



## **Asset Activation** **Planning Grant Program**

### **F.A.Q.**

#### **What is this program for?**

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority ("NJEDA," or "Authority") recognizes that a long history of shifting economic and development trends have left an array of underutilized properties and infrastructure throughout the state in urban, suburban, and rural communities alike. What were assets in former economies have become liabilities that no longer meet the needs of modern New Jerseyans and require innovative development to activate their potential and contribute to the State's economy. Properties like these often have additional hurdles for redevelopment, and therefore the state seeks to aid communities in building vibrant and inclusive cities and neighborhoods.

This program provides grants for pre-development planning work that demonstrates viability, and prepares implementation, of projects that will activate public assets. Planning projects may include, but are not limited to; conceptual design, feasibility studies, economic analysis, market analysis, redevelopment needs assessments, and redevelopment planning, as they relate to a specific asset.

A successfully completed project in this program will produce plans, reports, or studies necessary to advance the development process of the target asset.

#### **What funding is available?**

This Program utilizes State budget funds appropriated to the Authority in 2021 and 2023. The current Round (4), for 2025 will offer \$300,000 in grants.

#### **How are awards made in the Asset Activation program?**

Complete and qualified applications, which also meet minimum scoring requirements, will be awarded grants in the order in which they were submitted until program funds are exhausted.

Individual grants awards may be up to \$100,000.

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 and will be solely responsible for any contractors or professional services as part of the project.

#### **How will applications be evaluated?**

Complete applications will be scored by a committee of EDA staff subject matter experts.

Applications that meet a minimum score of 65/100 will be recommended for grant approval in the order in which they were submitted.

Applications will be evaluated and scored based on:

1. Asset Impact (40 points): Illustrate the potential future benefits from development of the asset, and detriments of the current conditions of the asset. (If the planning work seeks to evaluate and determine potential future uses, there should be indication of what those possibilities are, and their impacts.) The proposal should look beyond the specific site and demonstrate the larger impact of the asset on the community and regional economy.
2. Project Purpose and Merit (20 points): Clearly demonstrate the need for the Asset Activation grant to fund the proposed planning work, and a demonstrate a clear path between the planning and subsequent development of the asset. Provide a detailed of scope of the proposed planning work, with specific deliverables, and responsibilities of the lead entity, strategic partner (if applicable), asset owning entity, and any subcontractors. The proposal should demonstrate a clear understanding of the community planning goals and challenges, and the asset's role withing that setting.
3. Previous Experience (20 points): Provide resumes/CVs, and examples of previous planning projects that demonstrate a record of producing planning and analysis reports like those proposed in the proposal. Emphasis on those which have led to development.
4. Community Engagement (10 points): The scope of the proposed planning work should include a community engagement component and explain how it will contribute to the planning project results.
5. Municipal Revitalization Index Score (10 points) 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. The MRI score will provide objective indications of community need in some cases, but the proposal should supplement this with further information, and/or explain community needs for municipalities with low distress scores.

### **Who can apply?**

Applicants should be New Jersey municipalities, counties, municipal/county/regional/New Jersey redevelopment agencies municipal/county/regional/New Jersey independent authorities, non-profit entities, or private (for-profit) entities that meet additional criteria.

If a State officer or employee owns or controls more than 1% of a privately owned organization, that organization may not seek financial assistance from the NJEDA. State officer or employee also includes his or her partners, any other person for the use or benefit of the State employee or on his or her account or any corporation which he/she controls or in which he/she owns or controls more than 1% of the stock.

An applicant may engage strategic partners to bolster the strength of the planning project and their proposal. However, an applicant in the lead role may only submit one application.

An entity in a lead role that received prior Asset Activation grant funds may not apply again.

## **What Assets are eligible for this program?**

An eligible asset must be owned by a public entity.

Proposals should target under-utilized, or vacant land, buildings, or infrastructure owned by a New Jersey County, municipality, district, public authority, public agency, or other political subdivision or public body.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Parking Lots or vacant rights-of-way owned by independent authorities/commissions
- Decommissioned office space of public organizations
- Vacant or blighted properties obtained by municipalities or redevelopment authorities
- Other under-utilized public property that would have high economic or community benefits if repurposed

Applications must include a letter of approval from the executive of the public entities that hold ownership of the subject property or have the development oversight and authority to close the property. Assets owned by The State of New Jersey are not eligible. However, assets owned by independent authorities, commissions, boards, or other entities of the State of New Jersey are eligible when accompanied by a letter of approval from the body's executive with development oversight and authority, as discussed above.

## **Can a Planning Project study more than one property?**

Yes. If a site is composed of multiple properties, it is eligible for this Program as long as the principle component(s) of the site are publicly owned, and the owner of the property provides a letter of authorization.

## **Is a Right-Of-Way considered public property?**

Yes. a public road right-of-way is eligible property. In some cases, a rail or utility right-of-way may be eligible depending on the public entity that owns it.

## **What planning activities are eligible for funding?**

Any pre-development planning work that will determine the use or viability of a public asset or. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Redevelopment needs assessments or redevelopment planning
- Economic or market analyses
- Concept development, design, or visioning
- Architectural drawings and site-plans
- Site Due Diligence, or project feasibility study

## **Can grant funds be used to reimburse for planning work already completed?**

No. This programs funds planning work that has not yet been completed.

Funds may be used for late phases of ongoing planning efforts if they have not been completed, but applicants should consider how their proposal justifies the need for grant assistance.

## **How are the Assets meant to be “activated”?**

Proposals must demonstrate to what extent the utilization of a public asset will be improved, and how

development or use of a public asset will benefit the regional economy and the community.

Proposals 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
- Expanding access to public transportation or public services
- Attracting employers and a diverse, talented workforce
- Expanding entrepreneurial opportunities and support for local businesses
- Innovative land use, or improving land use efficiency and sustainability

An award of grant funding does not imply approval of plans, use, sale, or divestment of any assets or property, however planning projects should be coordinated with the property-owning entity to work toward an achievable result for the property.

### **Where can I get more details about the program?**

Visit the Program home page, which includes the NJEDA Board memorandum, program specifications, and other related documents and links, here: <https://www.njeda.com/asset-activation-planning-grant/>

### **How can an application be submitted?**

Once the accepting period has begun, applications must be submitted through the online NJEDA application portal.

A checklist of the required application documents, and a link to the application portal is available on the program homepage, here: <https://www.njeda.com/asset-activation-planning-grant/>

### **Is there an application fee?**

Yes\* - a standard application fee of \$1,000 must be submitted to complete the application.

*\*Applicants located in municipalities with Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI) scores in the top 10% of all municipalities statewide are eligible to waive application fees. This waiver is only available to municipal government bodies, and independent municipal authorities, boards, and commissions.*

### **Additional Questions...**

Additional questions, comments, and inquiries should be directed to [njaap@njeda.gov](mailto:njaap@njeda.gov)