

NORTH COUNTRY ALLIANCE



EDUCATION & OUTREACH>2

LOAN FUND>3

LEADERSHIP>4

ANNUAL REPORT

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Photo Credit: Naturally Lewis

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, 2022. The North Country Alliance is proud of its commitment to community and economic development across New York's 7-county North Country region.

In 2022, the NCA adopted a new mission: *The North Country Alliance promotes economic and business growth in New York's North Country region through collaboration, financing, and advocacy.* By promoting economic and business growth, the NCA seeks to foster thriving communities that support our current and future generations, like the pictures on the left signify. As a business owner, I understand the importance of having a qualified and dedicated workforce, and proudly find both here in the north country.

In 2022, the NCA committed \$187,500 to two loans and closed on 1 loan totaling \$200,000. More information is provided later in the report on our success story, War Cannon Spirits.

The NCA Education and Outreach Committee released its 2022 Agenda in winter 2022. 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 NCA also adopted its first Strategic Plan in 2022 and began executing it.

The Board of Directors looks forward to 2023 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



Photo Credit: North Country Chamber of Commerce



Photo Credit: Naturally Lewis



Photo Credit: T.I. Tourism Council

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

‘WHERE ONE-SIZE-DOES-NOT-FIT-ALL’

For many years, the North Country Alliance has completed an annual Education and Outreach Agenda that highlights the issues facing its members in the North Country. The Agenda is drafted by a committee of members that meets to discuss the issues impacting the region. The final Agenda is accepted by the Board of Directors and then shared with local, state and federal elected officials.

The statement ‘one-size-does-not-fit-all’ headlines the NCA’s Education and Outreach Agenda. The members of the NCA recognize that New York State is a diverse state, and that the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to programs and funding is not the best mechanism to affect positive job growth, especially in rural areas like the North Country.

In 2022, the NCA continued to support investments in rural broadband, tourism, workforce development, and affordable child care and housing. The lack of affordable child care and workforce housing continue to be deterring factors for growth in rural communities as they continue to see an out-migration of workers. It is simply too expensive for many workers to pay for housing and child care.

Further, in regard to rural broadband, the NCA strongly opposed excessive fees, and other charges or mandates passed on to broadband providers that negatively affected 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.

The NCA continued to support funding and policies to strengthen the tourism industry in our rural region. The NCA was very happy to see Governor Hochul’s funding for the Olympic Regional Development Authority’s capital improvements. The NCA also supported the proposal to require vacation rental platforms to collect sales tax on the short-term rentals they facilitate, and encouraged the re-opening of the Beekmantown Gateway Information Center. The NCA opposed the proposed \$1 million reduction to the Tourism Promotion Matching Funds program.

The NCA strongly opposed the further closing of prisons in the North Country. It welcomed working with state officials to identify reuse/redevelopment opportunities for our facilities and communities, and any financial assistance to assist local efforts in doing so.

CONNECTIONS: NETWORKING WITH A FLARE

While that might sound odd, the NCA meets in person twice a year, and what better place to meet, to have a free lunch, and to talk than at the Mirror Lake Inn in beautiful Lake Placid, NY! And while members enjoy the scenery and fellow comradery, the program highlights the relevant issues impacting the North Country.

In June 2022, the NCA's annual meeting focused on its strategic plan. The membership learned about the recommendations from the committee on such things as the revised mission statement, core values/goals, objectives, and implementation strategy. Feedback was provided by the membership. The board of directors voted to adopt the strategic plan and tasked the organization's committees to begin implementation.

In October 2022, the NCA met again in Lake Placid where there was a panel of speakers on the impact of renewable energy in the North Country. This was a timely and extremely informative session. The first panel was comprised of representatives from the New York State Energy, Research, and Development Authority, The New York State Independent System Operator, and National Grid. This panel provided insight on how energy supply is allocated and distributed across the state, the state's goals for renewable energy generation in coming years, and the transmission facilities needed both today and in the future.

A second panel discussion was comprised of representatives from the Essex County IDA, Naturally Lewis, and Adirondack-North Country Association. This panel looked at the impact of renewable energy projects on communities. They discussed best practices, and the issues that communities may face when siting these projects.

Overall, the NCA's meetings offer an excellent opportunity for members from across northern New York State to share experiences, concerns, and best practices in a great, centralized location in Lake Placid. And if learning is involved: *it is networking with a flare.*



Photo Credit: Aviva Gold



Photo Credit: The Sun

CAPITAL FUELING BUSINESS GROWTH

A core value to the North Country Alliance is its regional revolving loan fund. The NCA committed \$187,500 to two projects and closed on one loan in 2022 to War Cannon Spirits.

War Cannon Spirits is a start-up distillery in Crown Point, Essex County. Since 2018, it has received \$800,000 (4 separate \$200,000 loans) from the NCA to help bridge NYS grant funds. The NCA structured the financing creatively, by phases, so that it was able to provide the business with the capital needed to complete renovations while waiting for reimbursement on grants from New York State. This is a niche in the lending market that the NCA has been happy to fill as many traditional lenders will not bridge NYS grants due to the inability to assign the grant to the lender. The pictures above and below show how, thinking outside of the box, the NCA was able to *fuel business growth.*

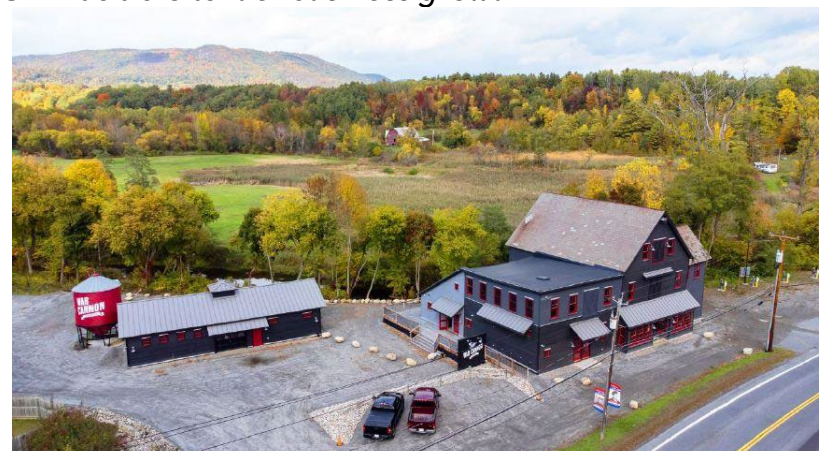


Photo Credit: The Sun

LEADERSHIP



OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Marijean Remington
Eric Virkler
Joseph Russo
David Zembiec

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer

DIRECTORS

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

STRATEGIC PLANNING: *A VISION FOR THE FUTURE*

That is what a strategic plan is and that is what the North Country Alliance committed to in 2022. The board of directors, with input from membership, adopted its first strategic plan. The strategic plan process was led by directors Rob Aiken and Eric Virkler, and facilitated by member Victoria Duley. After a year-long process, the NCA adopted its new mission statement and set its vision for the future relying on its core values to set goals and objectives.

Updated Mission Statement:

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

Identified Core Values/Goals:

- Collaboration,
- Access to Capital/Financing, and
- Advocacy.

Plans for the future include: more networking events, increased professional educational opportunities, and recapitalization of loan funds, to name a few. A new speaker's series has been launched in 2023 to increase professional education opportunities.

The NCA is energized to advance into the future!