NYS Department of State
Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure
SMART GROWTH COMNMUNITY PLANNING PROGRAM (SGCP)
2025 – 2026 Request for Applications
RFA #25-OPDSG-11

The responses to questions included herein are official responses by the Department of State (DOS) to questions submitted by potential applicants and are hereby incorporated into the Request for Applications RFA #25-OPDSG-11 issued on May 19, 2025. In the event of any conflict between the Request for Applications and these responses, the requirements or information contained in these responses will prevail.

DATE POSTED. July 11, 2025

RFA Updates

Section III (Eligible Applicants) is hereby updated to add a new paragraph as follows:

Additionally, communities may enter into intermunicipal agreements to undertake planning activities and land-use regulation with one another if each of the communities has the authority under any state statutory law to prescribe, perform, or exercise the function or power separately. For example, counties do not have authority to adopt zoning regulations and may not adopt joint zoning regulations with a town, city, or village. Please be aware that each participating town, city, or village must formally adopt the joint zoning regulations through its own local legislative process. Applications to complete and adopt joint zoning regulations should be submitted by the entity that the Department should recognize as the primary applicant for all purposes, including contract award.

Clarification: Section VIII page 9 – Demonstration of Need and Indicators of Economic Distress: applicants may utilize alternative sources to determine a community's Median Household Income (MHI), but a clear methodology resulting in statistically valid data must be provided.

Questions & Answers

Q1. Does the NYS DOS Smart Growth Community Planning Grant Program require that a municipality is a certified Pro-Housing Community to be eligible to apply for and receive this funding?

A1. The Smart Growth Community Planning Grant program **does not** require Pro-Housing Community certification to be eligible to apply for and receive funding.

Q2. Would it be possible for municipalities to submit a joint application for a zoning update project? For instance, a village and neighboring town.

Specifically, the Village and Town of Lowville share a joint planning board and, as their names suggest, are geographically adjacent. A coordinated zoning update would allow both municipalities to align their regulations and land use goals, especially since the same core steering committee members would be involved in both efforts. Rather than duplicating work or competing for funding, we believe a joint application would make the most effective use of time and resources.

A2. Yes, communities may enter into intermunicipal agreements to undertake planning activities and land-use regulation with one another if each of the communities has the authority under any state statutory law to prescribe, perform, or exercise the function or power separately. For example, counties do not have authority to adopt zoning regulations and may not adopt joint zoning regulations with a town, city, or village. Please be aware that each participating town, city, or village must formally adopt the joint zoning regulations through its own local legislative process. Applications to complete and adopt joint zoning regulations should be submitted by the entity that the Department should recognize as the primary applicant for all purposes, including contract award.

Q3.

- **Is a comprehensive water study an allowable ask for this grant? We have a village within a town, with a county airport between the two. This village is an integral part of the area's economic development as a whole. Both for distribution and trending industry as well as tourism. We have a huge task ahead of us in planning for and executing long term strategy for upgrades and enlargements of our WWTP and acquiring new wells. It has been overlooked for years and has been a point of contention. I believe we would benefit from some comprehensive planning for both. Would this be allowable?**
- **Are plans addressing a specific topic, such as an infrastructure or transportation plan, allowed?**

A3. No, topical plans are not an eligible activity under Section IV of the Request for Applications (RFA). However, such subjects are often incorporated into comprehensive plans, and topic-specific work completed as part of a broader comprehensive plan or area plan would be considered an eligible activity.

Q4.

- **The City of Corning is working to complete and update an updated Comprehensive Plan by the end of 2025. One of the priority projects that has been identified is updating our Zoning Code to be consistent with our new updated Comprehensive Plan and incorporate smart growth principles. We are nearing the point where we will have a draft plan. Are we able to apply for funding to update our Zoning this CFA cycle prior to our updated plan being adopted?**
- **My community applied for and received a Smart Growth Comprehensive Planning Grant in FY 2024. Can we apply for a Smart Growth Zoning Grant this year?**

A4. Per Section I of the RFA, Applications to establish or update zoning regulations for an entire town, village, or city should be in accordance with a comprehensive plan duly adopted by the local government (town, village, or city) by September 30, 2025.

Q5. Where can I find information on how to develop a comprehensive plan or zoning code?

A5. The Building Strong Communities: DOS Smart Growth Community Planning Program Training provides information on comprehensive plans and zoning codes. It can be reviewed at the following link.

Q6. Can I start my SGCP project before grant awards are announced?

A6. Project costs incurred prior to April 1, 2025, will not be eligible for reimbursement. Expenses incurred before receipt of an executed contract are incurred at the grantees risk and, to be reimbursed, must be eligible and consistent with the contract work plan.

Q7. Can a Not-for-Profit submit applications on behalf of more than one municipality?

A7. Yes. Eligible not-for-profit organizations may submit separate applications for different towns, villages, cities, or counties. Please be aware that each eligible municipality or county must provide a letter or resolution indicating its consent and support for the project.

Q8. My community is considering working with a county, non-profit regional planning board to develop a comprehensive plan, with the intention of having their staff complete the plan if the project is awarded. Is that a permissible approach?

A8. Per the RFA, Section III, Local government applicants may apply jointly with counties, non-profits, or regional planning boards where the intent is for the staff to complete (in whole or in part) the eligible activities. Such applications should identify the municipality, county, non-profit, or regional planning board that the Department should recognize as the primary applicant for all purposes, including contract award.

Q9. Q_17716, the community is listed as having a MHI of approx. $72k per the census data. However, they have a document stating that the MHI is actually 50k per an Income Survey they did for an EFC grant, the status of which expires 7/2026. Can I use that data for this grant/this particular question?

A9. Alternative sources can be used to determine your community's MHI, but a clear, methodology resulting in statistically valid data must be provided.

Q10. Q_17855, The town has intentions of becoming registered/ certified with both the climate smart communities and the AARP programs, however they have not yet done so. This will be a part of the updated plan. Would it be advisable to try to get through the process before proposal submission, or will including the intention in the narrative suffice would you say?

A10. You may only receive points for these certifications if you are certified at the time of application. However, you can certainly include the ambition to pursue both certifications in your application narrative where appropriate.

Q11. Q_12241, While I understand that letters of support are not required, I'm just wondering who would make the most sense to get them from for this particular grant. Would it be better to get them directly from members of the planning and zoning boards, or should they not come from elected officials but members of the community who have been affected by the outdated zoning codes?

A11. Any letters of support are welcome. Typically, letters of support come from relevant elected officials or key community partners such as counties or non-profits. Individuals, particular planning or zoning board chairs, with direct experience with the need for an updated plan or zoning code would be appropriate.

Q12. Are you able to advise on how to go about incorporating an agricultural protection clause into a smart growth community plan?

A12. The Department can provide technical support on matters including the inclusion of agricultural protection clauses into a smart growth plan during development of the contract work plan if an application is awarded funding. However, if being considered as part of an application, we are not able to assist during the open CFA period.

Q13. Would an in-kind contribution totaling 10% of the grant award satisfy the match requirement, or does it need to be a cash match?

A13. In-kind contributions of staff time may satisfy the 10% local share. However, please note that the time of elected officials may not be used as an in-kind contribution.

Final applications are due by 4:00 pm, July 31, 2025