

STATE OF NEW YORK

1913

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 14, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. SMULLEN, ANGELINO, BLANKENBUSH, LEMONDES, BEEPHAN, E. BROWN, BUTTENSCHON -- read once and referred to the Committee on Economic Development

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:

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

4 § 16-jj. Rural equity assistance program. 1. As used in this section
5 the following terms shall have the following meanings:

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

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

11 (c) "Municipality" means a city, county, town, village, or other poli-
12 tical subdivision of the state of New York located within a rural area.

13 (d) "Not-for-profit organization" means a domestic corporation incor-
14 porated pursuant to or otherwise subject to the not-for-profit corpo-
15 ration law.

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

23 3. (a) The rural equity assistance program shall provide the following
24 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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1 (i) identification of grants or other funding opportunities available
2 which may facilitate business development, siting of businesses, work-
3 force development, broadband deployment, infrastructure development, or
4 other economic and community development opportunities; and

5 (ii) technical assistance in writing grants, accessing, and completing
6 the application process for identified grants or other funding opportu-
7 nities, including writing applications for grants or other funding,
8 coordination with providers of grants or other funding, strategic plan-
9 ning for the implementation or timing of activities funded by grants or
10 other funding, and compliance with the requirements of grant awards or
11 awards of other funding.

12 (b) The rural equity assistance program shall provide small towns,
13 municipalities, and not-for-profits in rural areas with services to
14 facilitate economic development in such areas. These services shall
15 include, but not be limited to recommending available grants, tax cred-
16 its, or other incentives that a small town, municipality or not-for-pro-
17 fit in a rural area can use to attract businesses, support existing
18 businesses and improve the quality of life for residents in that commu-
19 nity.

20 (c) In providing services under this subdivision, rural equity assist-
21 ance centers, as established in subdivision four of this section, shall
22 coordinate with the regional economic development council within the
23 same region to avoid duplication of business recruitment and workforce
24 development services already provided.

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

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

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

34 (iii) provide or arrange for assistance for small towns, munici-
35 palities, and not-for-profits in rural areas of the state in applying
36 for assistance from state, federal, local and/or private economic devel-
37 opment programs; and

38 (iv) provide technical assistance in applying for necessary licenses
39 or permits to comply with federal, state, or local rules and regu-
40 lations.

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

46 (c) Applications for assistance provided by the rural equity assist-
47 ance program shall be submitted to the rural equity assistance center
48 for that region, for no fee. In providing services under this subdivi-
49 sion, a rural equity assistance center shall give priority to projects
50 that have received necessary state or municipal approval and that are
51 ready for construction or implementation.

52 5. Beginning on January 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the presi-
53 dent of the corporation shall submit to the governor, speaker of the
54 assembly, minority leader of the assembly, temporary president of the
55 senate, and minority leader of the senate, a report regarding the activ-
56 ities and progress of the rural equity assistance program. The report

1 shall summarize the program's activities from the preceding year; evalu-
2 ate the effectiveness of the services provided by the program; provide
3 an accounting of the grants or other funding that the program facili-
4 tated or helped secure; and recommend any changes to the program to
5 further economic development in small towns and municipalities in rural
6 areas of the state.

7 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.