# STATE OF NEW YORK

7718

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

# IN SENATE

October 18, 2023

Introduced by Sen. GRIFFO -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Rules

AN ACT to amend the New York state urban development corporation act, in relation to establishing the rural equity assistance program

**The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:**

Section 1. Section 1 of chapter 174 of the laws of 1968, constituting the New York state urban development corporation act, is amended by adding a new section 16-ii to read as follows:

**§ 16-ii. Rural equity assistance program. 1. As used in this section the following terms shall have the following meanings:**

**(a) "Rural area" shall have the same meaning as such term is defined in subdivision 8 of section 260 of the agriculture and markets law.**

**(b) "Small town" means a town in the state with a population of less than 5,000 at the date of the most recent United States census bureau decennial census.**

**(c) "Municipality" means a city, county, town, village, or other political subdivision of the state of New York located within a rural area.**

**(d) "Not-for-profit organization" means a domestic corporation incorporated pursuant to or otherwise subject to the not-for-profit corporation law.**

**2. There is hereby created within the corporation, the rural equity assistance program to promote and facilitate community and economic development in the small towns and rural areas of the state. The rural equity assistance program shall collaborate with municipalities, businesses, regional development corporations, not-for-profits, and other appropriate entities to access funding and other assistance available to rural areas of the state.**

**3. (a) The rural equity assistance program shall provide the following services to small towns and municipalities in rural areas:**

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(i) identification of grants or other funding opportunities available which may facilitate business development, siting of businesses, workforce development, broadband deployment, infrastructure development, or other economic and community development opportunities; and

(ii) technical assistance in writing grants, accessing, and completing the application process for identified grants or other funding opportunities, including writing applications for grants or other funding, coordination with providers of grants or other funding, strategic planning for the implementation or timing of activities funded by grants or other funding, and compliance with the requirements of grant awards or awards of other funding.

(b) The rural equity assistance program shall provide small towns, municipalities, and not-for-profits in rural areas with services to facilitate economic development in such areas. These services shall include, but not be limited to recommending available grants, tax credits, or other incentives that a small town, municipality or not-for-profit in a rural area can use to attract businesses, support existing businesses and improve the quality of life for residents in that community.

(c) In providing services under this subdivision, rural equity assistance centers, as established in subdivision 4 of this section, shall coordinate with the regional economic development council within the same region to avoid duplication of business recruitment and workforce development services already provided.

4. (a) The empire state development corporation is hereby empowered and shall establish rural equity assistance centers in each of the ten economic development regions throughout the state. Rural equity assistance centers shall:

(i) serve as a center for information regarding economic development resources available from the state, federal government, local agencies and private investment;

(ii) coordinate the economic development programs and activities of state agencies and authorities within the region;

(iii) provide or arrange for assistance for small towns, municipalities, and not-for-profits in rural areas of the state in applying for assistance from state, federal, local and/or private economic development programs; and

(iv) provide technical assistance in applying for necessary licenses or permits to comply with federal, state, or local rules and regulations.

(b) Each rural equity assistance center shall consist of a dedicated representative from the empire state development corporation, a grant writer, and all necessary staff to carry out the duties of the rural equity assistance center. All costs to operate such centers shall be paid for out of existing resources of the corporation.

(c) Applications for assistance provided by the rural equity assistance program shall be submitted to the rural equity assistance center for that region, for no fee. In providing services under this subdivision, a rural equity assistance center shall give priority to projects that have received necessary state or municipal approval and that are ready for construction or implementation.

5. Beginning on January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, the president of the corporation shall submit to the governor, speaker of the assembly, minority leader of the assembly, temporary president of the senate, and minority leader of the senate, a report regarding the activities and progress of the rural equity assistance program. The report

**shall summarize the program's activities from the preceding year; evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided by the program; provide an accounting of the grants or other funding that the program facilitated or helped secure; and recommend any changes to the program to further economic development in small towns and municipalities in rural areas of the state.**

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.