

Cleaner, Greener Communities Regional Sustainability Planning Program Up to \$2.7 Million Available for the Finger Lakes, Long Island & Mohawk Valley Regions

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Cleaner, Greener Communities program was announced by Governor Cuomo in his 2011 State of the State address as a \$96 million competitive grant program to encourage communities to develop regional sustainable growth strategies. The Regional Sustainability Planning program is the first stage of the Cleaner, Greener Communities program and is intended to provide the necessary resources for each region in New York State, as defined by the boundaries of the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs), to develop a comprehensive sustainability plan. Engaging in the planning process will allow each region to develop its vision, goals, and objectives for a sustainable future and to identify the activities or types of projects needed to achieve that future. It is expected that regions will develop their plans within 8 months of receiving their grant funding.

The plans that result from this program will:

- Establish a statewide sustainability planning framework that will aid in statewide infrastructure investment decision making
- Outline specific and tangible actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions consistent with a goal of 80% carbon reductions by the year 2050
- Inform municipal land use policies
- Serve as a basis for local government infrastructure decision making
- Help guide infrastructure investment of both public and private resources
- Provide each region with a sustainability plan that will enable them to strategically identify and prioritize the projects they submit for consideration to the Implementation Grant stage of the program

In stage two of the Cleaner, Greener Communities program – the Implementation Grant stage – funding will be provided on a competitive basis for implementation of specific projects that provide the greatest opportunities for achieving carbon reductions, energy efficiency savings, and renewable energy deployment consistent with a region's sustainability and REDC strategic plans. Other actions identified in the plan may be eligible for funding from other sources.

AWARD INFORMATION:

A total of \$2.7 million dollars is available for the Cleaner, Greener Communities Regional Sustainability Planning Program. Funding will be available for up to \$1 million per regional sustainability plan and only one award will be made per region. Only applicants representing the Finger Lakes, Long Island and Mohawk Valley regions are eligible to apply for this round of funding.

Funding will be based on demonstrated need and as need is expected to vary between regions it is not expected that each region will receive the same level of funding. Applicants that provide co-funding and other resources and demonstrate the ability to leverage other funding sources to support the planning process will be considered favorably. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) will decide how best to distribute grants equitably based on each region's proposed budgets, existing resources and expressed needs.

Proposed budgets should only include activities necessary for the development of the region's sustainability plan. Budgets may not include any funds for project implementation. Grant funding cannot be used to supplant existing government agency or non-profit budgets or to pay any portion of the salary for a REDC member.

Regions with existing regional sustainability plans may use funding from the program to expand the scope of their plans, align the goals of their existing plan with their region's REDC strategic planning efforts or to conduct additional planning work that will support the prioritization of projects that will contribute to the state's carbon reduction, renewable deployment and energy savings goals.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

Applicants must be a municipality (county, city, town, village, Indian tribe or nation residing within New York State) acting on behalf of a consortium of other municipalities within the Finger Lakes, Long Island or Mohawk Valley regions. If selected for a grant, the municipality submitting the application on behalf of the consortium will hold fiscal and administrative responsibility for regular interaction with NYSERDA.

Consortiums shall:

- Identify a lead municipality to act as applicant and a leadership team to guide the planning process
- Have a membership that is representative of the municipalities within the region
- Provide accountability for the development of the regional sustainability plan and demonstrate a region's ability to successfully engage and enable collaboration within the region
- Develop a governance structure that reflects the diversity of its partners and will allow (if funding is awarded) for maximum inclusion of other municipalities and the engagement of non-municipal stakeholders in strategy development, decision making, and plan implementation
- Identify a Sustainability Planning Team (e.g., planning consultant, municipal planners or regional planning board members) to provide planning services and technical assistance

Municipalities may only sign on to participate in one consortium per region. Evaluation will consider the percentage of a region's municipalities that are represented by each consortium and the number of participating municipalities that have made the Climate Smart Communities pledge.

Consortiums should make every effort to use the existing planning resources within their regions, which may include municipal planning offices, regional planning boards or Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), but it is expected that applicants may also need to engage planning consultants to provide technical assistance and the necessary staff to conduct a comprehensive sustainability planning process within the 8-month timeframe. In this case, applicants will need to identify a planning consultant before applying for funding. If a planning firm is the identified consultant for more than one regional proposal the applicant must demonstrate that the consultant has sufficient capacity to serve both regions simultaneously.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES:

This program is intended to provide funding for the development of regional sustainability plans. The guidance below pertains to what NYSERDA expects to receive from each region after it has engaged in its 8-month plan development process. The following guidance should only be used to inform your proposed plan development strategy.

A Regional Sustainability Plan shall include:

- A baseline assessment of the region, including inventories of greenhouse gas emissions and energy use as well as assessments of natural resource and economic assets, liabilities and opportunities. The plan will identify data gaps and steps to fill them.
- Long-term and short-term sustainability goals for the region including greenhouse gas reductions and sustainability goals for energy supply, transportation, water management, waste management, land use, open space, agriculture, housing and economic development. The plan should include metrics for each goal and a commitment to annual reporting.
- Actions to achieve greenhouse gas reduction or other sustainability goals, including barriers to successful implementation and proposed means for removing such barriers. Descriptions should include metrics of progress and co-benefits such as job creation and taxpayer savings.

- An implementation plan showing how the municipalities will collaborate and their schedule with timetables of targeted milestones and completion dates for actions described in the plan.
- Stakeholder involvement throughout plan development and implementation.

A regional sustainability plan can improve environmental quality by reducing air, water and land pollution and improve quality of life through smart growth and sustainable development. Smart growth promotes land use practices such as compact growth, transit-oriented and mixed-use development, walkable and bicycle friendly practices, complete streets, context-sensitive design, and protection of critical land, water and natural resources. Sustainable development strives to enhance environmental, economic and social well being without degrading current or future natural, economic and social resources. Projects identified by this planning process should improve energy efficiency throughout the community, promote renewable energy and result in reduced emissions of carbon.

Further guidance on sustainability planning is available at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/76483.html>.

HOW TO APPLY:

NYSERDA is currently accepting applications for the Cleaner, Greener Communities Regional Sustainability Planning Program through the [Consolidated Funding Application \(CFA\)](#). Applications are due April 24th, 2012. It is expected that resulting awards will be announced in May 2012.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Scoring of applications received via the CFA will consider endorsement of the respective REDC (weighted 20% in the evaluation) and the NYSERDA criteria identified below. NYSERDA's scoring criteria, while based on a 1-100% score, will be weighted 80% in the overall evaluation.

- Vision (5%)
 - The applicant/consortium provides a clear vision of how its regional sustainability planning process will successfully engage stakeholders to develop a comprehensive sustainability plan that increases energy efficiency, renewable energy, and carbon abatement
- Process (10%)
 - The applicant/consortium provides evidence of effective coordination and planning methodology
 - The application to develop the regional sustainability plan includes comprehensive stakeholder involvement
- Strategies (35%)
 - The application to develop the regional sustainability plan is based on sound data collection and analysis methodology
 - The application to develop the regional sustainability plan has identified appropriate milestones within the designated planning period
 - The application to develop the regional sustainability plan has identified an appropriate budget
 - The application to develop the regional sustainability plan has identified appropriate delineation of responsibilities
 - The regional sustainability plan will be comprehensive in scope and will address all appropriate focus areas for the region
 - The applicant/consortium clearly shows how the regional sustainability plan will promote energy efficiency, renewable energy and/or carbon abatement technologies
- Implementation (15%)
 - There is a likelihood of completing a high quality regional sustainability plan based on the:
 - o Composition of the consortium, including the breadth of participation by the region's municipalities and number of participation municipalities that are Climate Smart Communities
 - o Qualifications of the sustainability planning team

- Leveraging (15%)
 - The application to develop the regional sustainability plan shows how the consortium will leverage and expand upon existing planning efforts
 - The applicant/consortium provides reasonable co-funding and resources to develop the regional sustainability plan
- Performance measures (20%)
 - The application to develop the regional sustainability plan indicates how consistency with the Regional Economic Development Council's Strategic Plan will be maintained
 - The application to develop the regional sustainability plan clearly indicates what metrics will be used to assess the most effective opportunities for achieving carbon reductions, energy efficiency savings, and renewable energy deployment

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

For technical questions concerning this program, contact Lindsay Robbins at NYSERDA, 485 7th Avenue Suite 1006, New York, NY 10018, (212) 971-5342, ext. 3008 or LRR@nyserda.org. If you have contractual questions concerning this program, contact Venice Forbes at (518) 862-1090, ext. 3507 or VWF@nyserda.org.