Empire State Development

Mohawk Valley – Rooted in the Mohawk Valley Program Guidelines

State of New York

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Empire State Development

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I. Overview

As part of the 2025 Regional Economic Development Council ("REDC") Initiative's ACHIEVE competition, the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council (MVREDC) submitted a proposal entitled "Rooted in the Mohawk Valley" ("Rooted in the Mohawk Valley" or the "Proposal"). The proposal, which was awarded $32 million in ACHIEVE funding on December 23, 2025, is a six-county regional initiative designed to implement shovel-ready agribusiness and/or tourism projects across the Mohawk Valley.

Rooted in the Mohawk Valley seeks to establish the region as a model for rural resilience, regenerative enterprise, and community reinvestment. The Mohawk Valley is a tourism powerhouse and destination unlike any other. This initiative builds on these strengths to advance two of the region's strategic priorities to support agribusiness and tourism projects to fuel growth and implement regional priorities. Rooted in the Mohawk Valley emerges from an extensive implementation planning process led by the MVREDC and shaped through listening, collaboration, consensus building, and alignment with the region's 2023 Strategic Plan.

Through conversations with regional stakeholders and community members, over 100 public, private, not-for-profit, and academic partners were engaged, and it was through this process that the following transformational priorities emerged to support Rooted in the Mohawk Valley:

Impact at Scale | Pride of Place | Sustainable Innovation | Partnership Power

In the Mohawk Valley, transformation means renewing what's historic, reimagining what's possible, and rebuilding communities with care and intention. It's about creating a closed-loop economy where agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and workforce development reinforce one another to create long-term prosperity. Over the past decade, the Mohawk Valley has transformed into a model for rural regeneration, where innovation meets inclusion and growth comes from the ground up.

With a focus on our strategic priorities of agribusiness and tourism, these principles became the foundation of Rooted in the Mohawk Valley and how projects will be evaluated for funding to implement these priorities.These guidelines governor how the three anchor projects and 14 supporting projects identified by the ACHIEVE Proposal can apply for the available funding.

II. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility is **strictly limited** to project sponsors/projects already identified in the Mohawk Valley's 2025 ACHIEVE Proposal (including Anchor, Supporting, and Pipeline projects). Regardless of applicant type, the proposed project must meet the following requirements:

1. Projects must advance the Mohawk Valley REDC's Strategic Priorities of agribusiness and/or tourism;
2. Further the Mohawk Valley REDC's Strategic Vision;
3. Be led by a project sponsor;
4. Be located in the Mohawk Valley; and
5. Be transformational, as determined in ESD's sole discretion.

Eligible Applicants include but are not limited to for-profit businesses, not-for-profit corporations[1], local development corporations, public benefit corporations (including industrial development agencies), economic development organizations, research and academic institutions, incubators, municipalities, counties, tourist attractions and community facilities, cities, towns, and villages. City, town, and village applicants must be certified by NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) as a pro-housing community prior to receiving an award.

The applicant must either have ownership and/or control of the project site or provide written consent from the ownership entity. Applicants must complete and submit a Consolidated Funding Application for review by ESD and the MVREDC. All applicants are strongly encouraged to reach out to the Mohawk Valley Regional Office to discuss their project prior to submitting an application. Contact the Mohawk Valley Regional Office of ESD at nys-mohawkval@esd.ny.gov or 315-793-2366.

Projects that are not identified in the Rooted in the Mohawk Valley Proposal are not eligible to apply for this program. ESD is committed to supporting the goals of the Proposal more broadly, however, and funding may be available for other projects that are aligned with the goals of the Proposal through programs included in the REDC initiative. Interested applicants are encouraged to reach out to the Mohawk Valley Regional Office at nys-mohawkval@esd.ny.gov or 315-793-2366 to discuss their project and potential program opportunities.

III. Eligible Projects and Uses of Funds

Funding must be used for agribusiness/tourism-related projects that directly advance the Rooted in the Mohawk Valley Implementation Plan. This initiative provides **$32 million** in total funding to implement the capital and working capital projects identified in the Mohawk Valley's 2025 ACHIEVE Proposal.
Eligible uses include:

- Acquisition of land, buildings, machinery and/or equipment;
- New construction, renovation or leasehold improvements;
- Acquisition of furniture and fixtures;
- Commercial portion of mixed use projects;
- Soft costs of up to twenty-five percent (25%) of total project costs;
- Revolving Loan Funds
- Training; and
- Other costs / expenditures deemed eligible by ESD.

IV. Ineligible Projects and/or Costs

The following types of expenses are not eligible for reimbursement by grant funds and should not be included in the project budget:

- Projects not identified in the Mohawk Valley's 2025 ACHIEVE Proposal;
- Costs associated with completing an application;
- Residential costs;
- In-kind expenses;
- Costs incurred prior to the submission and award of a grant, actual or anticipated; and
- Other costs / expenditures deemed ineligible by ESD.

V. Project Selection Criteria

A subcommittee from the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council will serve as the advisory committee and work with Empire State Development to help recommend funding for implementation-ready projects to ensure the success of the Rooted in the Mohawk Valley initiative. The subcommittee will review projects for alignment with Rooted in the Mohawk Valley's strategic priorities, potential for transformational impact, and state and regional evaluation criteria, and will coordinate regular updates to the Mohawk Valley Regional Council on the progress of the initiative. Proposals will be evaluated based on their ability to:

- Advance one or more of the Mohawk Valley's strategic goals for tourism and/or agribusiness;
- Align with the Mohawk Valley REDC's vision;
- Attract population, increase visitors, and/or retain existing residents;
- Celebrate and enhance local assets and spark community pride;
- Leverage funding from non-program funding sources;
- Demonstrate local government and/or community support
- Support existing businesses and/or cultivate entrepreneurial innovation;
- Demonstrate feasibility ready to commence within 24 months of the award with priority given to projects ready to commence within 12 months of award;
- Demonstrate alignment with the New York State Smart Growth Program Principles; and

- Provide additional co-benefits that positively impact the Mohawk Valley region and New York State.

VI. Grant Amounts

The amount of a capital grant award from ESD is based on several factors including, but not limited to, the development of agribusiness innovation, advanced food systems, and high-impact tourism destinations For-profit applicants are eligible for up to 40% of the eligible total project cost. Not-for-profit applicants are eligible for up to 60% of the eligible total project cost. Municipal projects are eligible for up to 80% of the eligible total project costs. While residential costs are not eligible for funding, ESD may consider the overall mixed-use residential development project and economic development impacts in determining the grant amount.

Applicants should apply for the necessary amount of funding needed to incentivize the project to occur and request the amount of funding needed to complete their project versus the maximum amount the project may be eligible for. The likelihood of receiving an award improves as the percentage of ESD assistance is reduced and private investment or other sources are better leveraged. A strong emphasis will be placed on project readiness along with the applicant having the capacity to complete the project if awarded. Exceptions to funding limits may be considered at the sole discretion of ESD based on project merits that demonstrate extraordinary regional or statewide impact.

FUNDING AVAILABLE:
• Up to $32,000,000 will be made available;
• The minimum request/award is $100,000

EQUITY REQUIREMENTS:
ESD requires that the Applicant contribute a minimum of ten percent (10%) of the total project cost in the form of equity contributed after the Applicant's acceptance of ESD's incentive proposal. Equity is defined as cash injected into the project by the Applicant or by investors and should be auditable through the Applicant's financial statements or accounts, if requested by ESD. Equity cannot be borrowed money secured by the assets in the project or grants from a government source.

VII. Program Timeline

- Program Launch: **Wednesday, May 20**
- Final Application Due Date: **Monday, June 22 at 4:30 P.M. sharp.**

VIII. Documentation Requirements

All applications must be complete, true, and accurate. Incomplete applications will not be considered. However, ESD, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to accept amendments and additions to applications.

At a minimum, the following documents must be included with the application:

- Project proposal;
- Project sponsor(s);
- Project timeline;
- Project budget and description/commitment status of all associated funding sources; and
- Letter of matching fund commitment(s).

VIX. Scoring and Project Review / Evaluation / Funds Disbursement

ESD will review all eligible applications and will provide any award notifications. Project expenses that are incurred prior to the date of an ESD award will not be eligible for reimbursement and could result in the project being deemed ineligible.

Pursuant to New York State Executive Law Articles 15-A and Article 3 of New York State Veterans' Services Law, ESD recognizes its obligation under the law to promote opportunities for maximum feasible participation of certified minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBEs) and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses (SDVOBs) in the performance of ESD projects. The Recipient shall be required to use Good Faith Efforts (pursuant to 5 NYCRR §142.8 and 9 NYCRR § 252.2(m) to achieve MWBE and SDVOB Participation. In addition, ESD's MWBE and SDVOB Participation/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy will apply to this program. Specific goals related to the total value of ESD's funding will be established on a grant-by grant basis.

ESD has an agency-wide goal of 30% for MWBE participation, 15% for New York State-certified Minority-owned Business Enterprise ("MBE") participation and 15% for New York State-certified Women-owned Business Enterprise ("WBE") participation (based on the current availability of MBEs and WBEs). ESD has an agency-wide goal of 6% for SDVOB participation, based on the current availability of qualified SDVOBs.

An ESD award notification will outline the terms and conditions of the award and will include MWBE and SDVOB participation goals. The Office of Contractor and Supplier Diversity ("OCSD") will monitor MWBE and SDVOB utilization in connection with this project.

Following ESD board approval, the applicant will receive a Grant Disbursement Agreement outlining disbursement conditions.

X. Award Criteria Details

- If the implementation of a project fails to proceed as planned, and there is, in the exclusive judgment of ESD, doubt as to its viability, ESD reserves the right to cancel its funding commitment to such project. ESD reserves the right to require any additional information and/or documentation ESD deems necessary and

terminate the project at any point if the applicant fails to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

- Expenses incurred prior to the award and announcement of a CFA grant are not eligible, and as such cannot be included in CFA project budgets.
- The essential terms for the assistance are included in the incentive proposal. Although funding is offered prior to project commencement as an inducement to undertake the project, funds are disbursed in arrears, as reimbursement for eligible project expenditures. No financial payment of the grant will be made upfront. The grantee should be prepared to subsidize the project for up to 12 months during the process for requesting and receiving payments.
- In accordance with State law, after approval by the ESD Directors, a public hearing will be required if the project involves the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, alteration, or improvement of any property. ESD will schedule a public hearing in accordance with the New York State Urban Development Corporation Act ("UDC Act") and will take such further action as may be required by the UDC Act and other applicable law and regulations. The ESD Directors must reconsider the matter if any negative testimony is received at the public hearing. (Generally, this hearing occurs the month after the Directors' initial approval). Approval by the Public Authorities Control Board ("PACB"), New York State Comptroller ("OSC") and the New York State Attorney General ("AG") may then be required. Following approval by the ESD Directors and PACB, OSC and AG approval, if required, the documents for processing the grant award will be prepared by ESD.
- All required public approvals must be in place prior to the start of construction and approval by the ESD Directors, including but not limited to completion of environmental review in accordance with the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) and consultation with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation Historic Preservation's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in accordance with Section 14.09 of the New York State Historic Preservation Act, if applicable. Physical work on an ESD-funded project may not start prior to the completion of any necessary environmental review and SHPO consultation.
- The State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act of 2010 requires that public infrastructure projects approved, undertaken, supported or financed by a State Infrastructure Agency, which includes ESD, to the extent practicable, are consistent with relevant Smart Growth Criteria specified in the law. Projects that involve ESD approval of funding for public infrastructure (e.g., publicly-supported roads, bridges, streetscapes, other transportation systems, drinking water, sewers, drainage systems, and utilities) will require the completion of a Smart Growth Impact Statement prior to approval of funding.
- A $250 Application Fee, payable when an award is documented in an incentive proposal, and a one percent (1%) non-reimbursable commitment fee based on the grant amount awarded, will be assessed to all awardees. In addition, the

awardee will reimburse ESD for any direct expenses incurred in connection with this project, including costs related to holding a public hearing.

- Grant funds originally awarded to projects that have since been cancelled or terminated will be repurposed for economic development projects by ESD at its discretion.

Contact Information: For more information, please contact ESD Mohawk Valley Regional Office at: nys-mohawkval@esd.ny.gov or 315-793-2366.