

north  
country  
alliance



# 2023 Annual Report

Growing Businesses in the North Country.

# A Message from the President

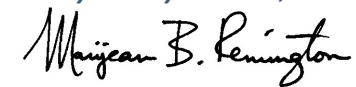
*On behalf of the Board of Directors for the North Country Alliance Local Development Corporation (NCA), I respectfully submit the organization's Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2023. The North Country Alliance is proud of its commitment to community and economic development across New York's 7-county North Country region.*

*In 2023, the NCA closed on 7 loans totaling \$763,500 and committed an additional \$400,000 to 3 loans. One such business to receive assistance was Iron Horse Grill in Waddington, a start-up business.*

*The NCA Education and Outreach Committee released its 2023 Agenda. The Agenda focused on investment in rural broadband, affordable workforce housing and childcare, and investment in infrastructure, among other items impacting our rural communities and businesses.*

*The Board of Directors looks forward to 2024 and to providing our members with resources to grow and expand the economy and communities of the North Country.*

*Very Truly Yours,*



*Marijean Remington, President*





## About Us

*The North Country Alliance promotes economic and business growth in New York's North Country region through collaboration, financing, and advocacy.*

-Mission Statement

The North Country Alliance is a not-for-profit, membership organization comprised of economic development organizations, private businesses, utilities, educational institutions, chambers of commerce, and others from across Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Clinton, Essex, Franklin and Hamilton Counties, also known as New York's North Country region. The NCA fosters collaboration among its membership, and advocates for the businesses and communities in the region. It's regional revolving loan fund plays a significant role in the economic well-being of the 7-county region.



# Education & Outreach

*Where One-Size Does Not Fit All.*

Highlights from the 2023 Education and Outreach Agenda included:

- Funding and policies that promote the development of our workforce, including investment in affordable, quality childcare opportunities, and housing options to support our working families.
- Funding for rural broadband and cellular service, while opposing excessive fees, other charges or mandates, passed on to broadband providers that negatively affect deployment of fiber or equipment to rural areas.
- Opposing the further closing of prisons in the North Country. It is difficult to repurpose these facilities, and the economic impact on the communities with closures is disproportionately severe.
- Supporting the development of renewable energy generation capacity, while urging the State to adopt policies and mandates that support energy resiliency while not imposing excessive costs to the consumer.



## 2023 North Country Alliance Education and Outreach Agenda

*New York is a diverse state.  
A “one-size-fits-all” approach is not the best mechanism to affect positive job growth.*

### RURAL BROADBAND

**The NCA strongly encourages funding for rural broadband and cellular service.** There are still great swaths of rural areas that do not have access to high speed, quality, affordable broadband, or cellular service. The services are not comparable to those provided in metropolitan or urban areas. The counties have been working proactively with NYS to challenge the FCC data which will ultimately factor into how much federal BEAD funding the state will receive. The BEAD funding will play an important role in filling the telecommunication gaps in **rural** communities.

The NCA **strongly opposes** excessive fees, other charges or mandates, passed on to broadband providers that negatively affect deployment of fiber or equipment to rural areas. These added costs hinder further development in rural areas, and negatively affect the availability of services to these communities. Ultimately, this increases cost to the resident and hinders economic growth in rural communities in the North Country.



*Photo Credit: Naturally Lewis*

### WORKFORCE, CHILDCARE & HOUSING

**The NCA supports funding and policies currently proposed that promote the development of our workforce, including investment in affordable, quality childcare opportunities and housing options to support our working families.** The lack of affordable childcare and housing are contributing factors to the out-migration of workers from the North Country. Eighty-six percent, 86%, of census tracts in the region are identified as child care deserts. There is also a significant need for affordable housing in the region as more and more households are paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs. Additional taxes and fees on NYS residents make homeownership an ideal and not a reality, and push workers to leave the state. In the North Country, efforts are underway to attract workers to the region through initiatives like Drum Country NY, as well as partnerships with colleges like SUNY Jefferson and others to train child care providers in order to increase child care slots in the region.



*Photo Credit: Naturally Lewis*

### RESTORE NY

**The NCA strongly supports funding to the RESTORE NY program.** This program has resulted in the redevelopment of several buildings in the North Country which have resulted in new housing and commercial space for businesses, and have removed blight from many downtowns. One such project was the redevelopment of a former historic, brick cheese plant in downtown Carthage, NY. It is now occupied by a restaurant.



*Photo Credit: DANC*

# Programming & Networking

Networking among members is an integral part of the North Country Alliance, and allows for the sharing of ideas and best practices across the region.

The NCA is spread across a large geographic area of northern New York State. Therefore, the NCA Board has made a conscious effort to meet face-to-face twice a year for programming and networking. In June 2023, the Board held its annual meeting in Saranac Lake. The panel discussion focused on community development best practices. Speakers included Andrea Smith, Director of Planning with the City of Ogdensburg, discussing the City's Land Bank Program; Sylvie Nelson, Executive Director of the North Country Workforce Development Board, talking about a growing STEM program that partners educational institutions with regional businesses; and Megan Stadler, Associate Vice President for Strategic Initiatives at Jefferson Community College, speaking about their program to develop home-based childcare businesses.

In October, the membership met in Canton on the campus of St. Lawrence University. At this meeting, Jeff Janiszewski, Senior Vice President, Strategic Business Development/Global NY, with Empire State Development spoke about the different programs and services offered by the state and how Empire State Development works with our economic development organizations to support businesses in the state.

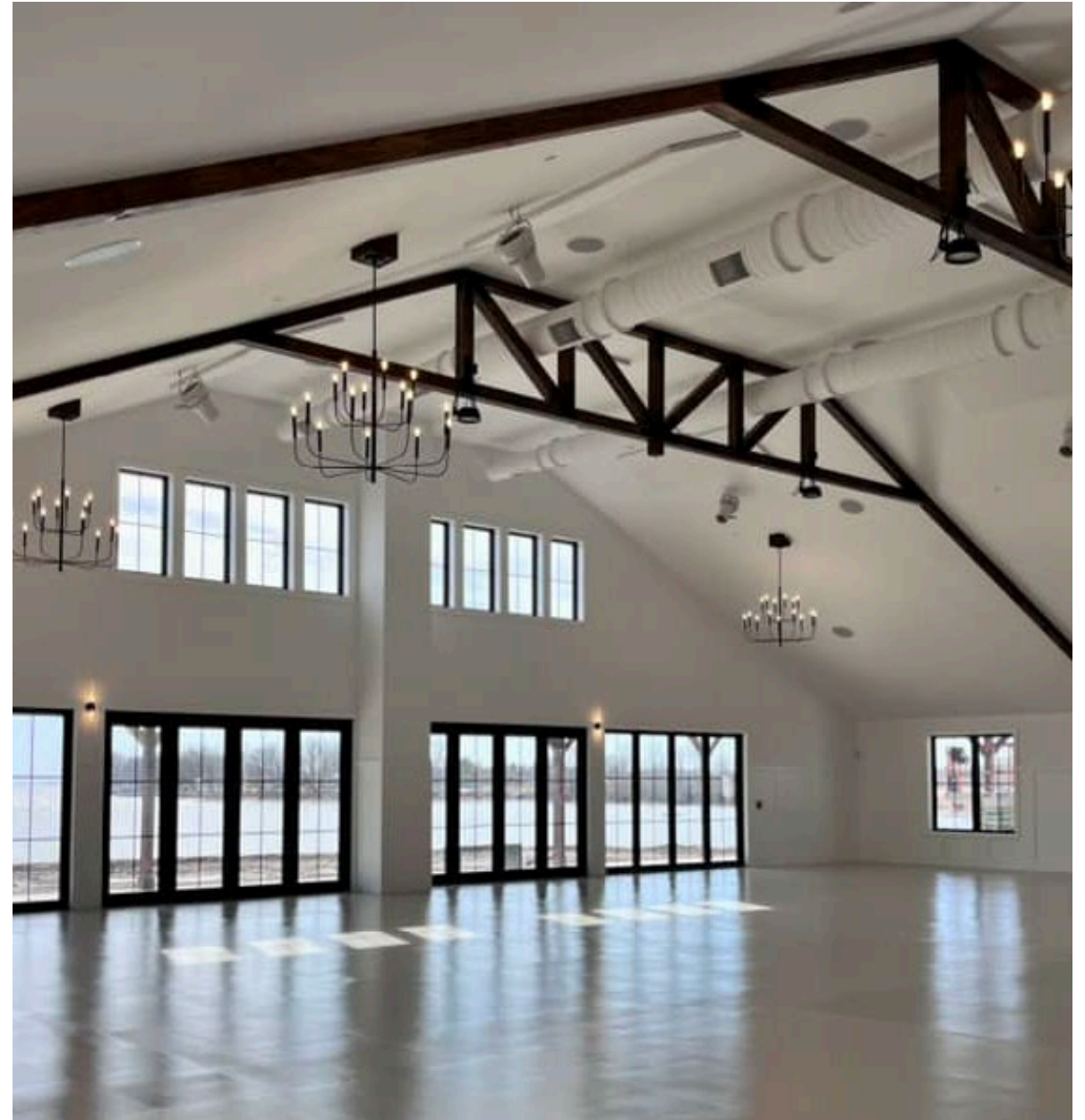


# Loan Fund

The NCA closed on 7 loans totaling \$763,500 to create/retain over 60 jobs for businesses in Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Hamilton Counties.

In 2023, the NCA closed on its 6<sup>th</sup> USDA Intermediary Relending Program loan of \$750,000. These funds are used to support lending to small businesses across the North Country. In 2023, the NCA closed on loans to the following businesses:

- Adirondack Foothills, LLC-\$150,000-Acquisition of a gas station/convenience store in Jefferson County.
- Blast Boss, LLC (d/b/a Iron Horse Bar and Grill)-\$100,000-Start-up restaurant in St. Lawrence County.
- LCO Destiny, LLC-\$125,000-Working capital loan for manufacturer in Jefferson County.
- River Creek, LLC-\$75,000-Working capital loan for start-up café in Hamilton County.
- RLE Howell Property, LLC-\$66,000-Acquisition of an existing business in Jefferson County.
- Fair Wind Rentals, LLC-\$135,000-Improvements to existing facility in Jefferson County.
- Three Mile Bay Ventures, LLC-\$112,500-Start-up of a new event center in Jefferson County. Picture to right.





## Success Story

RLE Howell Property, LLC is a real estate holding company owned by Mitchell and Trisha Howell, who operate Howell Enterprises, LLC, d/b/a Blackstone Electric. Blackstone Electric is located in Dexter, NY and specializes in commercial, industrial, agricultural wiring, as well as service and maintenance work. The company is licensed in NYS for the installation of fire alarm and security systems in addition to data, communications and fiber optic installations. RLE Howell Property, LLC. utilized funding from the North Country Alliance and Watertown Savings Bank to purchase the building that they were renting from the former owner.

# Financials

The Audit and Finance Committee met throughout the year to review the North Country Alliance’s financial performance.

**Primary funding sources:**

ESD SBRLF-Empire State Development Small Business Revolving Loan Fund

UDC-Urban Development Corporation

USDA IRP-U.S. Department of Agriculture Intermediary Relending Program

USDA RBEG-U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program

12/31	2023	2022
Total Assets	\$2,695,928	\$2,872,246
Total Liabilities	\$1,368,986	\$1,563,775
Total Net Assets	\$1,326,942	\$1,308,471
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$2,695,928	\$2,872,246

**Balance Sheet:**

- Primary assets are comprised of restricted cash and loans receivable.
- Primary liabilities are loans owing to USDA and Empire State Development.
- Current liabilities include an obligation to repay Empire State Development \$400,000.
- Net assets are primarily restricted to funding sources.

12/31/2023	ESD SBRLF	UDC	USDA IRP	USDA RBEG	Unclassified	Total
Income	\$12,918	\$39,032	\$64,751	\$5,111	\$14,049	\$135,861
Expense	\$19,947	\$29,910	\$63,479	\$0	\$4,054	\$117,390
Net Income	(\$7,029)	\$9,122	\$1,272	\$5,111	\$9,995	\$18,471

**Income Statement:**

- Income and expenses are charged to funding sources and restricted, unless otherwise unrestricted by the regulatory agency for administrative expenses.
- Primary income is interest income from repayment on loans.
- Primary expenses are the portfolio management fee, interest paid on loans, and insurances.



# Leadership

2023 Officers & Directors



## Officers

Marijean Remington	President
Eric Virkler	Vice-President
Joseph Russo	Secretary
David Zembiec	Treasurer

## Directors

Rob Aiken	Patrick Kelly
Carol Calabrese	Molly Ryan
Benjamin Dixon	Cheyenne Steria
Manna Doyle	Donna Wadsworth
Jeremy Evans	Christy Wilt
Brian Gladwin	Melinda Little

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**For more information**

[www.northcountryalliance.org](http://www.northcountryalliance.org)