

North Country Regional Economic Development Council

Synopsis of Regional Council and NYS Consolidated Funding Applications

In 2011, Governor Cuomo created 10 regional councils to develop long-term strategic plans for economic growth for their regions. The North Country Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC) encompasses Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties. Composed of 36 members from business, academia, state and local government and non-government organizations and co-chaired by Clarkson University President Tony Collins and North Country Chamber of Commerce President Garry Douglas, the council utilizes a bottom up approach to establish a unified vision, priorities and projects for public-private investment and economic development activities in the seven northern counties.

Following is a summary of key information for funding opportunities and the process for applying for funding through NYS and the NCREDC.

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council and Process: The NCREDC encourages any organization with a proposed project that can positively impact the North Country economy to apply for NYS funding. The Council also specifically seeks out projects that align with its vision. This is done through the CFA process (explained below). Private businesses, not-for-profit organizations and local governments can all apply for the various types of public funding available.

- **Priority Projects:** Through the annual regional council process, the NCREDC nominates certain projects for consideration as “Priority Projects” for funding from NYS. These projects should be significant and regionally transformative in nature and have significant positive economic impact in the seven counties. Those designated as priority projects will receive the full 20 points from the regional council. The regional council scores all projects up to 20 points, while the state agency(ies) to which the applicant applied score the remaining 80 points based on program guidelines. While many important projects submitted for consideration will not merit “priority project” status by the council, applicants should continue seeking funding for projects through the CFA process.
- **NCREDC “Pipeline”:** The North Country Regional Economic Development Council wants to know about projects and initiatives in various stages of development that can help the seven-county region with the implementation of the Council’s strategic plan. Once in the pipeline, the project is on the radar screen for the region and the state and a future application will be anticipated when the project is ready. To be included on the pipeline, speak with your county’s IDA.
- **NCREDC website:** The Council’s website, <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/content/north-country>, has important information for applicants. Reviewing the NCREDC’s 2011 Plan and yearly updates will help guide an applicant. A project that fits in with the vision statements and key strategies outlined on pages 24 and 34 – 56 of the 2011 Plan (“Transformational”) will have the most success. Making a connection between a project and these visions and strategies will show the NCREDC and NYS that the project fits in with the overall goal of the region and can be supported in the bottom up approach.

Consolidated Funding Application Process: As part of Governor Cuomo's transformative plan to improve the state's economic development model, the NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process was created to streamline and expedite the grant application process. Thirteen state agencies distribute approximately \$750 million in state funding for economic development projects as well as a variety of other community, tourism, infrastructure, recreation and other types of projects through the CFA process.

- The NYS Regional Council website, <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/>, has great resources to guide applicants. The links to the CFA Application Manual and CFA Resources are very important. Also reviewing the Regional Economic Development Awards booklets for successful projects in previous years can be a very good tool. Previous awards can be found online at <http://www.nyscfaprojectdata.ny.gov/>
- Any type of organization can apply for funding through the CFA process. The on-line application form guides the applicant through the various funding sources. It is important to understand the funding sources since several of these agencies have funds that are more appropriate for specific applicants and/or projects.
- Prior to the due date for applications, NYS and the NCREDC will hold multiple informational meetings to explain the application process, provide guidance to applicants, and answer questions. Check either the CFA or NCREDC websites for specific information on these sessions.

Successful Applicants

As noted, most organizations are eligible for NYS funding. It is important to understand the various sources of state agency funds and your type of project.

- Private businesses most likely will focus on an economic development funding that is based on creating or retaining jobs and growing business in NYS. These entities should consider contacting their county Industrial Development Agency, economic development office, or the Empire State Development for assistance in an application or defining the project. Other projects could possibly be oriented to energy efficiency or workforce training.
- Municipal organizations can consider a project for infrastructure, parks and recreation, housing, main street development, etc. Smaller towns and villages can seek assistance from the state agency that funds the program, from their county planning and development office or from other organizations that have grant writing and project management experience.
- Not-for-profit organizations might be able to apply for funds for a capital project at a community facility, historic site, recreational site, or a variety of other possibilities. Many small not-for-profit organizations could be challenged by the application and funding process for NYS grants. Seeking assistance from a larger municipality's planning office, a state agency, or from a larger not-for-profit organization (for example: Adirondack North Country Association, Development Authority of the North Country, Tug Hill Commission, a chamber of commerce, or regional foundation) can be a key to success for both the application and the implementation of the state grant. Partnering with others on regional projects increases funding success.

There are important considerations in applying for NYS grant funds.

- NYS funding is usually only a small portion of the project financing. An applicant should expect to acquire approximately 90 percent of the financing needed for the project, and a potential grant from NYS could cover the remaining 10%. In some circumstances, the state funding could be higher.
- A first step is to develop a well-defined project, a short project summary, a detailed budget, and an estimated time frame. Letters of support from multiple sectors with substantive contributions and understanding of the project can also benefit the application.
- The process for approval and contracting with NYS can take time. The project cannot be substantially initiated before this process occurs. It can take six months or more from the approval date and application before the applicant can begin action on their project. This should be considered in planning.
- NYS funding is most often disbursed in arrears. The applicant must complete the project and spend its own funds and then request reimbursement from NYS. Thus short-term financing is critical to project success. An applicant cannot expect that NYS will provide funding up front to get the project moving.

For more information, or if you have any questions, please visit <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov>, <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/content/north-country>, or call Empire State Development at 315-785-7907 or 518-561-5642.