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Adirondack Park and Catskill Park Community Smart Growth Grants

Round 7
Information Session Webinar

November 14, 2023

Presenters: Dylan Walrath, NYS DEC Division of Lands & Forests
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Smart Growth in the Adirondack Park and Catskill Park

"The Adirondack and Catskill parks are more than vacation spots with vast mountainous and scenic regions of protected lands. The parks are composed of public parklands and private property, with more than 100,000 permanent residents and more than 100 municipal governments and hamlets. Smart growth projects enable the communities in the parks to capitalize on their unique natural settings to improve economic vitality, reinforce the assets of villages and hamlets, and help preserve their heritage."   **DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos**.

Grant Overview

Environmental Protection Fund: Approximately $6.8 million since 2007/08.

• $1.9 million in the Catskill Park; and

• $4.9 million in the Adirondack Park.

Grants support the priorities and initiatives identified by local communities.

Partnership with NYS Department of State and Adirondack Park Agency – broad review team.

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Purpose of this Webinar

- Describe funding amounts, eligibility requirements, and project types

- Detail application questions, scoring criteria and post-award requirements

- Answer detailed questions

Speculator Village Park

Round 7 Timeline

- New grantee organizations are required to register/sign up for Grants Gateway by December 15.

- Application Deadline is Wednesday, January 31, 2024 at 3:00 PM.

- Questions due by COB Wednesday, January 24, 2024.

- Awards Announced by (anticipated): March/April 2024.

- Contract start dates: May 2024.

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Questions & Answers

- Email questions to: landsforests@dec.ny.gov.
- Include "Smart Growth Grant Program" in the subject line of the email.
- Answers will be provided directly and aggregated for upload to the Grants Gateway weekly.

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Eligible Applicants

- Municipalities (County, Town, Village) located wholly or partially within the Park.

- Not-For-Profit Organizations*; any (501(c)3 or an environmental/development dedicated 501(c)4, provided that not-for-profit applicants must have the support of at least one eligible municipal project partner, substantiated by a letter of support.

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Eligible Project Location/Area

- Adirondack Park: project must be located within the Blue Line.

- Catskill Park: project must be located within a Catskill Park Town.

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Minimum / Maximum Amounts

- $25,000 to $125,000 standard request.
- Up to $300,000 for Transformative Projects:
  - Higher funding cap.
  - Higher award scoring threshold.

Round 7 Highlights

- $3.7 million total:
  - o Adirondack Park: $2.7 million; and
  - o Catskill Park: $1 million.

- Comprehensive Plans - separate scoring rubric to support comprehensive plan applications.

- Points for focus on affordable housing.

Funding Restrictions

- Note, there is a cap on the total funding that can be awarded directly to all not-for-profit corporations applying.

- Only 18.378% of total funding this round is available for not-for-profit corporations as lead applicant. Approximately $496,206 within the Adirondack Park and $183,783 within the Catskill Park is available for not-for-profit corporations as lead applicant.

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Partnerships

- Not-for-profit applicants are **strongly encouraged** to seek project partnerships with their local municipality in which the municipality is the lead applicant.

- Reimbursement will flow to municipality as lead applicant. Munis are not allowed to receive advance payments except for construction projects.

- All not-for-profit lead applicants must obtain a letter of support from an eligible municipality. This is an eligibility requirement to make sure that the proposals are consistent with local comprehensive plans and supported by the local government.

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Program Goals

- Community development, positive Impacts – Quality of life and social impact, tourism, economic impact, moving on previous planning and strategy.

- Supporting main streets in villages, hamlets and town centers, including streetscapes, bicycle and pedestrian access.

- Encouraging mixed use and adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings and sites.

- Enhancing community housing availability.

- Improving waterfront access and facilities.

Example of a plan for hamlet-connected recreation
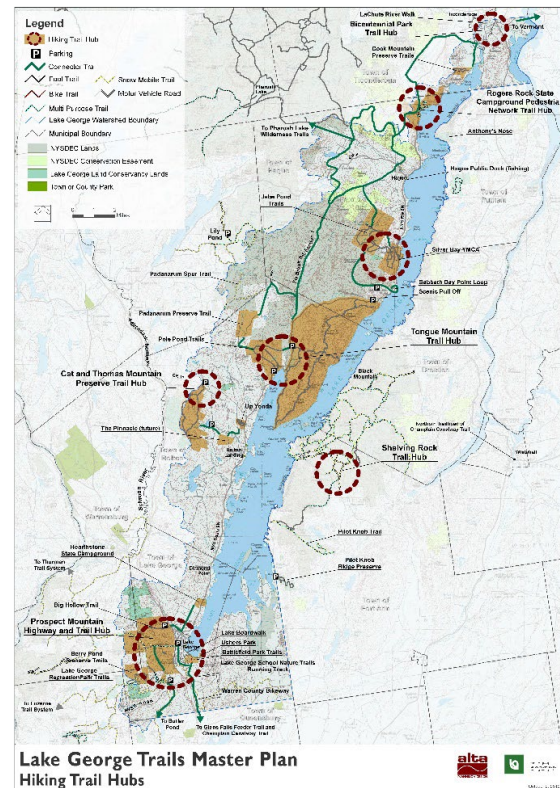
Program Goals Continued

- Ensuring environmental resource protection, including watersheds, habitat, and wetlands.

- Enhancing recreation sites and public access, including parks, trails, greenways or blueways.

- Protecting and improving scenic resources including viewsheds and scenic byways.

- Protecting and managing open space, farmland and working forests.

- Promoting and supporting resource-, recreation-, ecological- and heritage-based tourism.

- Providing park-based education & interpretive systems.

- Building local capacity to engage in community development.

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Project Types

- These are general descriptive categories, not scoring categories:
  - Capital Improvements;
  - Organizational Development / Capacity Building; and
  - Cultural, Environmental and Natural Adirondack and Catskill Resources.

- Project Advancement or actual implementation related to the above.

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Example Eligible Projects, part 1

- Providing bike-friendly routes and amenities.
- Improving or promoting local/regional museums and theaters.
- Improving main street facades.
- Refurbishing historic properties.
- Providing community-based tourism programs and activities.
- Creating new recreational opportunities.
- Developing multi-use trails.
- Installing informational signage and kiosks.

Recreational trail systems / signage

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Example Eligible Projects, part 2

- Enhancing parks and public spaces.
- Updating land use laws.
- Improving visitor centers.
- Beautifying tourism sites.
- Providing sidewalks and streetscape enhancements.
- Clean-up of contaminated sites and preparation for re-use.
- Project-specific feasibility, design, or market planning, and response to climate change.
- Energy efficiency assessment and improvement.
- Providing shuttle service.
- Developing municipal comprehensive plans.

Downtown kiosk in Tannersville

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Grant Award Administration

- Up to 15% of the grant amount.

- Contractual services OR Personal services may be used to contribute grant contract administration, project management, and reporting if applicant personnel do not have the needed capacity to administer a grant award.

Willsboro Pickleball Courts

Preparing to Apply

Keep in mind:

- cost effectiveness is 20% of score;

- estimates or quotes are required;

- bidding for contractors will involve MWBE outreach; and

- no match is required but is optional for points.

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Projects on State Land

Smart growth funds are for local priority projects on municipal land, not-for-profit owned land, or other private land with an assurance of public benefit. However, a project that is based on or includes State Land / Easement Land is eligible if you can provide a letter from the Regional DEC Land Manager, demonstrating support for the project and that it is unlikely to occur without the investment of a smart growth grant.

Land Acquisition

Eligible expense but needs to demonstrate public benefit and must be project-related so that the purpose for acquisition is one of the grant deliverables within the 3-year term. Will adhere to OPRHP land acquisition standards, including 2 qualified appraisals.

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Not For Profit Applicants

What type of support is needed from the local municipality? all that is required for municipal support is a letter of support from the Town. This is an eligibility requirement to make sure that the proposals are consistent with local comprehensive plans and supported by the local government.

Can applicant apply for a project already in progress?

The applicant must identify a discreet set of deliverables and scope of work which has not been delivered to date. The contract start date will likely not be until 11/1/2019 so any expenses incurred before then would be ineligible for reimbursement.

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Planning Activity

Municipal comprehensive plans and land use plans are eligible and will score better if the applicant can demonstrate how the community will benefit from having a comp plan for specific projects or outcomes related to scoring criteria. General strategic planning and organizational planning would not qualify because planning activities need to be project-specific.

Examples of "project-specific":

feasibility studies, conceptual design, construction design, site plans and permitting, designing a landscape scale program for shared services or improvements (ex. Catskill Park Signage, long distance trails, outreach programs, Adirondack Harvest, Great South Woods bikability project), designing educational programs or exhibits for public consumption.

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For-Profit Involvement

Is the program intended to help local businesses? This is not the main focus of the program. Funds are not available directly to for-profit applicants. There are numerous secondary effects of community development that are intended to improve the business environment. There are also some projects that directly benefit the private sector while also providing the public benefits envisioned within local comprehensive and smart-growth-oriented plans. Good examples include:

- Microenterprise grant programs that support small businesses throughout the community;

- Main Street programs that use agreements with private landowners to fund façade /structural improvements; and

- Promoting strategically important local development sites to connect private investment with key project opportunities.

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Project Phases: Can the program fund partial construction?

Applications will be reviewed and scored based upon what is committed for completion and final payment release is held until completion. Ideally, apply for a full project phase and find local match or other grants to cover the full cost.

If a full phase is too expensive- you may apply for a smaller portion in order to limit the commitment under the smart growth grant but for it to score well, it will need to be a functionally complete portion. For example:

- Complete all of the site work so that the current land uses are resolved and cleared, street level connections / openings are graded and prepped and the site is landscaped attractively to enable future planned uses or other developments to proceed. That alone could be a major improvement for some reuse sites.
- Finish a part of a master plan in a way that is compatible with future plans while also serving an immediate purpose to improve the existing onsite/adjacent facilities.

Use the Request For Applications

- Request For Applications (RFA) document is available on the DEC Smart Growth website and on Grants Gateway – Browse or Search for Smart Growth and go to View Opportunity. Choose either Adirondack Park or Catskill Park application.

- In this RFA you will see instructions for each question; the questions in Grants Gateway may not carry full details due to the character count so have a copy of the RFA at hand.

- Lost? Go to www.dec.ny.gov and click "Apply For a Grant" or search "Smart Growth"

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Scoring Criteria – RFA Page 16

This section of the RFA delves into the criteria under which your application will be evaluated.

Part A – List of Criteria and the detailed assignment of points. **Read this before writing your application and again before submitting it.**

Part B – Detail regarding the Special Conditions of the Parks (18 point question #1).

Part C – What is Smart Growth? This is an overall lens through which reviewers are looking to assign points.

Grant Application Components and Requirements – RFA Page 29

This section of the RFA is intended to provide a comprehensive guide to the application in the order in which it is arranged in the Grants Gateway.

Site Accessibility

Site Accessibility – Ownership and Letters of Permission/Municipal Endorsement

PASS/FAIL, Upload required

If the project does not involve a particular project site – Upload a brief description describing how the requirements related to ownership of project site are not applicable to the project.

If the property is owned by the applicant – Upload a screenshot/ printout of the parcel(s) in the county tax map or, if the county tax map is not current, upload a copy of the current deed.

Site Accessibility, continued- 1

If the property is not owned by the applicant – Upload a screenshot/ printout of the parcel(s) in the county tax map. Also required to be included in the upload is a signed letter of support that includes the tax parcel ID(s). A support letter from the landowner is needed at time of application. A formal, legally binding access agreement between the applicant and landowner will be required should the applicant receive a grant award and contract involving construction, alteration of the site, or increased public access.

Site Accessibility, continued-2

If the applicant is a not-for-profit proposing a project on municipal property – Upload a screenshot/printout of the parcel(s) in the county tax map. Also required to be included in the upload is a signed Municipal Endorsement referencing the tax parcel ID(s). A municipal endorsement provides authorization for the not-for-profit to conduct the proposed project on municipal property. A sample municipal endorsement can be downloaded and viewed in the Pre-submission Upload section in the Grants Gateway.

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Project Area

PASS/FAIL/N/A, Upload required if applicable

All projects that involve a project location or project area must provide an area map that clearly displays the project in relation to neighboring parcels (if applicable), municipal boundaries, hamlet/community centers, natural resource assets and recreational lands. The area map is intended to show the layout of the project within the surrounding landscape.

Site Plans

Site Plans, Photos and Permits *PASS/FAIL/N/A*

All construction or development applications must include clear drawings, maps, photos or plans of existing and proposed natural and man-made conditions on the project site and the areas immediately adjacent to the site.

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State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR)

PASS/FAIL/N/A

Applications involving construction or development will not be considered eligible for a grant without the completion of SEQR requirements detailed in the RFA.

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Universal Access

PASS/FAIL/N/A, Upload optional

Applicants must address the applicability and utilization of the principles of Universal Design in project development and implementation, including incorporation of ADA guidelines and ABA for Outdoor Developed Areas.

State whether the principles of Universal Design are relevant to the project, and if applicable, describe how the project will utilize principles of Universal Design. Applicants are strongly encouraged to upload any supporting documentation to assist reviewers in their assessment.

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Scoring related Questions (Program Specific Questions 12-26)

Reviewers look at the whole application when scoring, not just these responses but:

- These program questions give you an opportunity to directly respond to the scoring criteria and make your case as to the value of your application as it pertains to each one.

- Write responses in a Word doc and copy/paste in case of timeouts or crashes

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Alignment with the Special Conditions of the Adirondack Park or Catskill Park

- SWOT analysis.
- Public land ownership.
- Remote locations, scenic and environmental quality.
- Broadband challenges and opportunities.
- Recreational, cultural, historic assets.
- Housing market challenges.
- Waterfront Hamlet-oriented development patterns.
- See "Advantage Adirondacks" for examples.

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Cost Effectiveness

Check eligible and non-eligible items in the RFA on page 36.

Budget needs to be cost effective, reasonable and eligible to gain top points.

Project cost-effectiveness will account for at least 20% of an application score as identified in the evaluation criteria section of this RFA.

Scoring Notes, continued-1

Local Contribution *up to 5 POINTS (pg. 29).*

Match is not required, but this is where you can gain points by committing match. The details still need to be entered in the budget under the optional Match category.

Scoring Notes, continued-2

Budget Detail and Reasonableness of Expenses up to *7 POINTS UPLOAD REQUIRED* (pg. 30).

Better documentation of anticipated expenses will result in higher score.

If the budget contains contractual services and/or equipment valued at $2,500 or more per-item, two informal quotes must be uploaded for each such item or service.

Expenditure Budget (Pg. 10 of RFA)

Entering an Optional Local Contribution as Described in Program Specific Question 23.

If there is no local match the amount of match may remain at $0. Otherwise, these resources must be entered by the Applicant in the "Match" category of the Budget Properties screen in the Grants Gateway. This should only be entered if the local contribution is directly associated with delivering components of the Applicant's Work Plan.

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Expenditure Budget, (Pg. 11 of RFA)

Entering an Optional Local Contribution, cont.

Important: The Grants Gateway automatically calculates match as a percentage of the grant amount. Many other grant programs calculate match as a percentage of the "Total Project" where the total project encompasses grant + match. Consider the following clarification of the scoring thresholds:

A. Match valued at 40% of the requested grant amount is equivalent to 28.571% of "total project".

B. Match valued at 25% of the requested grant amount is equivalent to 20% of "total project".

C. Match valued at 12% of the requested grant amount is equivalent to 10.714% of "total project"

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Expenditure Budget, cont. (Pg. 11 of RFA)

Entering any **<u>Other</u>** New York State or Federal Funding Sources:

- Any additional State or Federal contributions toward the total project should be entered in the "Other" category of the Budget Properties screen. This should only be entered if the other funding is needed to fully deliver the performance measures included in the Applicant's Work Plan.

- Be Careful not to over-report project components from future OR past project phases.

- All expenses in the budget should be associated with the expected grant contract term

Work Plan (Pg. 12 of RFA)

The Work Plan is the canvas for the project. Map out what, how, when and who will be involved. This is the overview of the project.

The Work Plan must include anticipated time frames in meeting project objectives, tasks and deliverables.

 The Work Plan (tasks, objectives and performance measures) becomes the basis for the contract, awardee reporting and project reimbursement.

Use the Word doc download in Pre-Submission Uploads as a work plan template

Eligible Grant Reimbursement Costs

- Personal Services: staff salaries directly devoted to program. Include any volunteer hours in this category.

- Contractual: costs provided by builders, technical personnel and consultants directly related to implementation of the project.

- Travel: if directly required for project.

- Equipment: costs for equipment rentals.

- Other: use for supplies, materials.

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Costs NOT Eligible Grant Reimbursement

- **Costs expended outside the Adirondack Park boundary or Catskill Park Town & Village boundaries**: For projects that extend beyond the eligible boundaries, any costs expended for work outside the eligible area are not eligible for reimbursement.

- **Indirect or Overhead Costs: examples of indirect costs include** rent, telephone service, utilities, and general administrative support.

- **Salaries and other expenses of elected officials**, whether incurred for purposes of project direction, execution, or legislation, are not an eligible cost.

- **Costs of preparing the grant application.**

- **Costs associated with planning activities not integral to either:**

  A. **Implementation of the project; or**

  B. **development of a comprehensive plan and/or local land use plan.**

- **Costs incurred** outside of the MCG term start and end dates.

- **Costs paid** from other State or Federal funding sources.

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Things to remember:

Always upload a single .pdf for each question, multiple attachments cannot be viewed.

• If you try to upload multiple PDFs, it just overwrites and erases their first one.

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Should You Receive An Award (page 38 of RFA)

Wage and Hours Provisions

For public works covered by Article 8 of the Labor Law, <u>prevailing wages </u>do apply

Municipal projects involving construction or maintenance of buildings, roads, trails, park amenities, and similar improvements on public property using this grant funding or other public funding are public works.

Such projects undertaken by a not-for-profit on public property are also public works.

Such projects undertaken by a not-for-profit on private land, however, must be assessed for the project's public purpose to determine whether it is a public works project.

<u>**If there is any question regarding the applicability of public work, the Applicant is encouraged to consult the NYS Department of Labor.**</u>

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Should You Receive An Award: MWBE and EEO Requirements

Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements will apply.

- **MWBE thresholds require the Contractor to submit a Utilization Plan prior to the execution of the contract and Monthly.**
- Compliance Audits in the NYSCS after the contract is executed.
- All contractors shall complete an EEO Policy Statement and Staffing Plan form and submit it prior to the execution of the contract.

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Should You Receive An Award (Cont.)

- **25% Advance Payment** option.

- **10% Retainage** mandatory.

- **Quarterly Reporting** in the Grants Gateway.

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Should You Receive An Award: Signage and Acknowledgment

- For infrastructure projects, the contractor shall install signage on-site that acknowledges funding from the Department of Environmental Conservation.

- In all printed documents, video/online materials, and/or advertisements DEC and Environmental Protection Fund must be acknowledged.

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Should You Receive An Award: Historic Preservation Review Requirements

- For projects that involve properties listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places, all work undertaken as part of a grant-assisted project must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

- Such projects will be referred to OPRHP with DEC assistance as needed.

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Successful Prior Projects

- We do everything possible to help your project succeed once awarded.

- Go to the **Smart Growth in the Adirondack Park and Catskill Park** webpage and scroll down to our "List of Prior Awards" to see more examples.

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Thank You

- Dylan Walrath, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- Bradley McMillian, NYS Grants Management

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