

New York Main Street Program Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: I own a downtown mixed-use building, can I apply for a NYMS grant?

A1: Units of local government and organizations incorporated under the NYS Not-for-Profit Corporation Law are eligible applicants for NYMS grants. Municipal and not-for-profit recipients of NYMS funds then provide grants to local building owners. NYS Homes and Community Renewal does not contract directly with property owners. Please contact your local government or county planning office to find out if existing NYMS funds are available in your community.

Q2: Property owners in our community are not currently interested in completing building renovation projects, but we would like to install benches, garbage cans and bike racks on Main Street. Can we apply for Streetscape funds to purchase and install these fixtures?

A2: NYMS Streetscape funds may not be requested as a standalone activity. Streetscape funds must be ancillary to a multi-project building renovation program.

Q3: We have a project that could use New York Main Street Technical Assistance funds and New York Main Street Building Renovation funds. Can we submit an application for both?

A3: No. NYMS Technical Assistance proposals must be for future NYMS projects. Given the two year contract term, it is not feasible to fund a technical assistance project for a building renovation project that does not have an anticipated construction start date.

Q4: Can we apply for both a Traditional NYMS Target Area Building Renovation Program and a NYMS Downtown Anchor Project?

A4: No. Applicants are encouraged to focus their efforts on either a Downtown Anchor Project or a Target Area Building Renovation Program. For this reason, NYMS Downtown Anchor Project funds may not be requested in addition to a NYMS Target Area Building Renovation Program.

Q5: Are restrictions placed on buildings that receive NYMS funds?

A5: Property owners participating in the NYMS Program must sign a Property Maintenance Declaration. The Property Maintenance Declaration states that the property owner will maintain all NYMS assisted improvements in good condition for a five year term. If residential units are assisted, the rent limit will be imposed for the five year term. This Declaration document must be filed with the County to secure the investment.

Q6: If a residential unit is assisted with NYMS funds -does the owner have to verify tenant income?

A6: Assisted residential units must be marketed to and made affordable to persons of low to moderate income. This requirement is met through a rent limit imposed on the assisted unit(s) during the five year regulatory term.

Q7: If windows are being replaced in a residential unit, but no other interior work is completed within the unit, do rental restrictions still apply?

A7: Repairing or replacing windows can be considered an exterior improvement and the rent regulations may not apply. Please note that if renovation projects, such as work on windows, disturb lead based paint and impact a residential unit the Local Program Administrator must refer to the NYMS Lead-Based Paint Policy.

- Q8: If a building has existing vinyl windows, do they have to be replaced for the building to participate in the New York Main Street program?
- A8: Generally, existing vinyl windows or siding will not preclude a building from participating in the NYMS Program. Each Local Program Administrator must develop project selection criteria and design guidelines and work with participating property owners to develop agreed upon scopes of work. The State Historic Preservation Office reviews the scope of work for each participating building to ensure that the planned renovation will not have an adverse impact on historic resources.
- Q9: Can New York Main Street building renovation funds be used to improve a building's parking lot?
- A9: NYMS funds cannot be used for site work such as parking lots, driveways, sidewalks or general landscaping.
- Q10: Can we use New York Main Street funds to add an addition to a building or tear down a vacant building?
- A10: No, NYMS funds cannot be used for new construction or demolition.
- Q11: Are in-kind labor and donated materials eligible as match for NYMS?
- A11: No. Match for NYMS projects must be realized on a building by building basis, and eligible expenses and payments will be verified prior to reimbursement.
- Q12: Our City Hall needs repairs, can we use NYMS funds for renovations?
- A12: No, municipally-owned buildings, used for municipal purposes are not eligible to receive NYMS program funds.
- Q13: Are costs incurred prior to award eligible for reimbursement or as match?
- A13: No. Costs incurred prior to award are not eligible for reimbursement or as match. Additionally, applicants are advised against incurring costs prior to contract execution and environmental review.
- Q14: If my application is funded, how do I access the awarded New York Main Street money?
- A14: Before New York Main Street funds can be drawn down, awardees must execute the New York Main Street grant agreement and designate a bank account to receive NYMS funds in the form of a direct deposit. New York Main Street is a reimbursement program, therefore, individual projects must be complete and paid for before funds will be disbursed. NYMS funds may be requested on a per building/project basis. 40% of awarded administrative funds may be drawn down prior to completion of building and streetscape projects. Administrative funds beyond the initial 40% will be available based on overall program completion.
- Q15: Do specific buildings need to be identified in the application and are financial commitment letters required for those projects?
- A15: A NYMS Target Area Building Renovation Program application that identifies specific buildings proposed to be assisted is generally more competitive because project readiness is demonstrated. Applications demonstrating formally committed funds will also score more competitively than those without funds committed. NYMS Downtown Anchor Project applications must identify the specific project and identify funding commitments and construction financing since this project activity is for “shovel ready” projects only.

New York Main Street (NYMS) Program Eligibility & Application Threshold Requirements

2016 NYMS Applications are due July 29, 2016. Applicants must answer a series of threshold questions correctly to access the application. The threshold questions are based on statutory and programmatic requirements.

Eligible Applicants

Units of Local Government and Not-for-profit organizations incorporated under the NYS not-for-profit corporation law that have been in existence for a period of one or more years prior to application.

Eligible Target Area

An eligible target area shall mean an area:

(i) that has experienced sustained physical deterioration, decay, neglect, or disinvestment;

(ii) has a number of substandard buildings or vacant residential or commercial units;

and (iii) in which more than fifty percent of the residents are persons whose incomes do not exceed ninety percent of the area median income for the county or metropolitan statistical area (MSA) in which the project is located, or which is designated by a state or federal agency to be eligible for a community or economic development program.

Applicants must address each of the three requirements and provide source data. CDBG eligible census tracts, and areas served by Neighborhood Preservation Companies meet criterion iii.

In addition to the statutory Target Area eligibility requirements, ensure that the proposal aligns with NYMS program objectives. A NYMS target area should be an established mixed-use “Main Street” or downtown retail district that is pedestrian-oriented and comprised of traditional mixed-use buildings. Target areas should be concentrated and well-defined areas that maximize the impact that the program will have on the neighborhood.

Municipal Resolution

Each municipality/Community Board in which the proposed program will function must approve a formal resolution authorizing the application. **The resolution must be passed prior to the application deadline.** A certified copy of the resolution must be attached to an application. Applications are ineligible for funding without this. A support letter is not a resolution, and draft resolutions will not be accepted.

NYMS Eligible Capital Activities

New construction, demolition, site work, general operating expenses, furniture, fixtures, equipment or electronics are **not** eligible uses of NYMS funds. Additionally, projects that commence prior to award are not eligible for reimbursement.

1. Traditional NYMS Target Area Building Renovation Projects

Applicants may request between \$50,000 and \$500,000 for NYMS projects. If awarded, a NYMS recipient may provide participating property owners with matching renovation grants of up to \$50,000 per building, with an additional \$25,000 for each residential unit assisted, not to exceed 75% of the total project cost or \$100,000, whichever is less. Applicants proposing to complete building renovation projects may also request up to \$15,000 in Streetscape enhancement funds, and up to 7.5% of the request amount for administrative expenses.

2. NYMS Downtown Anchor Project

Applicants may request between \$100,000 and \$500,000 for a standalone, single site, “shovel ready” renovation project. The NYMS Downtown Anchor Project funds may not exceed 75% of the total project cost. These funds are intended to help establish or expand cultural, residential or business anchors that are key to local revitalization efforts through substantial interior and/or exterior building renovations.

3. NYMS Downtown Stabilization Program

Applicants may request \$50,000 to \$500,000 for projects that identify or mitigate risks associated with hazardous materials or remove obstacles to future redevelopment. Funds can assist with environmental remediation and associated construction costs, as well as other innovative approaches to stabilizing and developing downtown, mixed-use buildings. NYMS Downtown Stabilization Program funds may not exceed 75% of the total project cost. Please contact HCR_CFA@nyshcr.org to discuss project eligibility.

Program Term

NYMS contracts shall not exceed 24 months. Applicants must outline the program's construction timeframe, and specifically demonstrate that all projects will be completed within the 24 month term.

Maintenance Term

The owner of a property improved with NYMS funds must agree for a minimum of five years to: maintain the property in good operating order and condition; to market and make available residential housing units to persons of low income by signing and filing a Property Maintenance Declaration with the County in which the project is located or the NYC Department of Finance for projects in NYC.

New York Main Street Technical Assistance grants are now available through an open-round application in the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA). The NYMS-TA program operates with *no deadline and rolling awards*. NYMS-TA grants are awarded for pre-development projects intended to improve a community's readiness to administer a future NYMS renovation program. Prior NYMS-TA recipients have used the grants to prepare architectural design guidelines, and to complete pre-development work for potential NYMS renovation participants. Contact HCR_CFA to discuss a project.

NYMS Application Tips

Review available resources:

- NYMS Program Guide & Template Administrative Plan: <http://www.nyshcr.org/Forms/NYMainStreet/>
- Consolidated Funding Application Instructions and Resource Guide: <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/>

Participate in the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) process.

Review the Strategic Plan developed by the REDC, and let the REDC know the importance of the project to your neighborhood and community. An application must specifically address how the proposed project aligns with the Plan. The state agency review is 80%, and the REDC review is 20% of the application score. <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/>

Present Feasible & Clear Budget

NYMS operates as reimbursement programs. Participating NYMS property owners must have cash or construction financing available. Applications receive points for leveraging additional funds. Any funding source identified in the application as committed must be supported by formal commitment documentation. Identify construction or temporary financing in the budget – not just NYMS.

Demonstrate Readiness and Implementation Capacity

- Applicant must demonstrate capacity to administer a grant program and successfully complete the project.
- Detail administrative procedures in place that could be adopted to administer this grant program.
- Present a clear understanding of the program rules.
- Explain why NYMS funds *specifically* are needed and how the funds will address community needs.
- Evaluate if neighborhood property owners are interested and prepared to participate.

Application Tips

- Confirm that the project is within an eligible area of NYS.
- Pursue the Municipal Resolution as soon as possible – it must be included with the application.
- Read the “Scoring Tips” formerly “Help” text for questions. It provides prompts for composing a response.
- Be specific and concise in application narrative sections.
- Do not rely on data to speak for itself. Explain, specifically, what the data means for your project and neighborhood.

Questions?

2016 NYMS Applications are due July 29, 2016. Contact the Office of Community Renewal to discuss the project. The Office of Community Renewal (OCR) will advise on activity eligibility and provide other technical assistance as needed. Review funding materials:

<http://www.nyshcr.org/AboutUs/Offices/CommunityRenewal/FundingOpportunities.htm>

Send an email and your question will be directed to OCR program staff for assistance: **HCR_CFA@nyshcr.org**