as specified in the grant contract or will grant the municipality access to the property on a regular basis to collect said data.

Q. Are applicants required to become certified under the CSC program to be eligible for funding?

A. No, applicants are not required to be a Certified Climate Smart Community to apply for funding; however, Climate Smart Communities do have a slight advantage in the scoring of applications.

If a municipality received CSC awards in the last round is the municipality precluded from applying in the current round?

No, the municipality may apply again as long as the application is for a new project or a later phase of a previously awarded project.

Q. Would the development of a specialized flood warning system and evacuation plan, as well as a plan for how to address a failure in a flood prevention system, be considered as suitable for application under the Implementation category or the Certification category?

A. Generally, planning and assessment activities are eligible for funding under the Certification category if they are consistent with the 16 certification actions listed as eligible in the current RFP (2018). Flood-risk reduction programs are eligible for funding under the Implementation category.

Q. If a previously certified Climate Smart Community were to successfully apply and receive a grant for an implementation project, either adaptation or mitigation, will it meet any ongoing certification requirements?

A. Implementation projects benefit a certified community by allowing it to complete additional actions that could gain the community points in the certification process and lead to certification at a higher level (bronze or silver). Status as Certified CSC expires after 5 years; the process for re-certification is similar to the one for becoming certified the first time. The local government must reapply for points to maintain its status as a Certified CSC. Some actions (most policy-type actions) do not have a timeframe, but some actions do expire and must be re-done in order to earn points (or other actions must be done to get enough points and meet the requirements to re-certify). The only way to earn points is to upload documentation of specific actions to the Climate Smart Community Portal <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/>. Just completing an implementation project (or other type of project) is not sufficient.

Q. Where can I find information about the CSC Program?

A. The CSC Grant website is <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/109181.html>; information on the CSC Program is at <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/>.

Q. Where can I find the application for the CSC Grant?

A. To apply for the CSC Grant Program one must complete the Consolidated Funding Application, often referred to as the CFA. Several other state agencies offer grant funding opportunities through the CFA. The web page for the CFA is <https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/>. An account log-on and password are required.