

# 2021 Grow NORCO Program Guidelines

## Round 1

### **Grow NORCO OVERVIEW:**

The Grow NORCO Program (GNP) is designed to be a flexible source of capital that will assist Northampton County municipalities and not-for-profit organizations grow Northampton County's economic prosperity and quality of life. The program will help the County prioritize and allocate its limited resources for the betterment of the County. Funding priorities of the Grow NORCO Program may change from round to round. Non-profits and Municipalities are encouraged to explore creative partnerships to implement their programs and projects. Applications that demonstrate partnerships or that advantage additional funds and resources may be prioritized.

### **2021 Round 1 Grow NORCO Program Guidelines:**

**2021 ROUND 1 IS LIMITED TO NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.** The County of Northampton will competitively award grant funds from the Grow NORCO Program (GNP). A total of \$300,000 is budgeted for this program.

### **Eligible uses:**

1. Operations Grants
2. Capital Improvement Grants

Operational grants to organizations that have been adversely impacted by COVID-19 will receive priority.

### **Eligible entities:**

Northampton County non-profit organizations with under \$3,000,000 in gross receipts in calendar year 2019 that **DID NOT receive any prior Northampton County CARES grant money for operating expenses.**

### **Project Timeline:**

Projects must be completed by December 31, 2021.

Average grant awards will range between \$5,000 and \$10,000. There is a \$15,000 maximum award amount per project. The County reserves the right to fund proposals at higher or lower amounts at its sole discretion.

### **Match requirements:**

A minimum match of \$3 cash for every \$1 granted is required for Operations grant applications.

A minimum match of \$1 cash for every \$1 granted is required for Capital Improvement applications.

## APPLICATION SCHEDULE

- Funding Announcement – **February 12, 2021**
- Application/Proposals Due – **Friday, March 12, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.**
- Anticipated Award Notifications – **April 2021**

## APPLICATION REVIEW

*All grants will be awarded based on a competitive review process. Eligible Projects will meet the GNP Guidelines and Application Requirements found below. The projects that can most effectively address the following criteria will receive preference:*

Scoring Criteria			Scoring Weight
1	<b>Project Need &amp; Approach</b>	A clear need and approach is defined in the project narrative. The project narrative should answer at a minimum who is being served, why the funding is needed and how it will be used.	<b>50%</b>
2	<b>Budget</b>	The budget is clear and reasonable. The cost estimates are from a credible source.	<b>25%</b>
3	<b>Match</b>	The project meets and/or exceeds the match criteria and the match source is clearly identified. The match source is identified and the status documented as being secured or applied for at the time of application.	<b>10%</b>
4	<b>Leverage</b>	The project is leveraging additional funds and/or resources.	<b>5%</b>
5	<b>Project Timeline and Capacity</b>	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.	<b>10%</b>

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Please visit the NCD CED Grant and Loan Programs web page at <https://www.northamptoncounty.org/CMTYECDV/Pages/Apply-for-Funding.aspx> and download all applicable documents associated with the funding announcement. In addition, **all applicants are required to register in the NCD CED County Relationship Manager (CRM)** if applicant has not previously registered and submitted electronic applications through the web. [PLEASE CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#). For new registrants, within 1-2 business days you may upload and submit your electronic application forms through the CRM application. Previous registrants may log-in to CRM and

apply immediately. Click on the apply button located next to the applicable funding program on the NCDCEd Grant and Loan Programs web page to access the CRM application.

**The deadline for submitting a full application is Friday, March 12, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.**

Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Questions about the application process and guidance on eligibility can be directed to Sarah Ortiz at 610-829-6308 or [sortiz@northamptoncounty.org](mailto: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.
- 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, 2021.

### **REPORTS**

Grantees are required to submit Interim Performance and Financial Reports to NCDCEd. Disbursement of funds and future grant awards are contingent upon the timely submission of these reports. At project completion, a Final close-out report is required. 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.

### **APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:**

- **Project Narrative** – Describe the community, why the funds are needed, how they will be spent, and the benefit that will result. 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.
  - **Public Purpose** – Describe how the public is served by the funding of this application.
- **Project Budget** – For Capital Improvement Grants, complete the GNP Program Sources and Uses Budget Spreadsheet as completely and as accurately as possible. For Operations Grants, provide a copy of your 2021 approved operations budget.
- **Financial Statements** – Submit the previous year's audited/accountant prepared financial statements.
- **Project Timeline** - A project timeline that tracks the key activities and the dates necessary to achieving the project's goals and objectives.

- **Cost Estimates/Contracting Requirements** – An estimate of how much the project will cost. *Contracting must meet the criteria established in Exhibit 1 hereto, “Contracting Requirements”.*
- **W-9** – A current copy of the organizations W-9 must be submitted with the application.
- **Document Verifying Non-Profit Status** – Organization by-laws, charter, articles of incorporation or other documentation that proves non-profit status will be accepted

***Questions and concerns may be directed to:***

Sarah Ortiz, Specialist

Northampton County Department of Community and Economic Development

[sortiz@northamptoncounty.org](mailto:sortiz@northamptoncounty.org)

610-829-6308

## **GROW NORCO GRANT GUIDELINES**

### **1. OPERATIONS GRANTS**

#### OVERVIEW

Grants are available to fund operations and staff positions that were adversely affected by COVID-19.

#### OPERATIONS GRANT REQUIREMENTS

- \$3 dollar match for every \$1 dollar granted.
- ***Proof that match funds were secured and expended will be required for project close-out under the grant agreement.***
- Costs incurred prior to agreement term of Grant award are not eligible expenses.

### **2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS**

#### OVERVIEW

Capital Improvement Grants are available for a variety of development projects to help eliminate decline, provide gap financing or “seed” funding to leverage additional funds for capital projects. NCDCED will review each proposal on its own merit and determine whether it clearly serves a public purpose, has strong financial commitments, is part of a cooperative partnership, and is ready to go.

#### EXAMPLE PROJECTS

- Building Improvements
- Equipment Purchases
- Site Improvements

#### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT REQUIREMENTS

- Projects must serve a public purpose.
- \$1 cash match for every \$1 granted.
- 50% of the required match can be documented in-kind services or goods.
- Applications are enhanced in the competitive review when match is provided above the required amounts.
- ***Proof that match funds were secured and expended will be required for project close-out under the grant agreement.***
- Costs incurred prior to agreement term if Grant award are typically not eligible expenses.

## 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/Subgrantee 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 (HUBZone), 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 (ie: 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.