



2017 North Country Alliance Education and Outreach Agenda

OUR MISSION: The North Country Alliance (NCA) is a private-public consortium of economic development organizations, private businesses, utilities, public and private colleges, the media and financial institutions working to grow the economy of New York's seven-county North Country region. Its role is to offer a single point of access to the resources you need to expand or locate your business in Northern New York. Visit our website at www.northcountryalliance.org.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New York is a diverse state; hence programs with a “one-size-fits-all” approach are not the best of mechanism to affect positive job growth. Evaluation of economic impact should be relative to the region where a business is locating, and program criteria should take into account the number of jobs created or retained relative to the size of the community, business and unemployment rate.

The NCA urges the Governor and the Legislature to consider the following amendments to the state’s economic development programs:

- ✓ Programs should contain “weighted” regional cost indices that take into account rural and urban areas as they relate to job creation standards and potential economic impacts of projects. The type, size and pay quality of jobs created in rural areas are generally far less than that in metropolitan areas and these should not be considered negatively in determining benefits to new and expanding companies;
- ✓ Diversify benchmarks for qualifying businesses beyond just job creation and include such qualifiers as annual capital investment, annual training activities, annual facility improvements, facility diversifications, etc.; and

➤ **THE NCA *SUPPORTS* THE FOLLOWING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:**

- ✓ The NCA *SUPPORTS* the executive budget life science initiative. Governor Cuomo has proposed to invest \$650 million to spur New York’s life science industry cluster. \$300 million would be for the administration of the initiative; \$250 million would be provided through tax incentives; and \$100 million in private sector investment.
- ✓ The NCA *SUPPORTS* continued funding to Technology Development Organizations (TDOs) and Manufacturing Extension Programs (MEPs). TDOs and MEPs provide programs and services that foster business growth and job creation across the North Country.

- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** the Governor’s Executive Budget proposal to invest in infrastructure across New York State to include Shovel-Ready Business Sites and Parks for attracting economic development projects. Infrastructure plays a crucial role in attracting and maintaining businesses in New York State; and long-term investment in maintaining this infrastructure is critical. The North Country is the largest region in the State, but local municipalities and development organizations lack the necessary funding to develop competitive sites with the required water, sewer, road, broadband and utility services necessary to attract new companies and large-scale development projects.
- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** the continued funding for the following regional programs:
 - \$750 Million for Round VI of the REDC Competition;
 - \$100 Million for Downtown Revitalization Program.
- **THE NCA *RECOMMENDS* THE FOLLOWING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:**
 - ✓ The NCA ***RECOMMENDS*** the state create a category of firms from “economically distressed areas” of New York State to be eligible with, and to receive equal standing as, MWBE firms in relation to the Governor’s goal of 30% for state contracting opportunities. Promoting economic development in distressed areas by providing enhanced access to state contracting opportunities for firms in these areas will:
 - alleviate some of the problems these areas have with finding a pools of certified firms; and
 - promote job retention and creation activities with firms from these areas; and
 - will assist these areas in attracting new firms and investment opportunities.
 - ✓ The NCA ***RECOMMENDS*** \$75 million be provided to fund a Round V of RESTORE NY grants. Two years ago, the legislature added \$25 million to the final State budget to fund a new round of RESTORE NY grants. On January 26, 2017, Governor Cuomo announced the awarding of \$40 million of RESTORE NY grants to 75 municipalities, including many in the North Country. These awards help to advance municipal projects which would otherwise not be completed.
- The NCA ***ACKNOWLEDGES*** the Governor’s MWBE goal of 30%; however recognizes that there is disparity between regions as to the pool of certified woman and minority owned businesses. Streamlining the backlogged certification process will help to grow the pool of qualified MWBEs.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Economic development in rural communities across Northern New York State does not occur in a vacuum but with the cooperation and partnership of many organizations like industrial development agencies, local development corporations, chambers of commerce, and other not-for-profit organizations. Not all organizations are created or sponsored by a public entity or municipality; however their work is not any less important in achieving the desired economic goals in rural communities.

- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** its local industrial development agencies and their affiliated development corporations. Robust, empowered and integrated local development agencies and corporations are the frontline partners for ensuring the successful execution of the Governor’s Regional Council’s and counties initiatives.
- ✓ The NCA ***OPPOSES*** efforts by the Authorities Budget Office to classify all not-for-profit local development corporations as falling under the Public Authorities Accountability Act. Not all not-for-profit local development corporations are affiliated with, sponsored by, or created by a county, city, town or village government as a local authority. The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** the fair review and classification of local development corporations by the Comptrollers’ Office.
- ✓ The NCA ***RECOMMENDS*** allowing property under a PILOT to be included in the calculation for determining a taxing jurisdiction’s tax levy for purposes of the two percent real property tax cap. This is important economically to municipalities and school districts in order to accurately reflect growth in value and for fair calculation of the tax cap.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

➤ **THE NCA ***SUPPORTS*** THE PROGRESSIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS THE SKILLS GAP:**

The skills gap, especially in the manufacturing sector, is a well-documented impediment to business growth and expansion that exists nationally as well as in New York State. With the re-shoring of American manufacturing; the retirement of baby boomers; and an outdated negative view of manufacturing jobs, this skills gap is continuing to widen. Future economic growth will go to those states and communities that are able to win the battle for talent. To be truly “Open for Business” New York must be able to supply the evolving manufacturing sector with a workforce strong in the technical, trade and program coding skills.

- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** the New York State Economic Development Council proposal that an amount equal to 5 percent of the amount awarded to each region through the REDC process be utilized to capitalize regional workforce development skills training funds.
- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** the promotion of trade and technical careers. New York State must encourage development of a talent pipeline by educating youth and their parents about the variety of good-paying jobs in manufacturing and the skilled trades. Currently, such educational efforts are initiated at the local and regional level. New York’s leadership in a statewide promotional campaign would not only develop such a pipeline, but would provide an alternative career pathway for those youth who are not college-bound. In directing them toward viable career opportunities, we would increase the number of productive individuals entering the workforce and reduce the number that would otherwise become dependent on public aid programs.
- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** educating tomorrow’s workforce. The FY 2018 Executive Budget provides a record level of support for our schools, including funding for pre-kindergarten, after school programs, and turning schools into community hubs. It proposes tuition-free college for middle class New Yorkers at State University of New York and City University of New York schools, and community colleges. New York should also support intensive post-

secondary skills training for those job opportunities providing a good wage, but that do not require a college degree.

- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** expanding employment opportunities for youth. Research shows that youth who work during high school years are better prepared to enter the workforce. However, the higher minimum wage is pushing youth out of the job market as employers are now seeking more experienced workers to justify the higher wages. To help counter this, the FY 2017-2018 Budget extends the Urban Youth Jobs Program with a \$50 million annual allocation over the next five years, through 2022, and formally changes the name to the New York Youth Jobs Program, recognizing the availability of this opportunity throughout the State. This program also provides an opportunity to place youth in those settings that encourage their interest in and pursuit of the promising careers of tomorrow.
- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** providing greater and more flexible support for incumbent worker training. New York's emphasis with the Governor's 15% fund, on supporting workforce development programs for those who are already long-term unemployed and dislocated workers has generated little success from employers and has had limited success. Such programs have had limited impact on developing the talent pipeline. The State must also support adult and continuing education programs for incumbent workers and those who are under-employed in order to develop the talent pipeline needed to keep our existing employers competitive and to attract new business to the state.

ENERGY

- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** legislation that would require the PSC to modify the Clean Energy Standard to ensure that operating renewables stay in operation in New York and do not export their renewable energy attributes elsewhere. The decision by the PSC to eliminate from the Clean Energy Standard the proposed Tier 2 market for existing renewable energy projects will likely lead to renewable energy leaving the state. According to a review of existing and recently expired contracts to sell renewable energy certificates under the Renewable Portfolio Standard, the predecessor program to the Clean Energy Standard, it is clear that the North Country region has more existing renewable energy projects than any other region in New York State. These projects total 1,080 megawatts.
- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** a consumer impact study and cost benefit analysis to better ascertain and respond to the costs associated with New York State's Reforming the Energy Vision initiative (REV).
- ✓ The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** the expiration of the 18-a energy surcharge, which negatively impacts NNY manufacturers.
- ✓ Additional natural gas capacity is needed to grow the upstate NY economy. New York State should create rules and regulations that are sensitive to both environmental and economic concerns, regarding the development and transportation of energy resources.

ENVIRONMENT

- The NCA ***SUPPORTS*** maintaining the Environmental Protection Fund at \$300 Million.