



Tompkins County
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Ithaca, New York 14850

Edward C. Marx, AICP
Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability

Telephone (607) 274-5560

TO: Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee
From: Megan McDonald, Senior Planner
Date: April 26, 2017
Re: Clean Energy Community Grant Application

Action Requested

No action is requested at this time. When a grant award is made, a resolution to accept the award must be approved by the full Legislature.

Background

On April 20, 2017 NYSEDA announced Tompkins County's designation as a Clean Energy Community (CEC), the first in the Southern Tier. NYSEDA's Clean Energy Communities (CEC) initiative (<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Clean-Energy-Communities>) provides each region of New York State with a limited number of grant awards for CEC designated communities. As the first designated community in its region with a population over 40,000 people, Tompkins County is eligible to apply for an award at the maximum funding level of \$250,000.

The CEC grant application needs to be submitted by late May 2017. The project must be ready to commence within six months of NYSEDA award notification and should be completed within three years of contract execution. Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria, and applicants must earn a minimum of 50% of the selection criteria points to be considered eligible.

1. To what extent does the proposer present a thorough, sound, detailed approach for accomplishing the objectives of their proposal within a reasonable timeframe? (25 possible points)
2. To what extent does the project/initiative have a positive direct impact on energy use and greenhouse gas emissions? (15 possible points)
3. To what extent does the project/initiative have other sustainability benefits? (15 possible points)
4. To what extent will efforts be made to collaborate with other municipalities and to transfer knowledge to the broader region and state? (15 possible points)
5. To what extent does the project/initiative involve an innovative and/or replicable approach? (15 possible points)
6. To what extent will the project/initiative leverage public and private dollars and/or generate economic development benefits (i.e. temporary or permanent job creation and investment)? (15 possible points)

Proposed CEC Grant Activity

Initial conversations with the local CEC Coordinator have resulted in the idea of framing the grant proposal as an effort to better address the two largest contributors of GHG emissions in Tompkins County – commercial buildings and transportation. The County has already led by example in making extensive energy efficiency improvements and achieving emissions reductions in its own buildings through the energy performance contract with Johnson Controls and purchase of renewable energy and renewable energy credits. Single family residential building emissions have been, and continue to be, targeted by efforts such as Solar Tompkins, HeatSmart Tompkins, and Energy Smart Community. However, commercial buildings, including multi-family residential, remain the largest GHG emitters and energy consumers.

With regards to transportation, the 2014 Tompkins County Government Operations Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy Use Inventory indicated that compared to buildings, less progress has been made in reducing the County's fleet emissions and energy use. The County is planning to update its green fleet policy, has already begun purchasing electric vehicles, and recognizes that current protocols for employer emissions accounting include the need to measure and reduce the emissions from its own employee commutes. The Downtown Ithaca Alliance, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Ithaca Carshare recently received a NYSERDA award to implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan with the immediate goal of removing up to 400 private vehicles from the city garage system. As a large downtown employer, there is potential for the County to collaborate in this effort. Therefore, the current two-part idea for the CEC grant proposal is:

1. **Energy Navigator** – commit approximately \$100,000-\$120,000 to help fund the three-year Energy Navigator who would develop a targeted program to assist businesses and multi-family landlords in making energy improvements to their facilities. This could include work in cooperation with NYSEG and the NYS Public Service Commission to facilitate efforts to reduce natural gas use and support development in the area around the Ithaca-Tompkins County Regional Airport.
2. **County Fleet Analysis and Management Plan + Employee Commute Effort** – commit the remainder of the award to: an analysis of the County government vehicle fleet in order to provide information that can help in right-sizing the fleet and updating the County Green Fleet Policy; assisting in the purchase of at least two more electric vehicles to replace conventional vehicles in the fleet; and, an analysis of County employee commutes and participation in the downtown Ithaca TDM effort in order to reduce emissions from County employee commuting.

Budget Implications

NYSERDA does not require a local match for the CEC grants, and up to 25% of the grant funds may be available as an advanced payment upon contract execution.

Enclosure

Press Release: NYSERDA Announces Tompkins County as the First County in Southern Tier to Earn Clean Energy Community Designation

Contact

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