



**Department  
of State**

**Downtown  
Revitalization  
Initiative**

**NY Forward**

**APPLICATION + SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

# **Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Round 6 and NY Forward**

Applications for the DRI Round 6 and/or NY Forward must be received by the appropriate  
Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) by:

**4PM on Friday September 23, 2022**

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# How Do I Submit an Application?

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**page 04****Step 1. Familiarize yourself with the application + resources.**

Key information to support the development and submission of your application, including contact information, deadlines, eligibility criteria, and technical assistance with application development, is summarized in this section.

**page 08****Step 2. Decide which funding program is the best fit.**

Review descriptions of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and NY Forward programs to determine which program is the best fit for your community's needs.

**page 16****Step 3. Submit your letter of intent.**

The letter of intent is optional but is strongly encouraged and is required if you would like to receive one-on-one technical assistance in the development of a NY Forward or joint DRI application. To take advantage of this pre-application technical assistance, be sure to submit your letter of intent by August 10, 2022.

**page 17****Step 4. Get ready to prepare the best application possible!**

Check out tips and best practices that will help you develop a competitive application, including recommended strategies for developing a vision statement, effectively engaging the public, and identifying transformative projects.

**page 20****Step 5. Review the application evaluation criteria.**

Review the State's evaluation criteria to gain a better understanding of the desired attributes of a DRI and/or NY Forward application.

**page 24****Step 6. Develop your application.**

Follow the detailed application requirements to develop your DRI Round 6 and/or NY Forward application.

**page 29****Step 7. Submit your application.**

Review application submission requirements and make sure you submit your completed application via email to the appropriate Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) by 4PM on Friday September 23, 2022. For New York City only, applications must be submitted to the relevant Borough President's office by 4PM on Friday September 2, 2022.

**SECTION 1**

# Key Resources + Deadlines

## What You'll Find in this Section...

This section provides an overview of:

- Eligibility criteria
- Important dates related to application deadlines and the anticipated timing of award announcements
- Resources to support application development, including capacity-building webinars, an informational presentation regarding this application, and one-on-one technical assistance for NY Forward and joint DRI applicants
- Contact information for each Regional Economic Development Council (REDC)

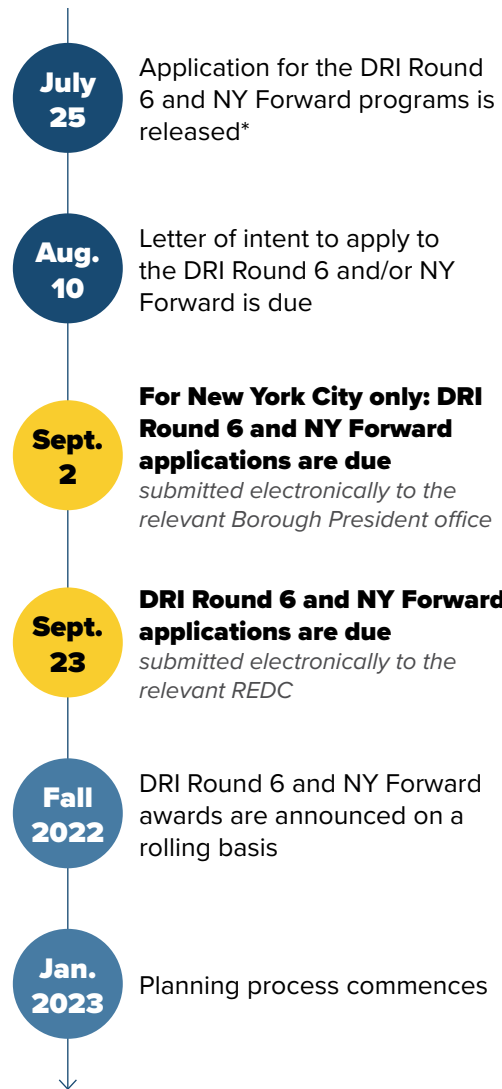
## Eligibility Criteria.

Any New York State town, city, or village is eligible to apply for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and NY Forward programs. Municipalities are permitted to apply for both the DRI and NY Forward in the same grant cycle. However, they are urged to first think carefully about which program may best suit their needs, circumstances, and capabilities (see Section 2 to help determine which program is best for your community).

For DRI Round 6, joint applications of two to three communities in the same REDC region with a single unified vision will be accepted.

If a municipality has already received funding through the DRI program in past rounds, it is eligible to apply to the DRI and/or NY Forward programs for a different area.

## Schedule.



*\*From July through September, capacity-building webinars will be available. See the next page for more information.*

**SECTION 1** KEY RESOURCES + DEADLINES



**Capacity-Building Webinars.**

The Department of State (DOS), in partnership with the Land Use Law Center of Pace University, will be providing publicly available capacity-building webinars from July through September. A total of six webinars on the fundamentals of downtown revitalization will be offered. The schedule and content are described below.

To register for one of the following capacity building webinars, please visit: [www.ny.gov/ny-forward/ny-forward-capacity-building-webinars](http://www.ny.gov/ny-forward/ny-forward-capacity-building-webinars)

**Thursday, July 28 @ 1PM:**

***Introduction / Community Inventory***

This introductory webinar will present the fundamentals of community revitalization and provide participants with tools for evaluating their readiness for undertaking transformative changes in the public realm, built environment, economic base, and residential sphere. Participants will learn how to inventory their community’s core assets and prevailing challenges in order to determine their administrative readiness for advancing long-term revitalization initiatives. The content of future webinars in the series will also be summarized.

**Thursday, August 11 @ 1PM:**

***Visioning, Goal Setting, and Outreach***

This webinar will outline a step-by-step process for actively engaging local residents in participatory and interactive visioning exercises aimed at establishing long-term community goals. Attendees will learn how to leverage existing community networks and maximize participation through in-person events, virtual meetings, and online surveys.



**Resources to Support Application Development.**

Three different forms of support are being offered to help municipalities with the development of their DRI Round 6 and/or NY Forward applications:



**Capacity-building webinars** on the fundamentals of downtown revitalization will be offered from July through September.



**A pre-recorded informational webinar** providing a detailed overview of the DRI/NY Forward application requirements, evaluation criteria, and submission requirements.



**One-on-one technical assistance** with the development of NY Forward applications.



**DRI and NY Forward Websites.**

For additional program information and updates, please visit:

- [www.ny.gov/programs/downtown-revitalization-initiative](http://www.ny.gov/programs/downtown-revitalization-initiative)
- [www.ny.gov/programs/ny-forward](http://www.ny.gov/programs/ny-forward)

**SECTION 1** KEY RESOURCES + DEADLINES**Thursday, August 18 @ 1PM:*****Community Needs Assessment***

Many small communities lack a dedicated planner with the range of technical skills in quantitative and spatial analysis that are typically required for community needs assessments. This module will guide participants through “short-cuts” in the technical assessment process and demonstrate easy-to-use online tools in statistical analysis, mapping, and real estate market research so that users can create a robust data driven profile of a community’s core assets and most salient challenges.

**Tuesday, August 23 @ 1PM:*****Placemaking Strategies and Early Project Identification***

The webinar will show participants how to take the “data” from the visioning process and combine it with the findings from the community needs assessment to begin formulating a coherent placemaking strategy and generate development interest. We will show communities how to harness their fullest economic potential and build momentum regardless of their small population sizes, geographic distance from major employment hubs, or absence of transportation connections.

**Thursday, August 25 @ 1PM:*****Project Development***

The webinar will help participants understand how to transform their early placemaking concepts into a synergistic set of transformative projects. Key issues addressed will be defining a project’s purpose and goals; relating the project goals to the community needs assessment; preparing conceptual designs; and developing a feasible project implementation plan.

**Thursday, September 8 @ 1PM:*****Implementation of a Revitalization Plan***

This webinar will focus on strategies for implementing a revitalization plan and avoiding project delays or cancellations. Key topics included in this webinar will be organizing implementation partners; amending the comprehensive plan and zoning code; shepherding a project through approval processes; and leveraging project successes for further revitalization initiatives.

**Application Webinar.**

A pre-recorded informational webinar focused on the DRI/NY Forward application will be posted online on August 10, 2022. This webinar will provide a detailed overview of the desired attributes of a DRI/NY Forward application and will discuss the application and submission requirements.

You can access the informational webinar by visiting either the DRI or NY Forward websites:

- [www.ny.gov/programs/downtown-revitalization-initiative](http://www.ny.gov/programs/downtown-revitalization-initiative)
- [www.ny.gov/programs/ny-forward](http://www.ny.gov/programs/ny-forward)

**One-On-One Technical Assistance.**

By submitting a letter of intent to apply (see Section 3), municipalities applying for the NY Forward program or submitting a joint application to DRI Round 6 will be eligible to register for office hours with technical experts who can provide advice and guidance on application development. Letter of intent submissions received after August 10, 2022 will not be guaranteed access to office hours.

**SECTION 1** KEY RESOURCES + DEADLINES**Contact Information.**

The REDCs are an important resource throughout the application development phase, and their contact information is listed below.

- All questions related to application development should be directed to the relevant REDC.
- Final applications from interested communities must be submitted electronically to the relevant REDC by 4PM on Friday September 23, 2022. For New York City only, applications must be submitted via email to the relevant Borough President's office by 4PM on Friday September 2, 2022.

**Capital Region**

[NYS-CapitalDist@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-CapitalDist@esd.ny.gov)

*Albany, Columbia, Greene, Saratoga, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Warren, and Washington Counties*

**Central New York Region**

[NYS-CentralNY@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-CentralNY@esd.ny.gov)

*Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties*

**Finger Lakes Region**

[NYS-FingerLakes@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-FingerLakes@esd.ny.gov)

*Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates Counties*

**Long Island Region**

[LIREDC@esd.ny.gov](mailto:LIREDC@esd.ny.gov)

*Nassau and Suffolk Counties*

**Mid-Hudson Region**

[NYS-MidHudson@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-MidHudson@esd.ny.gov)

*Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester Counties*

**Mohawk Valley Region**

[NYS-MohawkVal@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-MohawkVal@esd.ny.gov)

*Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties*

**North Country Region**

[NYS-NorthCountry@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-NorthCountry@esd.ny.gov)

*Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties*

**Souther Tier Region**

[NYS-SouthernTier@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-SouthernTier@esd.ny.gov)

*Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties*

**Western New York Region**

[NYS-WNY-REDC@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-WNY-REDC@esd.ny.gov)

*Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, and Niagara Counties*

**New York City Borough Presidents**

Bronx: Rafael Roger at  
[rroger@boedc.org](mailto:rroger@boedc.org)

Brooklyn: Inna Guzenfeld  
[inna.guzenfeld@brooklynbp.nyc.gov](mailto:inna.guzenfeld@brooklynbp.nyc.gov)

Manhattan: Amy Slattery at  
[aslattery@manhattanbp.nyc.gov](mailto:aslattery@manhattanbp.nyc.gov)

Queens: Shurn Anderson at  
[sanderson@queensbp.org](mailto:sanderson@queensbp.org)

Staten Island: Dr. Ram Raju at  
[rāju@statenislandusa.com](mailto:rāju@statenislandusa.com)

## SECTION 2

# Overview of the DRI and NY Forward Programs

## What You'll Find in this Section...

The overarching goals of the DRI and NY Forward programs are to **revitalize downtowns and reinvigorate local and regional economies.** Applicants are encouraged to carefully review this section to better understand how each funding program relates to their communities' needs, circumstances, and capabilities. The following topics are covered in this section:

- Description of the DRI Program, including community characteristics and available funding
- Description of the NY Forward program, including community characteristics and available funding
- A chart comparing and contrasting the DRI and NY Forward programs
- A description of the planning process for both programs
- Potential project types that can be funded through both programs
- Eligible / ineligible activities for both programs

## DRI and NY Forward Program Goals.



Creating an active downtown with a strong sense of place



Attracting new businesses that create a robust mix of shopping, entertainment and service options for residents and visitors, and that provide job opportunities for a variety of skills and salaries



Enhancing public spaces for arts and cultural events that serve the existing members of the community but also draw in attendees from around the region



Building a diverse population, with residents and workers supported by complementary diverse housing and employment opportunities



Growing the local property tax base



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality of life



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by creating compact, walkable development patterns that increase public transit ridership and allow for adoption of district-wide decarbonized heating and cooling; and by supporting efficiency and electrification of buildings, installation of on-site renewable energy generation, and electric vehicle charging



## SECTION 2 OVERVIEW OF THE DRI AND NY FORWARD PROGRAMS

### **DRI Program Overview.**

The DOS administers the Governor's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) in close coordination with Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), Empire State Development (ESD), New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA), and several other agency partners.

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative was launched in 2016 to accelerate revitalization of downtowns in all ten regions of the State so that they serve as centers of activity and catalysts for increased local investment. As a cornerstone of the State's economic development program, the DRI transforms downtown neighborhoods into vibrant centers that offer a high quality of life and become magnets for redevelopment, business growth, job creation, and economic and housing diversity. These compact, walkable downtowns are a key ingredient in helping the State rebuild its economy and civic/community bonds after the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### ***Community Characteristics***

In general, DRI communities represent larger geographical areas with a regional draw, including major employment centers, tourism attractions, a walkable network of destinations, and relatively dense urban development characterized by diverse land uses. Multi-modal transportation infrastructure is also often available (e.g., mass transit, trails) or has the potential to be made available.

#### ***Available Funding for the DRI Round 6***

The State has allocated \$100 million for DRI Round 6 to be invested in 10 new communities. \$10 million will be awarded to one community or a partnership of two to three smaller communities with a single unified vision in each of the State's ten REDC regions. After a thorough review of each application, the REDCs will nominate awardees.

### **NY Forward Program Overview.**

NY Forward supports a more equitable downtown recovery for New York's smaller and rural communities, with a focus on hamlets, villages, and neighborhood-scale municipal centers. Through the NY Forward program, these smaller downtowns will attract more businesses, residents, and visitors, while also providing a higher quality of life for residents.

#### ***Community Characteristics***

In general, NY Forward communities are smaller geographical areas with a concentrated activity node that provides important services to the local community/neighborhood. These areas often feature a distinct sense of place due to the presence of rich cultural, historic, natural, and/or agricultural assets. Development is often less dense than in a DRI community; however, NY Forward communities are still compact and walkable. Examples of a NY Forward community may include villages, hamlets, and residential neighborhood centers nested within a larger municipality.

#### ***Available Funding for NY Forward***

The State has allocated \$100 million for the first round of NY Forward. Each of the State's ten REDCs will have the option of nominating two communities for \$4.5 million NY Forward awards or three communities one of which will receive \$4.5 million and two that will be awarded \$2.25 million. NY Forward funds will also be used to provide robust capacity-building and technical assistance directly to communities throughout each phase of the program.

**SECTION 2**

OVERVIEW OF THE DRI AND NY FORWARD PROGRAMS

**Which Funding Program is the Best Fit for Your Community?**

The chart below compares and contrasts several elements of the DRI and NY Forward programs to help communities better understand the programs and make an informed decision about which to apply for.

*New York municipalities and regions are diverse in terms of scale, socio-demographic characteristics, connectivity, and development type and density. Please note that the descriptions contained in the following charts are intended to be representative and therefore may not fully capture the unique characteristics of every community or region.*

Community Characteristics	
DRI	NY Forward
Larger, walkable, more dense geographical areas with amenities that serve the regional community	Smaller, walkable, less dense geographical areas with amenities that serve the immediate local community
Multi-modal transportation, including mass transit options	More vehicle dependent; patrons mainly arrive by car
Employment center for the regional economy	Community center that is service-oriented. Services may include maintaining employment and job growth.
Larger, urban tourist center with more attractions to offer spread out over several blocks of development — walkable between multiple nodes of activities/ attractions	Small-town charm – with heritage, antiques, cottage, agriculture and other niche based tourism. In NYC, Business Improvement District (BID)-scale residential-focused districts
Availability or potential for rail/bus/ferry public transportation making Transit Oriented Development possible	Vehicle dependent with limited public transportation potential. Residential, or rural agricultural centric development
High-density development: height, units, acre, etc., potentially more than one commercial strip in the community	Low-density: building height, units, acres, etc., tight commercial strip
Existing or potential for higher density buildings, multi-story buildings with opportunities for upper story housing	Lower density - Two to four story buildings with opportunities for upper story housing



**SECTION 2** OVERVIEW OF THE DRI AND NY FORWARD PROGRAMS

**Community Selection and Funding**

DRI	NY Forward
\$10M in each region — either to one community or a joint application from two to three smaller communities with a single unified vision	\$10M in each region - either two \$4.5M awards OR one award of \$4.5M and two awards of \$2.25M each
\$300K assessed from each regional award for professional consulting services through the planning phase	NY Forward funds used toward technical assistance, capacity building webinars, and private consultant teams will not be deducted from community awards
REDCs nominate communities to the State	REDCs nominate communities

**Potential Projects**

DRI	NY Forward
Larger private, mixed-use projects	Smaller projects focused more on building renovation and redevelopment and activation of upper-stories (ex: housing, additional commercial) rather than new construction
Adaptive reuse	Adaptive reuse
New construction projects on developable properties, creating new spaces	Projects that deal primarily with vacancy and rehabilitation, but may include new construction or creation of new space
Projects that elevate urban- and employment-based downtown qualities and enhance the regional draw of the DRI area	Projects that elevate specific cultural, historical qualities that enhance the feeling of small-town charm
Communities must demonstrate more than \$10M of shovel ready revitalization projects and a high potential in leveraging capital investments in their applications	Application must demonstrate \$3-5M in multiple synergistic projects. <i>Final project award funding cannot be used for one sole project.</i>
Wayfinding projects to connect the network of amenities and attractions distributed over several commercial corridors	Tight commercial activity area with opportunity to enhance cultural heritage through signage or historic markers

## SECTION 2

## OVERVIEW OF THE DRI AND NY FORWARD PROGRAMS

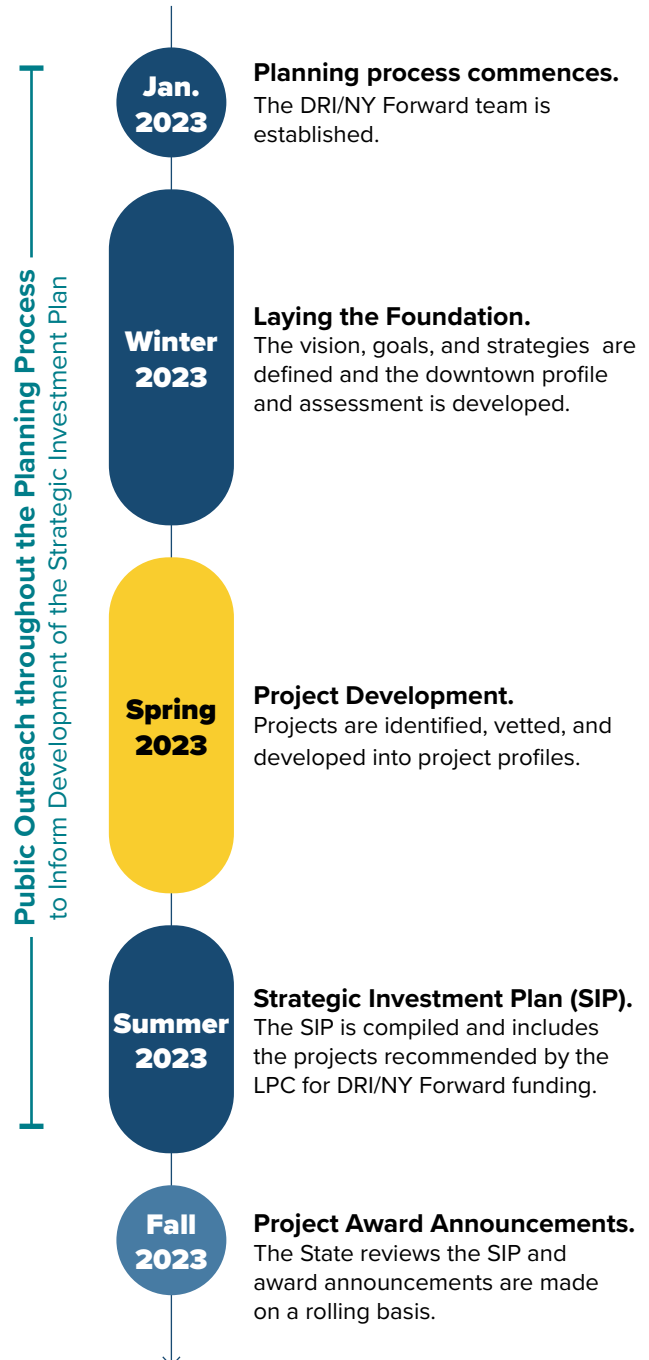
### The Planning Process.

Both the DRI and NY Forward programs employ an innovative “plan-then-act” strategy that couples strategic planning with immediate implementation. Winning communities are paired with a consulting team and a project manager from the DOS who will guide communities through a targeted six-month planning process focused on the development of a Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), which defines the community’s vision, goals, and strategies for revitalizing their downtown and identifies a suite of complementary and transformative projects to help the community achieve their vision for downtown revitalization.

In each community selected to participate in DRI or NY Forward, a Local Planning Committee (LPC) comprised of local stakeholders will be convened to oversee the planning process and the development of the SIP.

Over the course of the six month planning process, the LPC — with significant support from State agency partners and a consultant team — will work closely with the local community to:

- Review and refine the vision statement included in the DRI/NY Forward application
- Develop a clear and concise downtown profile and assessment to articulate the story of the region and the downtown, identify key challenges and opportunities, and provide the logical basis for project identification
- Establish goals and strategies to achieve the community’s vision
- Identify, vet, and develop projects that



**SECTION 2**

## OVERVIEW OF THE DRI AND NY FORWARD PROGRAMS

advance the community's vision, goals, and strategies for revitalization

- Private project sponsors of projects for new construction or major renovations will meet with energy consultants to identify ways of improving building performance and contribute to the State's clean energy and healthy community goals
- Develop detailed project profiles for each project that the LPC recommends for DRI/ NY Forward funding (the LPC will identify a final slate of projects in excess of the available DRI/NY Forward funding)
- Undertake broad public engagement throughout the entire planning process to solicit input, shape the community's vision for downtown, identify projects, and build support for plan implementation

A consultant team will compile the SIP, which will be submitted to the State for review. Each project recommended for DRI/NY Forward funding will be evaluated by a State agency team and a subset of recommended projects will be selected for funding by the Department of State.

Project awards will be announced in the Fall of 2023. Immediately following award announcements, project contracts will be negotiated and executed between project sponsors and relevant State agencies / authorities. The contracts will administered by a variety of agencies and authorities, with the majority held by the Department of State, Empire State Development, and the Housing Trust Fund.

**i****Examples of Past SIPs.**

Are you interested in seeing what a final SIP looks like? You can review SIPs from the past four rounds of the DRI by visiting:

[www.ny.gov/programs/downtown-revitalization-initiative](http://www.ny.gov/programs/downtown-revitalization-initiative)

Reviewing past SIPs will provide several examples of strong vision statements, an overview of the different types of public engagement conducted throughout the planning process, and a better sense of the level to which projects are developed that are being recommended for funding. Remember, the SIPs are a product of teamwork and represent significant contributions from the LPC, the public, project sponsors, State agencies, and the consultant team.

**SECTION 2**

## OVERVIEW OF THE DRI AND NY FORWARD PROGRAMS

**Eligible Project Types.**

During the DRI/NY Forward application process, communities are asked to describe a range of transformative projects and opportunities to demonstrate that the community is ready to move forward with thoughtful and catalytic projects that will benefit a growing downtown. If a community is selected to receive DRI and/or NY Forward funding, all projects submitted in the application will be further vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State during an open, community-based planning process. This planning process is designed to encourage creative and innovative approaches to downtown revitalization, and will result in a list of potential projects, including some that were contemplated in the initial application and others that arose during the process.

It is expected that the majority of DRI/NY Forward funds will be used for capital projects that will transform the physical environment of the downtown in ways that will benefit current residents and future generations. However, certain non-capital projects will also be considered to the extent that they will contribute to the revitalization of the downtown and are consistent with the community's vision and goals. Projects will generally fall into the following categories.

**Public Improvement Projects**

Projects in this category may include infrastructure projects such as broadband and other communications connectivity, green infrastructure, streetscape improvements, transportation, recreational trails, signage, new and upgraded parks and plazas, public art, and other public realm projects that will contribute to revitalization of the downtown.

***New Development and/or Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings***

Projects in this category may include development or redevelopment of real property for mixed-use, commercial, or public uses. They should have a visible and functional impact on the downtown, serving as anchor, catalytic or transformative projects that will provide employment opportunities, housing choices, and/or services for the community. Projects should employ decarbonization strategies consistent with the State's goals under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). Construction or rehab of stand-alone parking garages not connected with other uses will not be considered for funding.

***Grant Fund or Revolving Loan Fund***

A locally managed fund may be proposed to undertake a range of smaller downtown projects such as façade improvements, public art, and physical improvements to existing and/or vacant commercial or mixed-use space. Projects that are significant, such as new construction, should not be proposed for a fund and instead should be proposed as their own individual project.

***Branding and Marketing***

Projects in this category may include downtown branding and marketing projects that may target residents, investors, developers, tourists, and/or visitors. The costs eligible under this category must be one-time expenses, such as those to develop materials and signage. Ongoing operational costs, such as to fund a downtown manager or maintain a website, are not eligible for funding.

## SECTION 2

## OVERVIEW OF THE DRI AND NY FORWARD PROGRAMS

### Project Requirements.

The DRI and NY Forward programs are designed to fund shovel-ready, transformational projects that have the potential to create an immediate, positive effect on a community's downtown. Projects identified in a DRI and/or NY Forward application should meet the following criteria:

#### **Project Sponsors**

DRI/NY Forward funding awards may be awarded to public, not-for-profit, and private entities to implement projects selected for funding. Project sponsors must have the capacity and legal authority to undertake the proposed project.

#### **Timing**

Projects must be able to break ground within two years or sooner of receiving DRI/NY Forward grant funds.

#### **Matching Funds**

New York communities are diverse. To meet the opportunities and challenges throughout the State, there are no programmatic minimum match requirements for the DRI or NY Forward. However, the LPC may impose match requirements as part of the planning process.

#### **Decarbonization**

For the DRI program, projects that represent new construction (over 5,000 SF) and substantial rehabilitation (over 10,000 SF and 50% or more of the current value) will be required to meet the New York Stretch Energy Code, regardless of local adoption of the code. While encouraged, decarbonization strategies are not required for NY Forward projects. Energy consultants will be available to support project sponsors in meeting this requirement.

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### Ineligible Activities

There are very few restrictions on the use of DRI/NY Forward funds other than the requirement that proposed projects can be implemented quickly and, as a whole, will have a transformational impact on the downtown. However, a few specific activities have been identified as ineligible for DRI/NY Forward funds and should not be included in projects proposed for DRI /NY Forward funding. These ineligible activities include:

- **Planning activities.** Following the preparation of the Strategic Investment Plan, all DRI/NY Forward funds must be used for projects that directly implement the plan.
- **Operations and maintenance.** DRI/ NY Forward funds cannot be used for on-going or routine expenses, such as staff salaries and wages, rent, utilities, and property up-keep.
- **Pre-award costs.** Reimbursement for costs incurred before the Strategic Investment Plan is complete and before funding awards are announced is not permitted.
- **Property acquisition.** The cost of property acquisition can be included in the overall project budget, but the acquisition must be funded by another funding source.
- **Training and other program expenses.** The DRI and NY Forward programs are a one-time infusion of funds and cannot be used to cover continuous costs, such as training costs and expenses related to existing programs.

**SECTION 3**

# Letter of Intent

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## Letter of Intent to Apply.

Communities intending to apply to DRI Round 6 and/or NY Forward are strongly encouraged to submit a [letter of intent form](#) no later than August 10, 2022.

Information provided in the letter of intent will be considered preliminary and is not binding. It is expected that communities may refine, add to, or alter the area of focus and/or the list of key stakeholders and interested parties as final applications are developed.

Completed letter of intent forms should be submitted by email to the relevant REDC (see Section 1 for REDC contact information).

## Technical Assistance for Communities Preparing a NY Forward or Joint DRI Application.

Once NY Forward applicants or municipalities preparing a joint application for DRI Round 6 submit their letter of intent to apply, they will be eligible to participate in office hours with technical experts who can provide advice and guidance on application development. Letter of intent submissions received after August 10, 2022, will not be guaranteed access to the office hours.

Registration information for office hours will be provided upon receipt of a completed letter of intent form.



**SECTION 4**

# Application Tips and Best Practices

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## How to Prepare the Best Application Possible.

This section provides tips and best practices to help applicants meet REDC and State expectations and prepare the most competitive application possible. Please review this section prior to preparing your application and refer back to this section throughout application development.

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to participate in the capacity building webinars described in Section 1 and to submit their letter of intent form in order to receive technical assistance with their application development.

### *Traits of Winning Applications*

- Responses to each application requirement are complete, concise, and thoughtfully considered
- Applications are informed by robust community engagement
- Applications present a compelling, community-based vision for revitalization
- Proposed projects are well-aligned with the community vision
- Proposed projects are feasible and have been developed in coordination with project sponsors / property owners

## *Conduct Meaningful Community Outreach to Build Support for the Application.*

A minimum of one public event must be held during the development of the DRI/NY Forward application. The public meeting should provide an opportunity for the community to:

- Contribute to the development of the downtown vision
- Identify needs, opportunities, and potential projects — such as improved public transportation, increased access to affordable childcare, or new retail spaces to diversify the downtown’s current offerings
- Review preliminary list of projects to be included in the application and propose additional ideas

In order to maximize participation at the public event, applicants should:

- Advertise the event at least two weeks in advance through a variety of different media (e.g., local press, municipal website, social media, hard-copies of flyers posted in prominent public locations)
- Host the event in an ADA-accessible location and make translation and/or interpretation services available upon request to ensure the meeting is accessible to all members of the community
- Consider hosting the public event in tandem with another standing community event that typically draws a large local crowd (e.g., farmer’s market, summer concert series, etc.)

## SECTION 4 APPLICATION TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

If possible, communities should also consider providing multiple opportunities for the public to provide feedback during application development. Potential additional engagement strategies include:

- **Create an open call for project proposals to solicit project ideas from the community.** It's helpful to provide digital and hard-copies of the Open Call and make sure applicants are given sufficient time to respond (two weeks or more).
- **Create a website or webpage dedicated to the municipality's DRI and/or NY Forward application.** This digital resource can provide a centralized location for the community to access information related to the municipality's application, learn about upcoming events, host an online survey, and/or submit questions/comments.
- **Go to them!** Tabling at local events or attending standing community meetings can be a great way to engage and solicit input from community members without requiring them to attend another, separate meeting.

### ***Craft a Strong, Community-Supported Vision Statement.***

Developing a community-driven vision statement for downtown revitalization is an important part of the application process. This vision statement must be compelling, cohesive, and inclusive, and it should be clearly related to the potential projects identified in the community's application.

For winning communities, this vision statement will be refined through the planning process with additional input from the LPC and public. The final vision statement will serve as an important compass for identifying, evaluating,

and determining which projects will be included in the final Strategic Investment Plan.

As you begin to craft your vision statement for the DRI and/or NY Forward application, it's helpful to start by engaging the public. Potential questions to ask the community include:

- In your opinion, what is downtown's greatest asset? What is its greatest challenge?
- How would you describe downtown today?
- How would you like to describe downtown ten years from now?

If your engagement is broad and diverse, the answers to the above questions will provide a helpful starting point to crafting a strong, community-supported vision statement.

### **Sample Vision Statements**

The following vision statements are from DRI communities in previous rounds:

*Westbury will be Long Island's model transit-oriented, diverse, walkable, arts-centric downtown.*

*Owego will leverage its access to one of America's great rivers; its historical charm; its growing arts scene; its safe, friendly, and walkable atmosphere; and its proximity to major regional employers, to improve quality-of-life, resiliency, and economic opportunities for new and future residents, while attracting visitors to enjoy all of the recreational, cultural, and shopping assets that Owego has to offer.*

## SECTION 4 APPLICATION TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

### ***Identify Transformative Projects that are Poised for Implementation.***

As part of the DRI/NY Forward application, applicants are required to describe a range of transformative projects and opportunities that could become part of the community's Strategic Investment Plan. Although these projects are not guaranteed DRI or NY Forward funding, the preliminary identification of a robust, feasible slate of projects is critical to assembling a competitive application.

As you identify potential projects to include in your DRI/NY Forward application, please make sure each proposed project:

- Meets the project requirements specified in Section 2 (see page 15)
- Has been coordinated with property owners and/or project sponsors
- Is aligned with the community's vision for downtown revitalization
- Is aligned with the State's program goals defined in Section 2 (see page 8)
- Is publicly supported
- Demonstrates benefits to the broader community, not just the project sponsor
- Is ready for implementation
- Leverages other funding sources to the greatest extent possible
- Is led by a project sponsor with the ability to implement and sustain the proposed project and administer a State grant

### **i**

### **Case Studies of Successful DRI Projects.**

You can check out several of the projects that have been built using DRI funding by visiting:

[www.ny.gov/downtown-revitalization-initiative/dri-focus-case-studies-successful-dri-communities-projects](http://www.ny.gov/downtown-revitalization-initiative/dri-focus-case-studies-successful-dri-communities-projects)

Reviewing these case studies should give you a better sense of what a successful DRI or NY Forward project might look like. Successful DRI projects often build on other related planning efforts, create new destinations with regional draw, implement decarbonization strategies, expand services for the local community, and preserve and amplify a community's character and unique sense of place.

## SECTION 5

# Evaluation Criteria

## What You'll Find in this Section...

This section describes the desired attributes of a DRI/NY Forward application. These desired attributes represent the criteria that the REDC will use as they evaluate each DRI/NY Forward application. Please review this section carefully and refer back to it frequently as you develop your application.

Each REDC will consider the extent to which applications describe a downtown that meets the following list of desired attributes for participation in the DRI and/or NY Forward:

### 1. *Well-Defined Boundaries*

The downtown should be compact, with well-defined boundaries. There is no absolute minimum or maximum size for a downtown, but it must be a concentrated, defined area and should be easily walkable. A downtown can range from a corridor or few block(s) of a neighborhood to the municipality's traditional central business district. Core neighborhoods beyond the central business district are also eligible. For example, an arts or entertainment district could be the focus of the DRI/NY Forward if it is shown that investments in these areas complement an existing downtown.

**i**

## Evaluation Criteria for DRI and NY Forward Applications.

- Well-Defined Boundaries
- Past Investments, Future Potential
- Recent or Impending Job Growth
- Quality of Life
- Supportive Local Policies
- Public Support
- Transformative Project Opportunities and Readiness
- Administrative Capacity

## SECTION 5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

### **2. Past Investments, Future Potential**

The downtown should be able and ready to capitalize on prior public and private investment or catalyze future investments in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas as evidenced by:

- The presence of nearby investments planned or undertaken through the REDC or with other public or private funding;
- Continuity with the REDC's previously articulated vision for the area/region and consistency with recent planning efforts for the area;
- The existence of developable properties within the downtown, including properties that can be utilized for varying levels of housing affordability and mixed uses;
- The growth potential and community involvement of anchor institutions in or near the downtown;
- The municipality's current investment commitment to the downtown, as demonstrated by business improvement districts, actively engaged industrial development agencies, and land banks, or partnerships with non-profits;
- The ability of existing infrastructure to support development of the downtown, and the potential to maximize recent infrastructure upgrades;
- Application of Smart Growth principles;
- Potential for development of energy-efficient projects and opportunities for green jobs; and
- Investments in arts and cultural institutions and activities.

### **3. Recent or Impending Job Growth**

A crucial characteristic is recent or impending job growth within or near the downtown, which may be a result of Regional Council commitments or other public and private investments. The attraction of a diverse workforce and population in the downtown will support redevelopment and make growth sustainable in the long-term. Job growth should also be accompanied by:

- The presence of major job-creating projects and initiatives near the downtown;
- The existence of new and expanding employers;
- Accessibility of new and existing jobs from the downtown by foot or public transportation; and
- Diversity in area job opportunities, with different salaries and entry levels and the potential for mobility between jobs.

### **4. Quality of Life**

The downtown should have the potential to be an attractive and livable community for diverse populations of varying ages, income, ability, mobility, and cultural background. The following characteristics are examples of desirable qualities:

- Housing at different levels of affordability and type;
- Commercial and retail main street businesses;
- An assortment of food choices, including restaurants, healthy and affordable food markets, and farmers' markets;
- Multi-modal transportation to and from employment centers, other downtowns, and/or regional attractions;

## SECTION 5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Decarbonized buildings that provide improved living and working environments;
  - Walkability and bikeability within the downtown and connecting the downtown to surrounding open space networks and regional destinations;
  - Accessible recreational amenities, waterfront trails, parks and gathering spaces;
  - Access to health care facilities;
  - Community spaces, institutions and events that reflect the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity of the population of the State;
  - Academic, cultural and entertainment amenities;
  - Broadband accessibility; and
  - Community design and/or housing that caters to all ages.
- Adaptive re-use policies, program, incentives or laws;
  - Prior adoption of New York State Stretch Code;
  - Strategies and actions that cut energy use, reduce emissions, and adapt to climate change such as those required for certification as a Climate Smart Community or Clean Energy Community;
  - Existence of a management structure, such as a downtown manager or downtown business improvement district;
  - Application of Complete Streets principles that add to the enjoyment of amenities by all abilities and ages;
  - Presence of expansive non-discrimination laws and/or other protections of diverse populations;
  - Application of Smart Cities innovation technology; and
  - Policies that would make the community eligible for Age-Friendly Community Certification from AARP/WHO.

### 5. Supportive Local Policies

The municipality should already embrace or be able to create and implement policies that increase livability and quality of life for all New Yorkers, including:

- Planning and implementation documents that may include but are not limited to economic development, brownfield cleanup and redevelopment, community development, housing affordability, affirmatively furthering fair housing, and civic engagement;
- Use of modern zoning codes and development standards that promote smart growth principles such as a mix of uses, compact development, transit-oriented development, shared parking, and walkability;

### 6. Public Support

The municipality has conducted an open and robust community engagement process in support of the application. This outreach should result in a vision for downtown revitalization and a preliminary list of projects and initiatives that may be included in a Strategic Investment Plan. Evidence of the community's commitment to work together to advance revitalization efforts is demonstrated.

## SECTION 5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

### ***7. Transformative Project Opportunities and Readiness***

The municipality is prepared for near-term implementation of projects that will advance downtown revitalization. It may propose projects that meet the project requirements specified in Section 2 and that fall into the following categories:

- Projects that will be ready for implementation with an infusion of DRI/ NY Forward funds within the first one to two years (depending on the scope and complexity of the project) and that may leverage DRI/NY Forward funding with private investment or other funds. Examples of the ways project readiness may be demonstrated include, but are not limited to, completion of feasibility and market studies, preliminary site design, site control of key properties by willing partners, funding commitments, and/or expression of interest by developers and investors.
- Other transformative opportunities that may be explored during the planning process such as reuse of vacant and developable properties and underutilized buildings; projects to address unmet needs in the downtown, including housing, retail, and community services; and activities that will build upon regional strengths and trends.
- A limited grant or revolving loan fund to undertake smaller projects that, collectively, will create a more vibrant and active downtown. If a loan or grant fund is proposed, the municipality or other local entity should have the capacity to manage the fund.

### ***8. Administrative Capacity***

The municipality has the local capacity to manage the planning process and implementation of projects, including the ability to oversee contracts for awarded municipal projects.

## SECTION 6

# DRI/NY Forward Application

## What You'll Find in this Section...

This section includes the application requirements for both DRI Round 6 and NY Forward.

Please review this section carefully, as the REDCs will review each application based on the evaluation criteria specified in Section 5. All applications should be as complete and succinct as possible. The topics covered in this section include:

- General requirements
- Application requirements

## General Requirements.

### *Application Length*

Applications shall be limited to 20 pages, inclusive of all maps and graphics. The cover page and letters of support do not count toward the page limit.

### *Application Format*

Applications should be submitted as a single PDF document and should not exceed 15MB in size to enable transmission of the application via email to the appropriate REDC.

### *If You Plan to Apply to Both the DRI and NY Forward Programs*

If applying to both the DRI and NY Forward programs, one application may be submitted if the NY Forward area is the same as or a subset of the DRI area. If the NY Forward area is not fully contained within the DRI area, please submit two separate applications (one for the NY Forward area and one for the DRI area).

## Applying to Both the DRI and NY Forward...

You may submit one application if the NY Forward area is the same as or is a subset of the DRI area.



If the NY Forward area is not fully encompassed by the DRI areas (non-overlapping or partially overlapping areas), then two separate applications must be submitted.





## SECTION 6 DRI/NY Forward Application

### 1. Application Cover Page

The cover page of each application must include the following information:

- REDC region
- Program to which you are applying (DRI Round 6, NY Forward, or both)
- Municipality name (if a DRI joint application, please list all municipalities)
- Downtown name or names, if applicable
- County name
- Applicant contact(s) name, title, and email address (if a DRI joint application, please identify a primary contact)

### 2. Geographic Area and Justification.

***Clearly define the proposed DRI and/or NY Forward area and explain why the area is ready for the DRI/NY Forward investment and how that investment would serve as a catalyst for revitalization.***

Please describe the DRI and/or NY Forward area's defining characteristics and reasons for its selection. Please note that the boundary(ies) may be slightly adjusted during the planning process; however, once finalized, only projects located within the boundary(ies) will be eligible for DRI/NY Forward funding. The following are also required:

- A map that shows the proposed DRI and/or NY Forward area. The DRI and/or NY Forward boundary should follow roadways and parcel lines to the greatest extent possible

- If submitting a joint application to DRI Round 6 of two to three communities in the same REDC region, please make sure the DRI area map clearly shows municipal boundaries.

### 3. Vision Statement

***Provide a brief statement of the municipality's vision for downtown revitalization.***

This vision statement should be reflective of the unique nature of the downtown and the aspirations of the community for the future. If this application is for both funding programs, please make sure the vision statement is applicable to both the DRI and NY Forward areas.

See Section 4 for guidance related to developing a strong, community-based vision.

### 4. Past Investment and Future Potential.

***Describe how the DRI and/or NY Forward area will leverage prior private and public investment and catalyze future investments.***

Please describe recent and ongoing planning efforts that support public and private investment in the DRI and/or NY Forward area. To the extent possible, please describe and quantify recent investments in and around the DRI/NY Forward area (please focus on investments made in the past 10 years). Examples include public infrastructure improvements (e.g., water infrastructure upgrades), new development projects, redevelopment of vacant or underutilized spaces, streetscape enhancements to increase

## SECTION 6 DRI/NY Forward Application

walkability, recent expansions of anchor employers, and the addition of new or expansion of existing community services (e.g., child care).

*If applying to both funding programs, please respond to this question based on the DRI area (which should be the same as or should fully encompass the NY Forward area).*

### 5. Recent and Impending Job Growth.

***Describe how recent job growth will leverage the DRI and/or NY Forward investment.***

Please describe any recent (past five years) and impending job growth in or near the DRI and/or NY Forward area and how this growth will attract a diverse workforce and population, support redevelopment efforts, and make growth sustainable in the long-term. For example, if an existing company recently expanded, please specify how many new jobs were created.

*If applying to both funding programs, please respond to this question based on the DRI area (which should be the same as or should fully encompass the NY Forward area).*

### 6. Quality of Life.

***Describe the defining characteristics of the DRI and/or NY Forward area that make it a desirable place to live, work, and visit.***

Please identify the key attributes of the DRI and/or NY Forward area that contribute to (or could contribute to if enhanced) the attractiveness and livability of the downtown for a diverse population of varying ages, income, gender identity, ability, mobility, and cultural background.

Applicants to the DRI may want to consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, varied housing types at different levels of affordability, multi-modal transportation options, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.

Applicants to NY Forward may want to consider, for example, the presence of developable vacant and/or underutilized spaces, opportunities for upper-story housing, local service-oriented retail, niche-based tourism, walkability in the downtown center, recreational amenities, cultural heritage, and public parks and gathering spaces.

*If applying to both funding programs, please respond to this question based on the DRI area (which should be the same as or should fully encompass the NY Forward area).*

### 7. Supportive Local Policies.

***Describe any local policies in place that increase quality of life and advance the State's decarbonization goals.***

Examples include the use of local land banks, modern zoning codes, adoption of the New York State Stretch Energy Code, comprehensive plans, agricultural and farmland preservation plans, Clean Energy and/or Climate Smart Communities designations, complete streets policies, transit-oriented development, non-discrimination laws, age-friendly policies, and a downtown management structure. If policies that support livability and quality of life in downtown are not currently in place, describe near-term efforts by the municipality to create and implement such policies.

*If applying to both funding programs, please respond to this question based on the DRI area (which should be the same as or should fully encompass the NY Forward area).*

## SECTION 6 DRI/NY Forward Application

### 8. Public Support.

*Describe public participation in the development of the DRI and/or NY Forward application and recent past engagement, including how these engagement efforts shaped the downtown vision statement and the project list.*

Applicants must clearly describe each public engagement event conducted in support of their application and the number of participants engaged. Applicants are required to hold a **minimum of one public meeting** (in-person or virtual) and, if possible, are encouraged to hold multiple engagement events to expand participation. Applicants should describe outreach efforts that are inclusive of individuals from historically marginalized and under-served communities.

Public engagement activities should focus on gathering feedback from the community to develop the vision statement and to solicit project proposals. See Section 4 for suggested public outreach strategies and additional guidance.

Applicants should also describe any recent engagement efforts focused on downtown revitalization that have also contributed to the community's vision and project identification. Applicants that can demonstrate consistent, broad community engagement and outreach will be more competitive.

*If applying to both funding programs, one public event can be held for both the DRI and NY Forward areas. If the event is in-person, it should be held in a convenient and central location relative to the DRI and NY Forward areas.*

### 9. Transformative Project Opportunities.

*Identify and describe project opportunities that build on the community's strengths and needs and have the potential to be transformative in the DRI and/or NY Forward area.*

Please describe a complementary set of proposed projects or opportunities in the DRI and/or NY Forward area that have strong public support, are poised for implementation, and when considered together, would have a transformative effect on the community's downtown. Projects may be developed to varying degrees and applicants are also encouraged to include transformative opportunities that could be explored further during the planning process. Please identify multiple project opportunities, and the following applies to each project or opportunity identified in the application:

- Projects must be realistic, feasible, and have been coordinated with property owners / project sponsors
- Projects may be sponsored by public, non-profit, or private entities and may address economic development, transportation, housing, and community development needs
- Projects should be ready for implementation with an infusion of DRI / NY Forward funds within the first one or two years (depending on the scope and complexity of the project)
- Project descriptions should include the location, identification of a project sponsor, a tentative timeline for implementation, and a proposed cost and identification of potential funding sources

## SECTION 6 DRI/NY Forward Application

While DRI and NY Forward funding awards may be used to cover a portion of costs for both public and private projects, leveraged investment from other funding sources (private or public) will stretch the DRI/NY Forward award, allowing more projects to benefit. This, in turn, will broaden the impact to the community by funding a more inclusive and representative slate of projects leading to increased community revitalization, economic activity, community amenities, and quality of life.

Please note that if your community is selected to participate in DRI and/or NY Forward, projects identified in this application, along with any others that may arise during the planning process, will ultimately be vetted by the LPC and the State to determine which projects receive DRI/NY Forward funding awards.

*If applying to both funding programs, please clearly indicate which projects are located in the NY Forward area and which are located in the DRI area.*

### **10. Administrative Capacity.**

***Describe the municipality's capacity to oversee implementation and ensure the long-term success of projects.***

Please describe the local administrative capacity to manage the DRI/NY Forward planning process and project implementation, including the ability to oversee contracts for awarded municipal projects using existing staff and resources and the ability to successfully maintain and operate projects once constructed.

### **11. Letters of Support [optional].**

***Document the support of local leaders, stakeholders, and organizations.***

Applicants are encouraged to submit letters of support demonstrating the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to advancing the community's vision, participating in the DRI/NY Forward planning process, and supporting the implementation of the DRI/NY Forward grant program.

## SECTION 7

# Submission Requirements

## How to Submit Your Application.

Applications for the DRI Round 6 and NY Forward must be emailed to the appropriate REDC (see Section 1 for contact information) by 4:00 PM on September 23, 2022.

In New York City, the offices of the Borough Presidents will be the official applicants to the REDC, and organizations interested in proposing an area for DRI and/or NY Forward funding should submit their application to the respective office of the Borough President (see Section 1 for contact information). Based on these proposals, each office of the Borough President will develop and submit two applications for DRI Round 6 and two applications for NY Forward for consideration by the New York City REDC. Applications to the offices of the Borough President must be received by email no later than 4:00 PM on **September 2, 2022**.

The subject heading on the email must be “Downtown Revitalization Round 6” and/or “NY Forward Round 1.”



## Application Deadline\*.

All DRI and NY Forward applications must be submitted via email to the relevant REDC representative (see Section 1 for contact information) by:

**4PM on Friday  
September 23, 2022**

*\*In New York City, applications must be submitted to the office of the Borough President no later than 4PM on September 2, 2022.*

**Thank you for taking the time to submit an application to  
the DRI Round 6 and/or NY Forward.**

*All questions related to this application should be directed to  
the appropriate REDC (see Section 1 for contact information).*



**Department  
of State**

**Downtown  
Revitalization  
Initiative**

**NY Forward**