



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Authority

FROM: Tim Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer

DATE: October 09, 2025

SUBJECT: Asset Activation Planning Grant Program - Round Four Funding and Revisions

Summary

The Members are asked to approve:

- 1) Utilization of \$300,000 in remaining funds from the New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant Program (“Program”) to offer a fourth round of applications.
- 2) Program revision to extend the applicant cure period from 5 days to 15 days.
- 3) Program revision to extend the application window from 90 days to 12 months, or until funds are fully obligated, whichever comes first.
- 4) Program revision to increase the maximum grant award from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Background

On March 9, 2022, the NJEDA Board approved the Asset Activation Planning Grant Program (“Program”) to promote the State Economic Plan goals of assisting communities in creating vibrant and inclusive cities and neighborhoods and building a stronger and fairer New Jersey that attracts top tier talent business to the State. The Program promotes these objectives through the funding of pre-development planning projects that will activate distressed and under-utilized public assets and benefit their communities and the regional economy.

The Program offers grants to New Jersey public, private, and nonprofit entities for planning activities, such as conceptual or architectural design, feasibility studies, economic or market analyses, that will facilitate development of the target assets.

Since 2022, the Program has administered three rounds of grants offering a total of nearly one million dollars in funding. The nine projects awarded grants in Round One have reached completion, with several resulting plans leading to subsequent development phases and funding resources for their projects. Five grants were awarded in Round Two, with the last of those projects now nearing completion. Four grants were awarded in Round Three, which also has one project currently underway.

Round Four Funds and Revisions

Several projects funded through the Program have resulted in successful progress in activating their target assets. Plans produced with these grants have led directly to State funding allocations in the Meadowlands, additional NJEDA development in Atlantic City, and accelerated development pipelines in Trenton, Newark, and other locations. Therefore, it is recommended the Board approve the use of existing Program funds to capitalize a new Round Four of grants, totaling \$300,000 in available Program funds.

This Program was funded through two state appropriations. The first was \$400,000 from FY21 which utilized Main Street Recovery Finance Program funding. Then in FY23 the Governor Appropriations Act designated supplemental funding of \$1.8 million. To date, a total of \$848,300 has been allocated to Program awards and \$810,800 has been spent. Since there is a balance of \$851,700 left remaining, staff is currently requesting to utilize \$300,000 of this balance for Round Four of this product. Staff will then plan to request, in a separate board memo, that the remaining balance of \$551,700 be allocated back to the Main Street Recovery Fund.

Furthermore, staff is requesting minor revisions to the application window and cure process to improve the administration of this Program. Extending the applicant cure period to 15 business days will provide additional time for applicants to submit required documents. We also recommend that the 90-day application window be extended to 12 months or until all available funds are awarded, whichever comes first. Applications will be paused if grant requests exceed available funds, and will resume, if necessary, after pending application decisions are finalized and available funds are recalculated. If there are any unused funds after 12 months, those funds will be transferred from the Program to the Main Street Recovery Finance Program Recovery Fund.

We also recommend increasing the maximum grant award from \$50,000 to \$100,000 to accommodate increasing prices since the Program began and allow larger scale project proposals, while still allowing for smaller budget proposals based on specific needs.

All other specifications for the Program remain the same.

Recommendations

- 1) Utilization of \$300,000 in remaining funds from the New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant Program (“Program”) to offer a fourth round of applications.
- 2) Program revision to extend the applicant cure period from 5 days to 15 days.
- 3) Program revision of the application window from 90 days to 12 months.
- 4) Revision to increase the maximum grant award from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Tim Sullivan
Chief Executive Officer

Appendix A
New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant
Specifications with Proposed Revisions
October 2025

Funding Source	Utilization of a portion of the balance of funds to offer a fourth round for \$300,000.
Program Purpose	The Fourth Round of The New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant Program will award grants of up to \$100,000 to public, private, or non-profit entities, for early-stage planning and analysis that will demonstrate viability of projects that activate distressed or under-utilized public assets that benefit their communities and the regional economy.
Eligible Applicants	Qualified applicants are defined as a New Jersey: • New Jersey Municipalities, Counties, Redevelopment Agencies, or Independent Authorities, • Non-profit entities that meet additional criteria detailed below, and hold a valid New Jersey tax clearance certificate, or • Private, for-profit entities that meet additional criteria detailed below, and hold a valid New Jersey tax clearance certificate. An Applicant in a lead role is the entity that is the sole recipient of grant funds and responsible for all terms of the grant agreement. The lead applicant will serve as the primary point of contact with the Authority, submit any requests for fund disbursement, and provide reports to the Authority. An applicant may only submit one application each in a lead role but can be included as a partner in additional applications where they play a non-lead role Applicants may add strategic partners whose experience, knowledge, skills, and ability may provide an advantage in the production of analyses and reports. The strategic partnership must be recognized by a signed memorandum of understanding or a written agreement between the partner and the applicant and included in the completed application. Any named strategic partner or partners included in the proposal cannot be changed without the prior written consent of the Authority. Applications must provide a letter of approval from the chief executive of the public entities that hold ownership of the subject property, or person with final authority to make development decisions for the property. Assets owned by The State are not eligible for project applications, however assets owned by Independent State Authorities are eligible when accompanied by a letter of approval. A proposal on behalf of a county or independent authority does not preclude a municipality within that county; or municipality or county within boundary of independent authority; or independent authority whose boundaries overlap a municipality or county from submitting their own proposal.
Eligible Uses	The Fourth Round of the New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant Program will provide grants of up to \$100,000 directly to grantees for pre-development planning that will demonstrate viability of projects. Proposed plans may include, but are not limited to: • Conceptual design

	• Feasibility studies • Economic analysis • Market analyses • Redevelopment Needs Assessment and/or Plan Proposal plans must demonstrate to what extent the utilization of a public asset will be improved by the proposed project and how development of an asset will benefit the regional economy and the community. Projects should target deficient, under-utilized, or vacant land, buildings, or infrastructure owned by a county, municipality, district, public authority, public agency, or other political subdivision or public body. Projects may study areas with multiple properties, if the principal components of the study area are publicly owned, a letter of approval is provided for those principal properties, and all property owners are identified in the application. Plans should demonstrate a strong connection to the State’s development objectives through project elements, such as: • Creating or catalyzing a new business sector, or target industry • Driving economic growth and equity • Creating an innovative use for distressed public assets, unutilized or underutilized public property or unutilized public lands • Expanding access to public transportation or public services • Attracting employers and a diverse, talented workforce • Expanding entrepreneurial opportunities and support local businesses • Improving land use efficiency and sustainability
Application Process and Board Approval/ Delegated Authority	Following a Notice of Funding Availably, applications for The Program will be accepted on a rolling basis for 12 months or until all funds are awarded for the current round (whichever comes first). EDA anticipates notifying each applicant within five business days of receipt if the application has been deemed complete. Applicants whose applications have been deemed incomplete will be given fifteen business days to cure any deficiencies. If at the end of the fifteen-day period, the applications are still incomplete, they will be notified the application has been withdrawn, and a new application would need to be submitted for further consideration. Complete applications will proceed through review of legal and state agency compliance. Any issues found through this review will be given ten business days to resolve. Applications that cannot resolve legal or state agency compliance within ten days will be notified the application has been withdrawn, and a new application would need to be submitted for further consideration. Applications that meet legal and state compliance will proceed to scoring and must meet the minimum score requirement of 65 to receive an award. Applications that score below 65 will be recommended to the board for decline. If the next eligible application in line for an award cannot be fully funded with the remaining Program budget, the applicant will be given the option to revise their scope and budget, or withdrawal. A revised application will be re-scored immediately and proceed to a final award decision.

Scoring

Applications will be reviewed and scored by staff of the Authority formed as a scoring committee. The scoring committee may utilize the advice of subject matter experts from both the Authority and other New Jersey state departments, agencies, councils, offices, and boards to advise scoring decisions.

Grants will be scored on a scale of 0-100 points, with 100 points being the highest score possible. Grants award recommendations will be limited to applications that meet or exceed the Minimum Score Requirement of 65 points.

Applications must include plans for specific deliverables that can be fully completed (with copies provided to EDA appropriate for public consumption) six calendar months after the execution of funding agreement between EDA and the recipient

Applications will be evaluated and scored on each of the criteria below.

Criteria #1 - Asset Impact (Up to 40 points)

Proposals must demonstrate how projects will improve the utilization of a public asset and contribute to the community and regional economy.

Scoring measure:

- 0 - 10 points: Demonstrates minimal impact
- 11 - 20 points: Demonstrates marginal impacts
- 21 - 30 points: Demonstrates significant impacts
- 31 - 40 points: Demonstrates superior impacts

Criteria #2 – Identification of Project Purpose and Merits (Up to 20 points) – Proposals must demonstrate the need for the grant funds, the proposed planning work, and a clear path from the proposed planning work to the improved asset utilization. The proposal should demonstrate a clear understanding of the local planning goals and challenges, as well as the Asset’s role within them.

Scoring measure:

- 0 - 5 points: Little or no demonstration of features
- 5 - 10 points: Features are present but show deficiencies.
- 11 - 15 points: Features are well demonstrated.
- 16 - 20 points: Significantly exceeds requirements.

Criteria #3 - Previous Experience (Up to 20 points) – Preference will go to entities who are able to display a strong record of early-stage project planning and analysis that lead to development. Applications should demonstrate a commitment to engage in development projects through a record of past projects. Applications may bolster these criteria through strategic partnerships and detailing those partners’ records. Preference will go to applicants who can demonstrate a track record of:

Scoring measure:

- 0 - 5 points: Little or no demonstration of features
- 5 - 10 points: Features are present but show deficiencies.
- 11 - 15 points: Features are well demonstrated.
- 16 - 20 points: Significantly exceeds requirements.

Criteria #4 - Community Engagement (0 to 10 points) - Preference will go to applicants that are able to display efforts to engage local residents and businesses in planning efforts. Local interest may be shown in the form of both past and present support,

	whether formal (municipal resolutions) or informal (community discussion and engagement). Scoring measure: 1-5 points: Feature is present but shows deficiencies 5-7 points: Meets requirements 7-10 points: Significantly exceeds requirements <u>Criteria #5 - Municipal Revitalization Index Score</u> (0 to 10 points) – The Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI) serves as the State’s official measure and ranking of municipal distress. The MRI ranks New Jersey’s municipalities according to eight separate indicators that measure diverse aspects of social, economic, physical, and fiscal conditions in each locality. Most recent MRI scores will be applied based on time of application submission and physical location of proposed project’s municipal host community. Scoring measure: 2 point: MRI Distress Score 30 – 34.9 4 points: MRI Distress Score 35 – 39.9 6 Points: MRI Distress Score 40 – 49.9 8 Points: MRI Distress Score 50 – 69.9 10 Points: MRI Distress Score 70 or higher
Grant Amounts	Grant awards will be up to <u>\$100,000</u>
Funding Disbursement	Grant disbursements by the Authority will only be made to the lead role entity. The lead role entity shall be responsible for assuring the compliance of any strategic partners and/or subcontractors with all terms and conditions of this application - and assumes the sole and absolute responsibility for any payments due to any municipal, county, or strategic partners. All Applicants who are successfully awarded a grant will follow a uniform disbursement schedule. The lead entity will receive 50% of the grant amount upon execution of grant agreement, and 25% upon completion and submission of a mid-way progress report, and 25% upon completion and submission of a final plan and final progress report.
Reporting requirements	Communication between the Authority and the Grantee will be held monthly for the first three months of the grant term, up until the halfway point of the grant term. Within three months a report must be submitted and include: • Summary of funds expended to date; and • Narrative detailing of the milestones achieved and the overall progress toward completion of the final plan. During and following that time, additional calls may be held on an as-needed basis until the grant term has ended. At the end of the grant term, the awarded grantee must provide a copy of all project deliverables and related project documents, all expense documentation, and a final report to the Authority for review. Upon written request by the grantee at any time, an extension of up to two months may be authorized at the sole discretion of the Authority.

Fees	A fee of \$ 1,000 shall accompany every application for Authority assistance. An application fee waiver may be requested at the time of application for proposals led by municipalities or municipal authorities, boards, commissions, or other municipal entities ranked in the top 10% of the MRI. Applicants self-identify in the application as a municipality or municipal government entity requesting a waiver. NJEDA staff determines if the entity meets the criteria for a waiver. Eligible entities are granted a waiver for the Program. Ineligible entities are notified and a cure in the form of fees payment is requested to complete the application.
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