

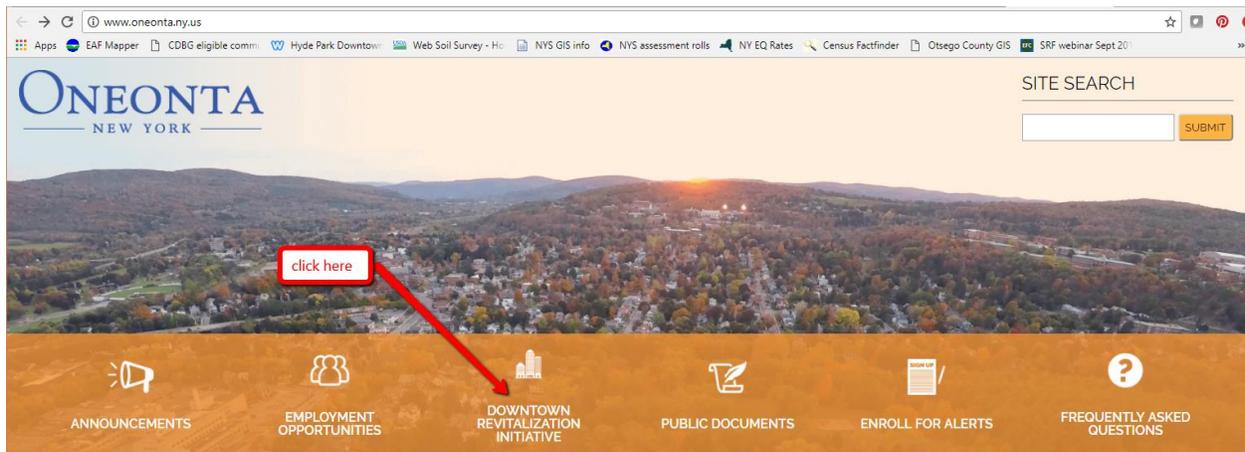


City of Oneonta DRI Downtown Improvement Fund (DIF)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is application and program information available online?

Yes – visit www.oneonta.ny.us and click here:



Where can I get an application?

- Download an application from the City’s website, www.oneonta.ny.us (see above)
- Visit City Hall, 258 Main Street, for a hard copy
- Call or email Elizabeth Horvath, Delaware Engineering, for a copy: ehorvath@delawareengineering.com, or (607) 432 8073

When are applications due?

Applications are due on Friday, August 31st at 4:00 p.m. While funds are available, applications will be accepted on a quarterly basis.

If you’re ONLY interested in applying for grant money for SIGNAGE, submit your application by Tuesday, July 31st, by 4:00 p.m., for early consideration.

Applicants will be notified of application deficiencies and will have the opportunity to address them.

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

Business and/or property owners **within the DRI boundary** who are:

- Individuals

- For-profit entities
- NYS not-for-profits

Tenants are eligible to apply, provided that they provide the written consent of the property owner for the proposed project.

Funds may not be used on municipally-owned or -operated buildings.

Is there a cost to apply?

No.

What types of projects are eligible for grant funding?

The three priorities for the DIF are (1) the creation or renovation of high-quality, year-round residential units in upper stories of existing buildings; (2) façade improvements; and (3) exterior signage for buildings.

The City also encourages applications for projects that are “transformative” in nature – please keep in mind that such projects still need to adhere to Eligibility requirements – see below.

All projects must be located within the identified Downtown Revitalization Initiative Study Area (map is available at www.oneonta.ny.us)

What types of upper-story residential units are eligible?

Year-round occupied, market-rate, high-quality residential units. Please consult the [DRI Design Guidelines](#) for specific guidelines and restrictions (www.oneonta.ny.us)

What types of signage are eligible?

Design and purchase of exterior signs that are context-sensitive to the overall façade and do not mask the architectural elements of the building. Signs may be exterior-lit and made of appropriate, durable materials. Strong preference will be given to “blade” (projecting) signage and awnings. Please consult the [DRI Design Guidelines](#) for specific guidelines and restrictions.

What types of activities & expenses are NOT eligible?

- Interior-lit or free-standing signs
- Signs not conforming with the [DRI Design Guidelines](#)
- Non-permanent fixtures (appliances, furnishings, electronics, tools, disposable supplies and business equipment)
- New construction
- Property acquisition
- Demolition of an entire structure
- Site work, including laterals, grading, parking lots, sidewalks, landscaping, fences, general maintenance
- Any projects or activities inconsistent with the objective & priorities of the City of Oneonta’s DRI Strategic Investment Plan

To be eligible, does my project need to create jobs?

No. For the Downtown Improvement Fund, projects do not need to create jobs to be eligible.

Can funding be used toward project costs that have been incurred before the grant was awarded?

No – project funding may only be used for expenses incurred after notification from the City that expenses may be incurred.

How much grant money may I request?

You may request between 50% and 100% of project costs. Please see the chart below:

Total Project Cost	Grant Amount	Owner’s Equity
\$0 to \$20,000	Up to 100%	0
\$20,001 to \$100,000	Up to 75%	Minimum 20%
\$100,001 and above	Up to 50%	Minimum 20%

How much equity is required?

You are required to provide at least 20% of project expenses for projects totaling more than \$20,000. Projects that leverage greater percentages of private equity will receive higher scores.

My project is in a preliminary phase. Should I proceed with an application?

All applications will be assessed for “project readiness” and feasibility, and the process is expected to be competitive. Applying for DIF funds this round will not preclude you from applying in future rounds, should there be future rounds, nor would applying this round affect the outcome of your application in future rounds.

What should the pro forma for Upper Story Housing applications contain?

The pro forma should contain, at a minimum, expected annual rent per rental unit, a vacancy allowance, and all expected expenses, itemized, per year.

Examples may be found online, at sites like:

<http://www.realty-developer.com/account/quickproforma>.

<https://www.biggerpockets.com/blogs/9004/53776-how-pro-forma-works-in-real-estate-investments>

Michelle Catan at the Small Business Development Center also has a template; she may be reached by email at mcatan@binghamton.edu.

What process will be used to determine which projects are funded?

A Project Selection Committee comprised of members of the local community with relevant experience with small businesses, downtown development, and historic structures, will review all applications. The committee will score applications based on the Project Scoring Criteria. The

Project Scoring Criteria may be found on the City's website (www.oneonta.ny.us). Awards will be based on how closely the project aligns with the goals of the DRI Strategic Investment Plan (also posted on the City's website), funding needs, and the City's underwriting criteria (see below).

Once the Committee has selected a project for grant funding, the application and supporting documentation will be submitted to the State for review and approval before the applicant is notified.

When will I be notified whether my project has been selected?

The City of Oneonta will advise applicants on the results after the State has reviewed and approved awardees. The City will mail a letter to the applicant that awards or declines the funding request. If a grant is awarded, the letter will include information concerning the grant amount, short-term loan if applicable, and terms. The applicant will then have 30 days to execute the Participant Grant Agreement with the City.

What are the City's underwriting criteria?

- Project costs must be reasonable
- All sources of project financing must be committed
- The project must be financially feasible
- The return on the owner's equity investment will not be unreasonably high
- The project development team must be experienced in this type of project
- The applicant's City of Oneonta taxes and fees (e.g., water, sewer, other) must be current

What happens after I receive notice that I've been awarded a grant?

- You'll enter into a Grant Agreement with the City that includes program requirements, funding amounts and terms, and the contract period
- Environmental review/SEQR must be submitted to the State prior to the commencement of any work or incurring any costs
- You will need to provide a commitment fee of \$800 – this fee is fully reimbursable with grant funds **unless** your project is not completed. Smaller projects of less than \$10,000 that only involve exterior work will have this fee waived.
- You will work with the City to develop the formal project scope of work, in writing, which must address the following items:
 - Immediate health and safety concerns, if any
 - The correction of existing code violations, if any
 - Environmental hazards, if any
 - Installation of energy conservation measures
 - Accessibility for persons with disabilities, if applicable
 - Consistency with Design Guidelines
 - Preservation of historical elements of the building

Both the City and the property owner will sign off on the formal scope of work

- The City will provide you with a list of approved contractors to perform the work (contractors can be approved and added to the list at any time). You will need to solicit at least 2 bid proposals for any work to be done; the bids will be received directly by the City and assessed for reasonableness and acceptability. You will be able to choose who does the work, but reimbursement will be based on the amount of the lowest accepted bid.
- You will need to follow the DRI Design Guidelines established by the City.
- The City has the right to inspect the work or audit progress at any point.
- The City will perform periodic inspections to monitor adherence to program rules and general progress.
- A final inspection will be conducted for each project, and a final report will be created and submitted to the State.

If I receive a grant, how and when do I get the grant money?

Grants are paid on a reimbursement basis: The grantee keeps records of, and receipts for, all project-related expenditures, and can request reimbursement for those expenditures, a maximum of two times, from the City, up to the amount of grant money committed. The State advises that the time from submission of a complete disbursement request and a grantee's receipt of funds is approximately 60 days.

Please note that in-kind services, and cash payments, are not eligible expenses for reimbursement. For reimbursement, to substantiate work costs, grantees must provide written contracts, bank documents, copies of invoices for materials and labor, cancelled checks, lien releases and any other documents deemed necessary by the City to maintain effective internal controls.

What if I don't have sufficient funds to "front" the money?

The City of Oneonta is offering short-term loans to grantees who don't have sufficient savings to fund project activities in full, prior to grant reimbursement. Grantees will have to qualify for the loan and will be obligated to pay a 2% per annum interest rate on money borrowed. Loan payments will be due monthly. Loan funds will be issued to grantees as costs are incurred and will be payable as two-party checks to the grant recipient and the vendor. The City will have loan application information available to applicants.

May I use grant funds to pay the interest on my loan?

No, interest charges will be the personal responsibility of the grantee.

Whom do I contact with additional questions?

Contact Elizabeth Horvath, Delaware Engineering, by email (preferable) at ehorvath@delawareengineering.com, or by phone at (607) 432 8073.