

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA): Downtown Lyons Falls Small Project Fund

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lewis County Announces Funding Opportunity for Lyons Falls Revitalization: Downtown Lyons Falls Small Project Fund Now Accepting Applications!

LYONS FALLS, NY – Lewis County is pleased to announce the availability of up to \$125,000 in funding through the **Downtown Lyons Falls Small Project Fund**, a program designed to revitalize the heart of Lyons Falls and support local property and business owners. Funded through the New York Forward program, this initiative offers matching grant funds to enhance commercial and mixed-use buildings, create vibrant residential spaces, and strengthen local businesses within the designated New York Forward Study Area in the Village of Lyons Falls. Projects should meet the goals of the NY Forward Program and advance the community's vision for downtown revitalization.

How to Apply:

Applications for the Downtown Lyons Falls Small Project Fund will be available starting **April 17th, 2025** on the Lewis County Planning & Community Development website: <https://lewiscountyny.gov/departments/downtown-lyons-falls-small-project-fund/>

Application Period: The application period will be open from **April 17th, 2025** to **May 31st, 2025**. **Applications must be received by 4 PM on May 31st, 2025 to be considered for funding.**

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What is the Lyons Falls Small Project Fund?

This exciting program provides financial assistance to property and business owners for building renovations and business upgrades that will:

- **Beautify Downtown:** Improve facades, storefronts, and building exteriors to create a more welcoming and attractive environment.
- **Boost Business:** Help existing businesses grow and thrive through investments in equipment and building improvements.
- **Create Housing Opportunities:** Support the renovation and creation of much-needed upper-floor residential units in the downtown area.

Who Can Apply? *Eligible applicants include:*

- **Property Owners:** Individuals, for-profit businesses, and non-profit organizations that own commercial or mixed-use buildings within the Village of Lyons Falls' New York Forward Study Area.
- **Business Owners:** Businesses operating within the target area seeking to improve their physical space or invest in permanent equipment.
- Only properties current with all property taxes, utility payments, mortgage payments, and fees are eligible to apply.
- For business assistance projects, only businesses open year-round are eligible to apply.
- Typically, a building owner is the applicant, but occasionally a business owner that is a building tenant or leaseholder may apply, provided several conditions are met. Please consult Community Development Specialist Megan Krokowski for more information, at 315-376-5423 or megankrokowski@lewiscounty.ny.gov.

What Types of Projects are Eligible?

Grant funds can be used for a variety of improvements, including:

- **Building Renovations:** Facade improvements, new storefronts, interior commercial space upgrades, roofing, electrical, plumbing, heating and cooling systems, accessibility upgrades, and more.
- **Upper-Floor Residential Renovations:** Creating or improving apartments in commercial buildings.
- **Business Equipment:** Purchase of permanent machinery and equipment essential for business operations (e.g., ovens for a bakery, specialized equipment for a manufacturer).
- **Minor Exterior Enhancements:** Signage, awnings, and painting projects to improve visual appeal.

What are Ineligible Projects

The Downtown Lyons Falls Small Project Fund cannot be used for the following:

- **Property Acquisition:** Funds cannot be used to purchase property.
- **Certain Organization Buildings:** Improvements to buildings owned by religious organizations or private membership-based clubs are not eligible.
- **Public Buildings:** Renovations or improvements to buildings owned and operated by the municipality are not eligible.
- **Non-Permanent Items:** Items like furniture, appliances (unless permanently installed and integral to the building), electronics, tools, disposable supplies, portable business equipment, temporary decorations, and temporary art are not eligible.
- **Site Work & Landscaping:** General site work and landscaping are not covered. This includes things like septic systems, grading, parking lots, sidewalks not directly attached to the building as part of

an entrance, patios, decks, garages, sheds, landscaping, fences, and free-standing signs. Routine maintenance and general repairs are also ineligible.

- **Business Operations Costs:** Normal business operating expenses like inventory, rent, lease payments, working capital, or other undefined expenses that don't directly improve the building or provide permanent business equipment are ineligible.
- **Labor by Related Parties & In-Kind Labor:** You cannot use grant funds to pay for labor provided by yourself, family members, or your staff. Similarly, in-kind labor (donated labor) and reimbursement for materials only (when labor is in-kind) are not eligible.
- Any other business or organization project that proposes projects to buildings, spaces or properties that would be closed to the general public based on age, race, gender, religion, etc.

Grant Amounts & Match:

- **Building Renovation Grants:** Between **\$25,000 and \$100,000 per building** (the project may be eligible to receive an additional \$25,000 if it adds at least 1 residential unit), covering up to 75% of eligible project costs.
- **Minor Exterior Project Grants:** Between **\$10,000 and \$25,000 per project**, covering up to 75% of eligible project costs.
- **Small Business Assistance Grants:** Between **\$10,000 and \$50,000 per business**, covering up to 75% of eligible project costs.

Applicants must provide a minimum of 25% match of the total project cost.

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Attend Our Informational Meeting!

Lewis County Planning & Community Development will host a public information meeting on behalf of the Downtown Lyons Falls Small Project Fund Review Committee (elsewhere referred to as the Small Project Fund Committee) to provide detailed program information and answer questions from potential applicants. This informational session will be held at the Lyons Falls Free Library, located at 3918 High Street, Lyons Falls, NY 13368, on Wednesday, April 30th from 3:30 PM to 7:00 PM. Please check Lewis County's Facebook Page and Website for updates.

Don't miss this opportunity to invest in your property and the future of Lyons Falls!

2025 NYF Lyons Falls Boundary Map



For more information and to obtain an application, please contact:

Megan Krokowski, Community Development Specialist
Lewis County Planning & Community Development
7660 N State Street, Suite 324, Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5423

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PROGRAM DETAILS:

The proposed project should align with the 2024 Lewis County Downtown Design Guidelines, available for your reference here: <https://lewiscountyny.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/FINAL-Lewis-County-Downtown-Design-Guidelines.pdf>

Eligible Projects:

- Interior and exterior building renovations for commercial and mixed-use spaces, e.g. façade/storefront renovations, permanently affixed signage and awnings, commercial interior fit-out, HVAC, MEP, and other permanent building improvements.
- Upper-story residential improvements
- Public art
- ADA accessibility improvements
- Soft Costs (up to 18% of the total eligible cost)— architectural, engineering, environmental
- Interior and exterior improvements to support adjusted business practices, e.g. pick-up windows, outdoor seating areas, and patios
- Permanent commercial machinery and equipment, that is integral to the business and not replacement of existing equipment unless it allows for more/new products to be offered and has a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$2,000 or more per unit
- *Renovations must meet Lewis County Downtown Design Guidelines and standards, the NYS Building Code, and NYS historic preservation standards.

Ineligible Projects:

- Material purchases made by the owner: all materials must be purchased, installed, and invoiced by the contractor
- Property acquisition, inventory, rent or lease expenses, working capital, or undefined expenses that do not sustain business operations
- Demolition of an entire building or new construction
- Construction of an additional story on an existing building
- Certain construction materials, including vinyl siding or vinyl windows
- Improvements to structures where the sole beneficiary is a religious or private membership-based organization
- Improvements to structures where the sole beneficiary is a municipally owned or municipally operated structure
- Furnishings (other than approved outdoor seating), appliances, electronics, tools, disposable supplies, non-permanent fixtures and equipment, hardware, vehicles, computers, and temporary artwork
- Site work or ancillary activities on property including but not limited to: septic systems/laterals, grading, parking lots, sidewalks, garages, sheds, fences, free-standing signs, general maintenance or repairs
- Energy system upgrades and installation of new windows (unless part of a larger façade restoration and/or commercial space improvement project) and roofing are eligible only if part of a larger facade renovation
- Funds cannot be used for the participant, the participant's family, or the participant's staff labor
- In-kind labor
- Repayment of debt
- Loan, finance, interest and/or tax fees

- Reallocation of funds to other organizations (other than approved subcontractors for the project)
- Salaries, wages and benefits
- Expenses reimbursed from any other source or agency (double-dipping)
- Projects that do not further the priorities of local and regional plans
- Work that, in the opinion of the project review committee, is inconsistent with or detracts from approved downtown design guidelines

Match Requirements:

- The match requirement for this grant is a minimum of 25% of the total project cost. In-kind match or labor is not eligible. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant agreement are not eligible for reimbursement and not eligible as a match.

Eligible Soft Costs:

- Eligible soft costs include architecture and engineering design services and environmental testing expenses. Soft costs require matching funds, and in-kind match is not eligible. Soft costs are to be paid by the property or business owner and can be partially reimbursed upon project completion. Soft costs incurred for work on buildings that eventually prove infeasible and do not receive other investments will not be reimbursed. Soft costs can not equate to more than 18% of the total eligible cost of the project.

Financing:

- Property or business owners are responsible for securing financing for their project.
- Applicants are encouraged to reach out to Michelle Capone (mcapone@danc.org) at the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) regarding potential short-term financing.
- Applicants are also encouraged to contact Naturally Lewis at 315-376-3014 to discuss other possible gap financing/funding options.

Reimbursement:

- This grant program is a reimbursement program, meaning that the property owner must pay all expenses directly and then submit documentation for eligible expenses for reimbursement. Soft costs for canceled projects are not eligible for reimbursement. Please see Section 8 below for more information on the reimbursement process.

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PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Project Scoring and Selection:

The project review committee will assign a score to each project using the following scoring system and recommend the projects for funding:

Criteria	Max Points
Visual Impact	20
Economic Impact	20
Project Readiness	20
Quality of Life	10
NYF Priorities	30
Total	100

Visual Impact:

- Visual prominence within the target area
- Transformative renovations beyond normal maintenance
- Restoration or preservation of historic structures or building elements, especially those in danger of being lost in part or in total to disrepair or damage
- Compliance with Lewis County Downtown Design Guidelines

Economic Impact:

- Reduction of blight and vacancies
- Contribution to the economic recovery of the target area
- Stabilization or expansion of downtown tax base, businesses and/or jobs
- Creation of new jobs
- Expansion of business service offerings

Project Readiness:

- Proof of ownership
- Proof of financing or reasonable and achievable financing plan
- Reasonable estimated project budget
- Percentage of total project cost funded by applicant
- Reasonable and achievable design and approval plan
- Reasonable construction timeline

Quality of Life:

- Accessibility improvements
- Contribution to a sense of place

NY Forward Priorities:

- Projects that advance the goals and priorities of the NY Forward Investment Strategy, including:
- Four Season Destination: Accelerate efforts to reinforce Lyons Falls as a welcoming, four-season community and destination with a variety of year-round activities, amenities, shopping, lodging, and dining.
- Environment and History: Celebrate and interpret Lyons Falls' value for and connection to the natural environment and history.
- Energize the Economy: Energize the Lyons Falls economy to attract and support businesses, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities.
- Quality of Place: Enhance the 'Quality of Place' in Lyons Falls to draw and retain residents, families, and businesses.

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PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & REIMBURSEMENT:

All projects receiving public funds must follow State procurement and reimbursement procedures. Property owners are required to pay contractors directly and then submit documentation for reimbursement. Please note that if construction begins before all steps under program development are completed, reimbursement cannot be issued. Upon notice of the funding award, the applicant must work with Lewis County on the project. Failure to meet milestones will result in the de-obligation of funds. All projects must proceed through the steps outlined below:

Step	Description	Responsible Party
1. Award Acceptance	• Return signed award letter to Lewis County • Pay a \$1,500 commitment fee (fee is applied to owner match once the project is completed)	Property Owner
2. Develop Project Scope of Work	• Work with the construction manager to develop the project scope of work • Ensure design meets local code and design standards • For larger projects: Complete floor plans, drawings, renderings, written scope of work, or any other needed construction documents • For smaller projects: Complete written scope • Finalize project budget • Secure development board approval if required • Receive clearance from the Downtown Lyons Falls Small Project Committee on the final design	Property Owner
3. Environmental Review	• ALL projects require an environmental review • Lewis County will secure State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) approval • Lewis County will obtain a floodplain determination letter, zoning letter, site contamination report, and any other needed documentation • Lewis County will complete an environmental checklist • Environmental testing (asbestos & lead paint) as needed	Property Owner & Lewis County
4. Project Setup	• Lewis County will submit the project setup to the State for approval	Lewis County

5. Bidding	• Lewis County will advertise the project and do direct solicitation • The Owner will communicate with contractors to solicit bids • Obtain a minimum of two bids or 2 quotes for each phase of work and select a contractor • Bids must be submitted directly to Lewis County	Property Owner and Lewis County
6. Contracts	• Lewis County will provide all agreement templates • Owner will execute agreement with contractor • Owner will execute agreement with Lewis County • Owner will sign Property Release Form • Owner will sign Bid Selection Form	Property Owner and Lewis County
7. Construction *Please note that if construction begins before all previous steps are completed, reimbursement cannot be issued*	• Contractor will secure a building permit and provide Lewis County Planning with a copy • Receive Notice to Proceed from Lewis County Planning • Owner will take before photos • Lewis County Planning will provide a project sign to be installed • Owner will take after photos • Code Enforcement will do an inspection and issue Certificate of Compliance or Certificate of Occupancy • Lewis County will complete environmental clearances (only required if there was hazardous material abatement)	Property Owner, Contractor & Lewis County
8. Reimbursement *Property owners are required to pay contractors directly and then submit documentation for reimbursement*	• Owner will send Lewis County all invoices and proof of payment (only canceled checks or bank/credit statements are acceptable proof of payment) • Invoices must be typed and acceptable to NYS, which must include: • Date • Name & address of contractor • Name & address of person being billed • Detailed description of what is being invoiced • Information about what has previously been paid (if applicable) and the balance for the current invoice • The invoice amount must match the proof of payment amount • Proof of payment date must be after the invoice date • Deposits for materials must be invoiced	Property Owner and Lewis County

	• Owner will sign and notarize the Property Maintenance Declaration prior to reimbursement • Lewis County will prepare and submit a disbursement request to State • Receive Reimbursement	
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PROGRAM CONDITIONS

- Grant awards will be merit-based. Applicants who can communicate a compelling need that directly fulfills criteria with quantifiable results will be given higher consideration.
- Projects selected by the Lyons Falls Small Project Review Committee will be submitted to the Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC) for review and final approval prior to notifying the property or business owner of formal funding approval.
- Awarded funds may be subject to conditions. The award letter and agreement will clearly outline all conditions.
- The Lyons Falls Small Project Committee reserves the right to award a project less funding than requested.
- If awarded funds, the property owner will be required to provide proof of full replacement value insurance (100 %), fire insurance, and flood insurance coverage (if in a special flood hazard area) to the LPA.
- A condition of the funding includes a lien being placed on the property for a term of 5 years, depending on the funding source(s) and the LPA will perform an annual inspection of the building for each year during the term of the lien

PROGRAM INFORMATION

- Additional information about this program, including contact information and the program application form, is available at <https://lewiscountyny.gov/departments/downtown-lyons-falls-small-project-fund/>.
- I acknowledge that I have read the program guidelines in their entirety. I understand that failure to comply with the program guidelines may result in my inability to get reimbursed.

Applicant Signature _____ **DATE** _____