

COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant Program

Municipal Assistance

Request for Proposals

COVID-19 County Relief Block Program Overview:

Act 24 of 2020 was signed by Governor Wolf on May 29, 2020, and provides \$625 million in CARES Act funding by means of block grants for counties in the commonwealth through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Northampton County has been awarded approximately \$27 million dollars that will be administered by the Northampton County Department of Community and Economic Development. This funding is authorized to be used for the following purposes:

1. Offsetting the costs of direct County response, planning and outreach efforts related to COVID-19.
2. Small Business Grant Programs to support businesses with fewer than 100 employees and to support businesses and other entities primarily engaged in the tourism industry.
3. Grant programs to support the following for costs related to assisting businesses during COVID-19 Disaster Emergency: Certified Economic Development Organizations, Local Development Districts Industrial Resource Center, Small Business Development Centers and Economic Development Corporations.
4. Assistance to cities, boroughs, incorporated towns or townships within eligible counties for response and planning efforts related to COVID-19.
5. Behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment services.
6. Nonprofit assistance programs for entities that are an exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) or 501 (c)(19)of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
7. Broadband internet deployment with priority given to unserved or underserved areas; and

Municipal Assistance Overview:

County Executive Lamont McClure has proposed programming approximately \$10 million dollars for assistance to cities, boroughs, incorporated towns or townships located within Northampton County for response and planning efforts related to COVID-19. **ALL PROPOSALS ARE SUBJECT TO COUNTY COUNCIL APPROVAL.**

Eligible uses:

Costs incurred between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020 for response and planning efforts related to COVID-19.

1. Salaries and benefits for employees involved in the planning and response to COVID-19.

- a. Please note proposals that include salaries and benefits must include an hourly rate for employees. A time sheet documenting the time spent on COVID-19 response and planning efforts must be submitted for reimbursement.
2. Operational supplies necessary for increased cleaning and sanitation due to COVID-19.
3. Equipment to aid in the planning and response to COVID-19.
4. Purchase of services that aid in the planning and response to COVID-19
5. Purchase and installation of physical barriers (e.g. Plexiglas, clear plastic sneeze guards)
6. Purchase of non-contact sanitation products (e.g. faucets, soap dispensers, paper towel dispensers, hand sanitizer dispensers)
7. Ventilation system improvements including the purchase and installation of high-efficiency air filters
8. Software implementation for on-line payments for bills (e.g. taxes, licenses, utilities)
9. Technology upgrades to support telework and virtual meetings
10. Personal protective equipment (PPE)
11. Other COVID-19 related improvements deemed eligible at the County's discretion

Ineligible Uses:

- Replacement of lost revenue.
- Activities not related to response and planning efforts tied to COVID-19.
- Supplanting resources that received from other State or Federal emergency funding sources for reimbursement.

Eligible entities:

- Northampton County municipalities

Award Amounts:

- There is no maximum award amount for Northampton County Municipalities
- Applicants may submit proposals for multiple projects. A separate application is required for each project.
- Northampton County reserves the right to fund proposals at higher or lower amounts at its sole discretion.

Project Timeline:

The grant contract will run until December 30, 2020.

Match requirements:

No match is required. Applications that demonstrate leveraged funds and/or resources may be prioritized.

APPLICATION SCHEDULE

- RFP Announcement – **July 10**
- Application/Proposals Due – **August 7**
 - Applications submitted after August 7 and will be reviewed on a rolling basis.
- Anticipated Award Notifications – **September** (for applications submitted by July 17)

APPLICATION REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by DCED staff and Northampton County Administration officials who will make funding recommendations to County Council. **ALL APPLICATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO COUNTY COUNCIL APPROVAL.**

Scoring Criteria		Scoring Weight	
1	Project Narrative/ Overall Application	The narrative is clear and concise. The project is clearly defined including funding sources, partners and resources being leveraged. The application is complete, well organized and well written.	50%
2	Budget	The budget is clear and reasonable. The cost estimates are from a credible source.	25%
3	Leverage	The project is leveraging additional funds and/or resources.	5%
4	Project Timeline and Capacity	The applicant has demonstrated the capacity to complete the project within the identified timeline. The timeline is reasonable and the project has all approvals, permits, sub-contracts, personnel, funding, etc. in place and ready for implementation upon funding approval.	10%
5	Special Considerations	Geographic location and population served.	10%

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. Please register on our CRM system if you have not previously done so (<https://web.northamptoncounty.org/DCEDForms/views/Login.html>). Click on “Register”. You only need to register one time. You will receive an email within 48 hours confirming your registration.
2. Visit the County website to download required documents (application, budget spreadsheet, program guidelines at (<https://www.northamptoncounty.org/CMTYECDV/Pages/Apply-for-Funding.aspx>).
3. Once all documents are filled out completely, return to the CRM website and log in.

4. Choose "Apply for Funding".
5. Fill in all required information.
6. Click "Browse" under Attachments and upload all required documents.
7. When all documents are uploaded, click on Submit.
8. You will receive a confirmation email containing your Application ID number.

The deadline for submitting a full application is Friday, August 7 at 4:00 p.m. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Questions about the application process and guidance on the eligibility can be directed to Sarah Ortiz at 610-829-6308 or sortiz@northamptoncounty.org.

PROGRAM CONDITIONS

- Grants are awarded based on merit and are subject to the availability of funds.
- Funds are released on a cost incurrence/reimbursement basis only.
- Eligible applicants may submit multiple requests.
- Applicants are urged to have contingency plans should they not receive their entire grant request.
- All items submitted in the Application and as requested by NCDCEd will become part of the binding grant agreement between the recipient and the County of Northampton.
- All projects funded under this announcement must be completed by December 31, 2020.

REPORTS

At project completion, a closeout report is required, which includes the Performance & Financial reports. Reports must be submitted on NCDCEd provided report forms. NCDCEd may conduct onsite monitoring at any point during the grant agreement term and/or at the completion of the project. Records must be maintained for a period of 3 years from the date of the final closeout report or audit report.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

- **Project Narrative** – Describe the community, why the funds are needed, how they will be spent, and the benefit that will result. Describe the COVID-19 impacts that are to be addressed. Be specific so that the reviewer understands the project, understands what is to be accomplished, how it will be accomplished and how the community will benefit.
- **Project Budget** – Complete the Application Program Sources and Uses Budget Spreadsheet as completely and as accurately as possible.
- **Financial Statements** – Submit the previous year's audited/accountant prepared financial statements.
- **Cost Estimates**– An estimate of how much the project will cost from credible sources.
- **W-9** – A current copy of the organizations W-9 must be submitted with the application.

Questions and concerns may be directed to:

Sarah Ortiz, Specialist
Northampton County Department of Community and Economic Development
sortiz@northamptoncounty.org
610-829-6308

Exhibit 1

Contracting Requirements

Contracting shall be done in accordance with all applicable federal, state and local requirements and guidelines. It shall be the responsibility of the Grantee/Sub grantee to ensure that such requirements and guidelines are followed. **Construction projects may be subject to Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage requirements. Please click [here](#) for applicability.**

COMPETITIVE BID REQUIREMENTS

Any good or service purchased under this grant must be done in accordance with your entity's purchasing requirements or the County's, *whichever is most restrictive*. Northampton County's thresholds are as follows:

\$1 to \$5,000	One quote, verbal or written
\$5,001 to \$24,999	Minimum three (3) written quotes. Written documentation must be attached to the transaction, and shall indicate which qualified vendor(s) were contacted, their responses, the date, and other pertinent information besides price, such as delivery, etc.
\$25,000 and above	Need to be procured utilizing a formally advertised public bid

Documented costs may include quotes or advertisements (i.e.: online cost comparisons). Remember to keep copies of all quotes/costs in your project record, as this verifies you followed the appropriate procurement method. Selecting a good or service through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's cooperative purchasing program administered by the Department of General Services (DGS) Bureau of Procurement, the COSTARS Program, is an acceptable alternative to the methods listed above.

PREPARING FOR COMPETITIVE BIDS

The first step in most projects is to document the specific work to be done in order to competitively solicit bids from contractors. On a small project where total construction costs are not expected to exceed \$25,000.00, you may only wish to use an existing estimate or specifications to solicit written estimates from contractors. Most sub-grantees work with an architectural, engineering or other project management firm to develop a bid package that ensures you select the most qualified contractor while complying with local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

Construction projects require specific technical expertise and knowledge of how to comply with state and federal labor requirements. Those not accustomed to overseeing construction projects are highly encouraged to hire a project manager.

ACQUISITION OF ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING SERVICES

When acquiring A/E services to design your site/project, a Request for Proposals (RFP) or a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) may be used. Under an RFQ, you may use competitive proposal procedures whereby the competitors' qualifications are evaluated and the most qualified competitor is selected, subject to negotiation of fair and reasonable compensation. In these instances, price is not used as a selection factor; once the most-qualified firm is identified, only that firm is asked for a price proposal that is subject to negotiation of a fair and reasonable price. If negotiations with the selected firm are unsuccessful, this process is repeated with the next highest-ranked firm, until a fair and reasonably priced contract can be awarded. You must document the basis for your determination of the most qualified competitor and the reasonableness of the contract price.

Note the following requirements if your project is federally funded:

- An RFQ may not be used to purchase other services performed by architects and engineers (24 CFR 85.36) (d) (3) (v). Additional services offered by A/E firms, such as preparation of bid packets, project management or grant writing, must be selected based on lowest cost (using an RFP or other appropriate small purchasing method).
- You cannot award a contract to any person or firm that develops or drafts specifications, requirements, statements of work, invitations for bids, and/or requests for proposals (24 CFR 84.43).
- Architects or engineers selected by municipalities may be reimbursed through your grant if documentation can be supplied that the firm had been selected using an appropriate procurement methodology within the previous three (3) years of the Start Date of the sub-grant agreement and the contract specifically includes project management activities in the scope of services. Otherwise, these costs cannot be paid under the grant.

VENDOR PREFERENCE

When contracts or subcontracts are expected to exceed \$25,000 and are funded in whole or in part by state or federal funds, opportunities must be afforded to businesses and organizations which are eligible for preferential treatment under a variety of laws, Executive Orders, etc. (e.g., the Small Business Act). Eligible organizations include: small, small disadvantaged, women-owned, historically underutilized business zone (HUB Zone), veteran-owned, and service disabled veteran-owned small businesses. These requirements historically included only Minority Owned or Women Owned Businesses (MBE/WBE). While certain funding sources (i.e.: HUD) may only ask for reporting on certain classifications of businesses, including all preferred classes in your preferred bidding process will ensure that all newly emerging requirements are met.

You and any prime contractors are required to advise and provide the maximum practicable opportunity for participation to small and diverse businesses. For federally funded projects, the target participation levels are 5% for minority owned business enterprises and 3% for women owned business enterprises.

Requirements under both state and federally funded projects can be met by accessing the current listing of state-certified Small and Diverse Firms at the following website:

<http://www.dgs.internet.state.pa.us/suppliersearch>

Click on the Advanced Search. Choose "Northampton County from the PA Counties section. Choose the Supplier Classification or check "Select All Classifications". Find the appropriate UNSPSC Codes in the available list. Hit Search. You will receive names of local MBE & WBE vendors and Small Diverse (SD) vendors for the type(s) of businesses you are soliciting.

Repeat for the following counties:

- Bucks
- Carbon
- Lehigh
- Monroe

You must send the bid announcement to any certified business that provides the service or good you need and is located in the five counties listed above. You can choose to solicit other classifications (i.e.: Veteran-Owned Businesses) or non-certified businesses; however, non-certified vendors must agree to register with the Commonwealth in order to receive preference in bidding.

- Keep evidence, such as a fax cover sheet or a copy of the stamped, addressed envelope, showing you successfully sent the bid announcement to each registered business.
- If there are no relevant vendors, print the page showing there were no matches and keep this in your records.