2021 Grow NORCO Program Guidelines
Round 2

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.

The County of Northampton will competitively award grant funds from the Grow NORCO Program (GNP).

Eligible Uses:

1. Capital Improvement Grants
2. Façade Program Grants
3. Operations Grants
4. Community Planning Grants
5. Municipal Police Department Support Grants

NCDCED strongly encourages community-based organizations and public agencies to work in partnership with local government to develop a comprehensive approach to address community and economic development needs. These partnerships will create a more attractive place to live as well as encourage business retention, expansion, and job-creation in the County. Where appropriate, multi-municipal projects will receive preference.

Eligible entities:
- Northampton County federally registered non-profit organizations (501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4))
- Northampton County municipalities

All projects are expected to be completed by December 31, 2022.

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

On average, eligible entities can apply for $50,000 per application/project. The County reserves the right to fund proposals at higher or lower amounts at its sole discretion.

A minimum match of $1 cash for every $1 granted is required for Capital Improvement, Façade Program Implementation, and Operational grant applications.

A minimum match of $1 cash for every $2 granted is required for Planning and Municipal Police Department Support grant applications.

Applications with a match source exceeding the minimum requirement will be considered more competitive. The match requirement for organizations with operating budgets of less than $350K may be waived at the discretion of the County.

APPLICATION SCHEDULE

- • Funding Announcement – late July/early August 2021
- • Application/Proposals Due – Friday, September 10, 2021 by 4:00 p.m.
- • Anticipated funding award approvals – October 2021

APPLICATION REVIEW

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

	Scoring Criteria		Scoring Weight
1	**Project Need & Approach**	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.	**50%**
2	**Budget**	The budget is clear and reasonable. The cost estimates are from a credible source.	**25%**
3	**Match**	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.	**10%**
4	**Leverage**	The project is leveraging additional funds and/or resources.	**5%**
5	**Project Timeline and Capacity**	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.	**10%**

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Please visit the NCDCED 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 NCDCED 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, September 10, 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.

PROGRAM CONDITIONS

- Grants are awarded based on merit and are subject to the availability of funds.
- Funds are released on a reimbursement basis only.
- Eligible applicants may submit multiple requests.
- 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, 2022.

REPORTS

Grantees are required to submit Semi-Annual 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 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.

PAST/ CURRENT GROW NORCO RECIPIENTS WITH OVERDUE REPORTS MAY NOT BE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR FUNDING.

Questions and concerns may be directed to:
Sarah Ortiz, Community and Economic Development Specialist
Phone: 610-829-6308
Email: sortiz@northamptoncounty.org

GROW NORCO GRANT GUIDELINES

1. ***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. Typical projects involve some type of capital improvement associated with implementing a specific revitalization strategy or capital improvement plan up to $50,000.

   EXAMPLE PROJECTS
   - Public Infrastructure Improvements
   - Community Facilities
   - Curb and Sidewalk replacement
   - Installation of Public Art
   - Streetscape Amenities i.e. Planters, Benches, Bike Racks
   - Signage
   - Park Improvements
   - Parking Lot 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.***
   - Projects must be associated with a specific revitalization strategy or capital improvement plan.
   - Costs incurred prior to agreement term of grant award are typically not eligible expenses.

2. ***FAÇADE PROGRAM GRANTS***

   OVERVIEW
   The Façade Program Grant is designed to stimulate private investment in properties, foster an attractive environment and preserve the architectural heritage of properties. Successful applicants will be awarded funding up to $50,000 that they will in turn grant out to property owners in a targeted area on a competitive basis.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES
The following activities are eligible for reimbursement:

- Sign Programs (storefronts)
- Exterior Paint Programs
- Design Assistance
- Building Façade Improvements/Rehabilitation (residential and commercial)

FAÇADE PROGRAM GRANT FUNDING REQUIREMENTS
- Grants are for exterior building improvements in a targeted downtown or neighborhood.
- Façade Grant limit is $10,000 per property (home or store front).
- $1 dollar cash match for every $1 granted.
- 50% of the required match can be documented in-kind services or goods.
- Must include private equity from property owner or tenant for each commercial property assisted.
- ***Proof that match funds were secured and expended will be required for project close-out under the grant agreement.***
- A strong demand for façade funding must be documented in the application.
- Applicant must be able to demonstrate administrative capacity to effectively run the program
- Applicant must submit façade design guidelines and procedures for approval by NCDCED.
- Costs incurred prior to the agreement term of the grant award are not eligible expenses.

3. *OPERATIONS GRANTS*

OVERVIEW
Grants are available to fund operations and staff positions that support new or existing community and economic development efforts. Programs with clearly defined goals and objectives that include measurable outcomes will receive priority. Funds will be targeted toward new efforts and are not intended to be an ongoing source of funds to support operations. It is uncommon for an entity or an organization to be funded if they received an award the previous year. **Applicants are encouraged to contact DCED to discuss.**

EXAMPLE PROJECTS:
- Funding to support a downtown manager
- Regional code enforcement officers
- Assistance toward a specific marketing campaign
- Program Advertising
- Initiatives that reduce or eliminate blight

OPERATIONS GRANT REQUIREMENTS
- $1 dollar match for every $1 dollar 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 of grant award are not eligible expenses.

4. *COMMUNITY PLANNING GRANTS*

OVERVIEW:
Planning grants are available to communities that desire to evaluate the ramifications and/or address a particular need, address a circumstance within a community, undertake a study relevant to an identified need within a community or study the results of implementing a specific activity. Applicants may apply for assistance to develop planning applications to work toward a state or federal designation status.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS:
- Funding to assist a community to develop the Four Point Plus Sustainability Approach (Main Street), or an alternative approach with the specific goal to revitalize the downtown.
- Funding to assist a community to develop the Five Point Plus Sustainability Approach (Elm Street), or an alternative approach with the specific goal to revitalize a neighborhood.
- Planning for the establishment of a special incentive zone or district i.e. Neighborhood Improvement District (NID), Business Improvement District (BID) Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) etc.
- Funding to assist a community to obtain some other state or federal designation to assist the community's revitalization efforts.
- Funding to carry out a business development survey in preparation of a business development strategy.
- The development of a Downtown Parking Analysis and Management Plan.
- The development of a Complete Streets Plan to address downtown circulation issues.
- Soft costs such as architectural, engineering and/or legal fees, consulting, etc. needed to implement the construction of a project that has secured funding. Evidence of secured funding must be provided.
- Site Reuse Studies
- Market Studies
- Multi-municipal Planning Studies (traffic, storm water, regional services etc.)
- Concept & Design of Public Improvements
- Capital Improvement Plans

PLANNING GRANT REQUIREMENTS
- Generally a match of $1 dollar for every $2 dollars granted is required except as described below.
- 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***
- A fee to administer the planning grant by the applicant is not an eligible expense unless approved by NCDCED.
- Costs incurred prior to the agreement term of the grant award are typically not eligible expenses

5. *MUNICIPAL POLICE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT GRANTS*

OVERVIEW
Grants are designed to assist municipalities support their police departments by providing funding for projects necessary to provide effective law enforcement and to ensure the safety of their citizens.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS:
- Capital Improvements
- Vehicle Purchase
- Equipment Purchase
- Training

MUNICIPAL POLICE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT GRANT REQUIREMENTS
- $1 dollar match for every $2 dollar 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 of grant award are not eligible expenses.

I. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

When submitting an application, please be sure to check the appropriate box under "Project Type" on page 2 of the application to indicate for which Grow NORCO Grant you are applying (Capital Improvement, Façade Program, Operations, Planning or Municipal Police Support). INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE REVIEWED.

FOR ALL GRANTS:

- **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.
  - **Discussion of Leverage –** Discuss how the project/activity will leverage additional funds and resources.
  - **Discussion of Capacity –** Discuss the organization's existing capacity to perform and/or manage the work identified in the proposal and any previous experience in managing similar efforts.

- **Project Budget** – Complete the Grow NORCO Sources and Uses Budget Spreadsheet as completely and as accurately as possible.
- **Financial Statements –** Submit the previous year's audited/accountant prepared financial statements.
- **Evidence of Matching Funds -** Match funds are defined as funds in addition to those funds being requested through this application that are necessary to complete the project. Evidence can be demonstrated in the form of award or commitment letters from federal, state and local governments or agencies, as well as private funding commitments i.e. letter of credit. Evidence that the funds have been expended will be required with the Final Invoice. This may include canceled checks, paid invoices, etc. Applications documenting on hand matching funds will be more competitive than those that do not. Match requirements for organizations with an operating budget of less than $350K may be waived at the discretion of the County.
- **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".*
- **Miscellaneous -** Other information/documentation that NCDCED may identify after the application is submitted**.**
- **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.

FOR FAÇADE PROGRAM GRANTS ONLY:

- **Design Guidelines and Procedures -** Establish program boundaries. Consideration must be given to the number of properties that can be assisted. All properties must be within the target area. For maximum impact, these boundaries can be reduced to include a portion target area.
  - o Set design standards. Promoting sensitive and quality rehabilitation is usually done by creating design guidelines that are approved by a local committee and distributed to local property owners. (Programs in historically eligible areas should follow the U.S. Department of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.")
  - o Define eligible and ineligible applicants and activities.
  - o Work items eligible for assistance must be specified in the local façade guidelines.
  - o Only external improvements are eligible.
  - o The guidelines should delineate anything that is eligible outside of the footprint of the building.
- **Policy and Procedures -**. The façade program must have written policies to rely on if disputes arise. All of the necessary forms and the contract document should be included as appendices. This is important for the local organization and business/property owners and should clearly outline the step-by-step procedures a person must follow – from initial inquiry, to final inspection and payment.
  - o Arrangements can be made for merchants who lease buildings and for residential properties located within the target area, if these buildings are addressed in the local façade guidelines.

FOR PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONS GRANTS ONLY:

- **Operational Budget –** Please submit the proposed operational budget of the entity requesting assistance.

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 subgrantees 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 to 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.