

FALL 2021

VERIZON MEDIA COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND FOR NIAGARA COUNTY – EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT

The Verizon Media Community Benefit Fund for Niagara County (“Fund”) was created in 2015 as part of an agreement between Verizon Media (formerly known as Oath and *Yahoo!*®) and Empire State Development (“ESD”) to establish a customer care and data center in Niagara County. The purpose of the Fund is to further connect Verizon Media to the community as part of Verizon Media’s receipt of New York State Excelsior Tax Credits as well as a New York State allocation of hydropower from the New York Power Authority.

I. FUND FOCUS AREAS

The Fund will consider proposals that advance one or more of the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council’s (“REDC”) three core enablers as outlined in the REDC’s strategic plan, *A Strategy for Prosperity*: Implement Smart Growth, Foster a Culture of Entrepreneurship, and Prepare our Workforce and/or support any of the region’s target industry sectors.

Implement Smart Growth: The fund seeks to build on existing assets, reverse the effects of sprawl on the county, and build more cost-effective, sustainable development. Smart growth projects will be considered that contribute to one or more of the following: foster mixed-use development in downtown urban areas, main street commercial corridors and village centers; create access to the waterfront while protecting water resources and habitats; foster the redevelopment of former industrial lands; preserve historic buildings and districts; encourage walkability and multi-modal transportation; connect disadvantaged communities with employment centers; and right-fit public assets and services to the needs of the community.

Foster a Culture of Entrepreneurship: The fund seeks to help grow new start-ups and retain and expand existing business in the county by leveraging the region’s research and industry strengths and building a stronger ecosystem to support entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship projects will be considered that contribute to one or more of the following: generate more start-up enterprises; facilitate applied R&D supports for new or existing companies; foster early stage firm growth; attract more venture capital; and make efforts to help minorities start new businesses. Priority will be given to projects that foster business development in the region’s target industry sectors—advanced manufacturing, health & life sciences, tourism, energy, agriculture and bi-national logistics; also to projects that connect to 43 North, WNY Innovation Hot Spot, and/or broadband initiatives whenever possible.

Prepare our Workforce: The fund seeks to build a stronger workforce pipeline in higher-paying, in-demand industries. Workforce development projects will be considered that contribute to one or more of the following: create stronger partnerships between academia and industry; build sustainable careers paths for disadvantaged populations; expand apprenticeships, on-the-job training, upskilling and educational training; provide greater awareness of job opportunities and access to training; and help retain recent college graduates. Priority will be given to projects that foster workforce development in the region’s target industry sectors—advanced manufacturing, health & life sciences, tourism, energy, agriculture and bi-national logistics.

II. PROJECT ELIGIBILITY AND ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Projects must be located in or provide services to Niagara County. Preference will be given to projects outside the Greater Lockport area (defined as the City of Lockport and Town of Lockport) because the Verizon Media Community Benefit Fund for Lockport focuses on these locations.

Funds must support a charitable organization or be used for a charitable purpose which may include programmatic expenses related to a new program or project. Or, a combination of capital and programmatic costs.

III. USE RESTRICTIONS

Funding cannot be used for:

- An organization's general operating expenses or working capital related to a capital project;
- Recapitalization/refinancing;
- Endowments;
- Religious purposes or improvements to structures owned by religious or private membership-based organizations;
- Fundraising;
- Political or lobbying activities;
- Activities that have occurred prior to the start of the grant period.

IV. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

- Applicants must be located in or provide services to Niagara County.
- Not-for-profit corporations with Section 501(c)(3) status at the time of application as determined by the Internal Revenue Service are eligible to apply for funding. A not-for-profit corporation must be registered and up-to-date with filings with the New York State Office of the Attorney General's Charities Bureau.
- Applicants must demonstrate the development and financial management expertise to successfully develop, design, construct, manage and implement the project. This expertise is demonstrated through previous experience in successfully developing projects similar to the one proposed, either by partners or key staff within the business or organization.
- Applicants must demonstrate ownership or site control of all real estate considered part of the proposed project. Although final acquisition costs may be considered as part of the proposal, applicant must show a clear intent and agreement to purchase such as a Purchase Option Agreement or comparable legal instrument.

V. FUNDING LEVELS AND MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

Approximately \$230,000 will be available annually through the Fund. Priority will be given to projects that have matching funds from sources other than other public funds.

VI. REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Project readiness (15%)
- Alignment with one or more of the Fund focus areas (20%)
- Demonstration of need (15%)
- Project impact in relation to the project goals (20%)
- Organizational capacity (20%)
- Project sustainability (10%)

VII. FALL 2021 PROPOSAL DEADLINE AND TIMELINE

Applications must be submitted electronically online through the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo's Foundant Grant Lifecycle manager. Only applications submitted online through Foundant will be accepted.

Visit <https://www.cfgb.org/nonprofits/grants/verizonmedia-community-benefit-fund-niagara/> to submit your application.

Applications accepted online starting: September 13, 2021

Proposal Deadline: October 15, 2021 at 4:00 PM

Grants Announced: Mid-November 2021

Proposals received after the deadline will not be reviewed. Questions about the Fund can be sent via email to John Risio at John.Risio@esd.ny.gov. Questions regarding the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo's Foundant online application system should be directed to Colin Perry at ColinP@cfgb.org.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Please provide the following information through the online application system in order to be considered for funding through the Fund:

Proposal Questions:

1. **Project Name**
2. **Contact Information:** Include applicant organization, contact name, address, email and phone number
3. **Total Amount Requested** through the Fund
4. **Total Project Cost**
5. **Geographic Location** and/or Service Area of the Project
6. **Project Description:** Describe the proposed actions and/or activities; the distinct features of your project; who will benefit from the project; and the timeline for completion.
7. **Alignment with Fund Focus Areas:** Describe how your project aligns with one or more of the Fund Focus Areas.
8. **Demonstration of Need:** Describe the specific need your project is addressing in the community and why funding through the Fund is necessary to complete the project.

- 9. Project Goals and Impact:** Describe the specific outcomes and goals of the project and how you will measure progress made toward these goals. Describe the impact the project will have on the city/town/village as well as how the project will impact Niagara County and/or Western NY as a whole.
- 10. Project Management and Organizational Capacity:** Describe the applicant organization's experience with projects of similar size and scale to the proposed one. Identify who will be involved in developing and implementing the project and their qualifications. Note the number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff members employed by your organization.
- 11. Sustainability:** Describe how the project will be sustained once the grant period is over.
- 12. Project Budget:** Include a detailed budget with all sources and uses including the request through the Fund. Please also upload a budget narrative and explain any matching funds for the project and their status.

Proposal Attachments:

- 1. Organizational Chart and List of Board Members.**
- 2. Resumes of key project personnel.**
- 3. Certification that the executive director and a Board officer have approved submittal of the grant request and that all information provided is accurate.**
- 4. Memoranda of Understanding or letters in support of your project from collaborators or letters from other funding sources who may have expressed interest in supporting the project – strongly advised.**
- 5. Financial background of organization including:**
 - **2021 annual operating budget**
 - **2020 fiscal year surplus/deficit**
 - **Three (3) years of most recent audited financial statements**

Empire State Development reserves the right to request additional information once a proposal has been reviewed.