

# Direct Assistance to Businesses and Other Organizations

## **Empire State Development Grant Funds**

**Funding Available: Up to \$150 million**

### **DESCRIPTION:**

ESD has \$150 million of capital grant funding from the Regional Council Capital Fund available for the State's Regional Economic Development Council Initiative, which helps drive regional and local economic development across New York State in cooperation with ten Regional Economic Development Councils ("Regional Councils").

Capital grant funding is available for capital-based economic development projects intended to create or retain jobs; prevent, reduce or eliminate unemployment and underemployment; and/or increase business or economic activity in a community or Region.

Grant funding will be allocated among the ten regions, each represented by a Regional Council, based on each Regional Council's development and implementation of a five-year strategic plan that sets out a comprehensive vision for economic development and specific strategies to implement that vision. Funding will be allocated to projects, including priority projects identified by the Regional Councils, identified as significant, regionally supported and capable of stimulating economic investment.

In addition, special consideration shall be given to projects supporting Regional Economic Development Council Opportunity Agenda priorities, Global NY projects, Veterans' Related Projects and projects identified in the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program recovery plans.

Funding will be awarded by the New York State Urban Development Corporation (d/b/a Empire State Development) at its discretion.

### **ELIGIBLE TYPES OF APPLICANTS:**

Eligible Applicants include but are not limited to: for-profit businesses, not-for-profit corporations\*, business improvement districts, local development corporations, public benefit corporations (including industrial development agencies), economic development organizations, research and academic institutions, incubators, technology parks, municipalities, counties, regional planning councils, tourist attractions and community facilities.

\* If awarded funding, prior to ESD Directors' approval and execution of a contract with ESD, a not-for-profit corporation must be registered and up-to-date with filings with the New York State Office of the Attorney General's Charities Bureau and the New York State Office of the State Comptroller's VendRep System and must be prequalified in the New York State Grants Gateway.

### **ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES / PROGRAM BENEFIT REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicants applying for ESD Grant Funds should clearly describe the scope and budget for the "project" for which funds are being requested. For example, an Applicant may be planning a larger project that would include multiple phases, such as in the case of a major infrastructure project or redevelopment of a specific geographic area. However, the "project" for which funds are being requested via the CFA might consist of only one phase of the larger project. In such situations, the request for ESD Grant funds should be specific to the phase, NOT the overall multi-phase project.

## **Assistance generally falls into three categories:**

### **1. Business Investment:**

Business investments are capital expenditures that facilitate an employer's ability to create new jobs in New York State or to retain jobs that are otherwise in jeopardy. Five-year job commitments will be required of all award recipients because it is by underwriting these job commitments that ESD is best able to forecast the economic benefits of providing assistance to any particular project. Applicants will therefore be required to commit to the number of jobs at risk (of relocation or loss) that will be retained by the proposed project, the number of net new full-time jobs that will be created by the project, and the average salaries of each. Failure to achieve or maintain these employment commitments will subject a funding recipient to potential recapture of assistance.

### **2. Infrastructure Investment:**

Funds may be used to finance infrastructure investments in order to attract new businesses and expand existing businesses, thereby fostering further investment. Infrastructure investments are capital expenditures for infrastructure including transportation, parking garages, water and sewer, communication, and energy generation and distribution. Infrastructure Investment projects may also include planning or feasibility studies relating to a specific capital project or site.

Infrastructure investment projects that are able to provide job commitments will be viewed favorably. It is important, however, to note that (1) few infrastructure investment projects are anticipated to be able to provide job commitments and (2) if the employer will be an entity other than the Applicant, a third party guarantee of the Applicant's job commitment must be provided by the prospective employer and both the prospective employer and the third party guarantor must be found by ESD to be creditworthy.

### **3. Economic Growth Investment:**

An Economic Growth Investment initiative fosters economic growth through cultural activity, higher education activity, regional revolving loan and grant programs, agribusiness initiatives, other local or regional initiatives, planning or feasibility studies relating to a specific capital project or site, improvements to facilities in highly distressed areas, commercial revitalization activities in central business districts or commercial strips, or other types of projects that may not have direct job creation goals. Economic Growth Investment projects that are able to provide direct job commitments will be viewed favorably.

## **FUNDS MAY BE USED FOR:**

- Acquisition of land, buildings, machinery and/or equipment;
- Demolition and environmental remediation;
- New construction, renovation or leasehold improvements;
- Acquisition of furniture and fixtures;
- Soft costs of up to twenty-five percent (25%) of total project costs; and
- Planning and feasibility studies related to a specific capital project or site.

## **INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES:**

The following types of expenses may be included in budgets but shall not be eligible for reimbursement by grant funds:

- Developer fees;
- Training; and
- Residential development, although program funds may be used for the commercial component of a mixed-use project.

**PRE-APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicants must complete and submit a Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) for review by ESD and the Regional Council for the region in which the proposed project is located.

**SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS:**

Because awards are offered as an incentive to undertake a project, the project should not begin, and expenses should not be incurred, before funding awards have been announced. Expenses incurred prior to submission of a CFA should not be included in CFA project budgets, nor should expenses that will be incurred after submission of a CFA but prior to an award announcement.

ESD generally seeks to provide no more than twenty percent (20%) of the financing for any particular project.

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 so requested by ESD. Equity cannot be borrowed money secured by the assets in the project or grants from a government source.

The Applicant must always disclose whether it is pursuing or intends to pursue multiple ESD funding sources, including grants, loans and tax incentives.

**SELECTION CRITERIA:**

In addition to the criteria noted below, ESD shall have the discretion to consider additional factors in determining the relative merits of projects.

**Vision and Regional Economic Development Strategies:**

- The overall economic impact that the project identified in the application will have on a region, including, but not limited to, the number and impact of any direct or indirect jobs that will be created;
- The number of new jobs created and/or at-risk jobs that will be retained;
- The amount of capital investment and the level of increased economic activity from the proposed capital investment; and
- The likelihood that the project identified in the application would be located outside of New York State or would not occur in New York State but for the availability of state or local incentives.

**Public/Stakeholders:**

- Whether the project has demonstrated support from local government and private sector leaders in the locality and the region where the project will be located;
- Whether the project will have a significant regional impact or is likely to increase the subject community's economic and social viability and vitality; and
- The degree of economic distress in the area where the Applicant will locate the project identified in its application, including downtown revitalization and brownfield areas.

**Implementation:**

- The degree of project readiness and likelihood of completion, including, where applicable for real estate development projects, if there are identified tenants for a completed project; and
- The degree of the Applicant's financial viability and strength of financials/operating history/ESD credit score.

**Leveraged Resources:**

- The amount of private financing leveraged; and
- The amount of public financing leveraged.

**Performance Measures:**

- The estimated return on investment that the project identified in the application will provide to New York State;
- For downtown areas, whether or not the project concerns the preservation of the architectural character of a building or neighborhood;
- Whether, where applicable, there are identified tenants for a completed project;
- The degree to which the project supports the principals of smart growth, energy-efficiency (including but not limited to, the reduction of greenhouse gas and emissions and the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design [LEED] green building rating system for the project identified in its application), and sustainable development; and
- The degree to which the project identified in the application supports New York state minority and women business enterprises.

**Significant Statewide Programs:**

- Proposed projects that are part of the following initiatives will be looked upon favorably:

NY Rising Related Projects: The NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program is a community driven initiative that empowers localities severely damaged by Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, or Tropical Storm Lee to develop comprehensive and innovative recovery plans. Projects identified in the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program recovery plans consist of innovative, transformative projects and actions, enhance resilience and economic development. For more information, please visit: <http://stormrecovery.ny.gov/community-reconstruction-program>

Opportunity Agenda Related Projects: Each Regional Council may develop region-wide strategies, or may focus its efforts by designating one or more chronically distressed community as an "Opportunity Area." Projects seeking to apply CFA funds for the purpose of eliminating barriers to skilled employment in your region, as identified by the Opportunity Agenda and Strategic Plan, should provide evidence as such in their application.

Global NY Projects: The Global NY initiative accomplishes two complementary economic growth objectives - attract international investment and jobs to Upstate New York and provide New York businesses with the tools and assistance they need to export their products to the global marketplace. Applicants that link project proposals to the Global NY strategies identified by the Regional Council will be looked upon favorably.

Veterans' Related Projects: New York State is home to more than 900,000 veterans, 72 percent of whom served in combat. In 2014 the REDCs were asked to create a Veterans Work Group to promote participation by Veterans in the CFA, and develop strategies to encourage other potential CFA applicants to include workforce goals related to Veteran's employment. This is part of a comprehensive approach to improving services to the veterans and military families in New York. Applicants that link project proposals to the Veteran's Initiative strategies identified by the Regional Councils will be looked upon favorably.

## AWARD CRITERIA DETAILS:

- Notice of a funding award will be given in the form of an incentive proposal outlining the terms of the proposed assistance. The award is subject to approval of the ESD Directors and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Project funding may only be used for expenses incurred after the date that notice of the funding award is given. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review and countersign ESD's incentive proposal prior to starting the project.
- All Applicants will be requested to certify and agree that any decrease in the scope of work described in the Applicant's final CFA submission including, but not limited to, total project costs, jobs retained, and jobs created, may result in ESD's reduction of the award, in ESD's sole discretion, in an amount proportionate to any such decrease.
- All Applicants will be requested to certify and agree that any expansion of the scope of work described in the Applicant's final CFA submission including, but not limited to, total project costs, jobs retained, and jobs created, will not result in the increase of the award by ESD.
- The essential terms for the disbursement of 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.
- For Business Investment projects, partial funding is disbursed upon project completion and interim job creation/retention milestones, with additional funding disbursed upon achievement of job creation/retention milestones. For Infrastructure Investment and Economic Growth Investment projects, funding typically is disbursed upon project completion.
- Projects generally are presented to the ESD Directors once all project expenditures have been undertaken and disbursement of ESD assistance is sought.
- All required public approvals must be in place prior to the start of construction and approval by the ESD Directors, including State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, if applicable.
- For projects with job creation and/or retention, job numbers will be verified using the employer's NY-45 and NY-45 ATT and/or payroll reports prior to disbursement of funds and annually thereafter through the required reporting period.
- In accordance with the requirements of Article 15-A of the New York State Executive Law: Participation By Minority Group Members and Women With Respect To State Contracts by providing opportunities for MBE/WBE participation, projects awarded funding shall be reviewed by ESD's Office of Contractor and Supplier Diversity, which will set business and participation goals for minorities and women. Such goals shall typically be included in the incentive proposal.

Please note that ESD's agency-wide MWBE utilization goal is 30%. Each project will be assigned an individual contract-specific goal, which may be higher or lower than 30%. Should an Applicant receive a funding award, the Applicant shall be required to use good faith efforts to achieve the prescribed MWBE goals assigned to this project. Applicants must maintain such records and take such actions necessary to demonstrate such compliance.

- 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. Notwithstanding the process outlined above, no project shall be funded if sufficient resources are not received by ESD for such project.

- A \$250 Application Fee, payable when funding 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. The commitment fee will be due when the Applicant executes documents required for processing the award, after approval by the ESD Directors. The Applicant will be obligated to pay for out-of-pocket expenses incurred by ESD in connection with the project, including, but not limited to, expenses related to attorney fees, appraisals, surveys, title insurance, credit searches, filing fees, public hearing expenses and other requirements deemed appropriate by ESD.
- Projects having a hotel as a principal function will be required to demonstrate compliance with Section 2879-b of Public Authorities Law regarding labor peace if funding is awarded. Public Authorities Law Section 2879-b prohibits public authorities from providing financing for any project that includes, as one of the principal functions, a hotel with more than fifteen employees unless a labor peace agreement ("LPA") is entered into with a labor organization representing hotel or convention center employees in the State, for a period of at least five years. An LPA is an agreement between the project developer (or its contractors) and a labor organization prohibiting the labor organization and its members from engaging in labor activities that disrupt the hotel's operations.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

For more information, eligible Applicants should contact the local Empire State Development Regional Office. A complete list of the ESD Regional Offices can be found at

<http://esd.ny.gov/RegionalOverviews.html>