



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Call for Projects: Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program 2026

For any questions about the application process or clarification about the responses within this FAQ, please contact Julie Richmond at the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council either by email or phone.

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Funding availability questions:

What is the Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program?

The Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council Call for Projects gives local governments an opportunity to complete bridge preliminary engineering studies ahead of the next NYSDOT Bridge NY program solicitation. The program does not support full-scale construction projects but allows for the completion of preliminary engineering work.

Who can apply for this funding?

Any city, county, town, village, or other political subdivision, including tribal nations/governments and public benefit corporations, authorized to receive and administer State and Federal transportation funding through the existing capital program planning process.

Do the municipalities have to pay for the work first and then get reimbursed?

Yes, the Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program is a reimbursement program.

Are municipalities allowed to apply for state owned bridges that carry local roads (ex. Erie Canal Bridges)?

Yes. In addition, NYSDOT has the bridge data for state-owned bridges, including the bridge inspection report. The Project Sponsor should coordinate with the Owner prior to the application submission.

Railroad bridges are not eligible for BRIDGENY funds; therefore, not eligible for HOCTC's Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program funds. Does that exclude both undergrade and overgrade bridges from eligibility?

The objective of the Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program is to provide funding for local governments to complete preliminary engineering phases of projects to rehabilitate and replace bridges that carry vehicular traffic.

Bridges that carry railroads (train is on the bridge) are not eligible. Bridges carrying public roadways with vehicular traffic over railroads (train is not on the bridge) **are** eligible.

Bike and pedestrian path bridges are not eligible, but are multi-use bridges eligible?

As the funds are intended for bridge projects that carry vehicular traffic, the addition of a sidewalk or shoulder on the bridge to address pedestrian/bicycle use and meet design standards is permitted. Exclusive pedestrian/bicycle projects may be eligible under the Transportation Alternatives Program/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (TAP-CMAQ). More information is available at the website <https://www.dot.ny.gov/TAP-CMAQ>.

Can other funding sources be used to cover the 5 percent local share requirements?

Per the program materials, NYSDOT will provide up to 95 percent of the originally authorized project costs with sponsors providing a minimum 5 percent local funding share. The local share can be comprised of local funds, Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) funds, contributions, or pre-approved non-cash sources.

Other sources of funding can be used as the local share portion for a proposed project if the funding is currently available for the specific project for which a Sponsor is applying for funding. For example, State funds provided through:

- Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- Department of State (DOS) - Downtown Revitalization Initiative funds
- Department of Environmental Conservation
- Canalway Grant funds
- Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grant funds would need pre-approval from both NYSDOT and the Administering Agency

Must a bridge be on a federal-aid eligible road or simply be eligible to receive federal-aid (i.e. off-system bridge)?

Eligible bridge projects must be on a public roadway/highway carrying vehicular traffic, be eligible for federal aid, and shall follow the federal aid process. The NYSDOT may consider bridge projects that incorporate sensors to monitor structural integrity. Bridges that are on a toll collection facility are excluded from eligibility for Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program funds. Multiuse (Pedestrian/Bicycle) and railroad bridges are not eligible for Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program funds.

Federal law makes provision for “off-system bridges” which are not on the federal aid highway system. As such, federal funding (e.g. STBG Off System Bridges) may also be used for bridges on highways with classifications 08, 09 and 19.

“Federal-aid highways” means highways on the Federal-aid highway systems and all other public roads not classified as local roads or rural minor collectors. As such, the following roadways are not on the Federal aid system:

08 - Rural - Minor Collector

09 - Rural - Local (Including Unclassified)

19 - Urban – Local

Do bridges that provide for vehicular access for critical infrastructure needs (water treatment plants, wastewater treatment plants, or other public facilities) which carry a private roadway owned by the municipality and is not open to public vehicular traffic qualify for funding?

No. Bridge projects must be on a public roadway that carries vehicular traffic; be eligible for Federal aid; and shall follow the federal aid process.

Are Culverts eligible through this program for preliminary engineering work?

No, not at this time. The project must involve a bridge whose primary purpose is carrying vehicular traffic.

Consultant Questions:

Can a consultant of the applicant submit the project request and all supporting documentation on behalf of the applicant?

Yes.

Clarify the use of consultants.

Federal and State regulations require a qualifications-based selection (QBS) process for procuring/obtaining/hiring engineering services. Price cannot be a factor in the selection process. The fee for services is negotiated along with the scope of services after selection has been made. See the NYS County Highway Superintendents Association's web site <https://www.countyhwys.org/> under 2025-2028 Local Design Services Agreement Program, <https://www.countyhwys.org/ldsa>. This web page and Section 6.3.2 of the Local Projects Manual (LPM) (Chapter 6) describe how to make a "project specific selection" of a firm using the Local Design Services Agreement (LDSA) list. Section 6.3.1 describes the selection process if a Sponsor would like to pursue a project specific selection. If you have any further questions, please contact HOCTC to receive assistance with the process.

Clarify phases of work and conflict of interest.

A consultant is only eligible to perform the phases of work named in the solicitation. If later phases are not referenced, and the Sponsor must go through another competitive, qualifications-based selection process, and the original consultant cannot be considered due to a conflict of interest. The firm preparing the project request would have an unfair advantage as they would have knowledge not available to others as they developed the project request. See the Local Projects Manual (Chapter 6, Section 6.7.2 Conflict of Interest).

Can a consultant be used to prepare the project request and design preliminary plans?

Yes. Consultants must be selected through a competitive, qualifications-based selection (QBS) process within the last 3 years which comply with state and federal regulations if state or federal funds will be sought for the reimbursement of consultant services. If seeking reimbursement, a Sponsor may use their existing procurement procedures if they meet state and federal procurement procedures. Consultants are only eligible to work on the phases (project request, design, right of way acquisition and/or construction) that are named in the request for proposals/solicitation. See the Local Projects Manual (Chapter 6, Section 6.1.1). If you are unsure if your consultant selection process meets federal and state requirements, please contact your RLPL.

If a municipality selects a consultant to assist in the development of a Preliminary Engineering for Local Bridges application request only (using their own procurement process and not seeking reimbursement for these consultant services), is that firm excluded from being a sub-contractor of a primary firm who may undertake additional phases of the project?

The consultant may not be a sub-consultant for the prime selected for subsequent phases of a project.

As a potential project Sponsor, through the NYSCHSA LDSA I received consultant proposals for a potential Preliminary Engineering Bridge project that indicated they would prepare the project request for free. Is this allowed?

No, this is not allowed.

In accordance with 23 U.S.C. § 112, 23 C.F.R. Part 172, and New York State Finance Law §136- a, Architectural/Engineering (AE) services must be obtained through a Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) process. Proposals for potential projects must not include any discussion of a fee nor should it include an option for services provided for free. Either of these may influence the potential project Sponsor to select the firm that indicated they would provide the services for free rather than the firm that is best qualified for the proposed work.

If a potential project Sponsor receives a consultant proposal containing cost related information, the proposal must be returned to the consultant requesting they remove all cost related information prior to resubmitting the proposal. If the consultant fails to revise the proposal as directed, it may result in the proposal being found non-responsive.

Project Request Funding and Local Share Requirements

Is bonding of a project eligible for reimbursement?

Costs related to bonding to finance a project are not eligible for reimbursement.

Can in-kind services from the Sponsor be used to offset the 5% local share requirement?

Project sponsors will need to identify local funds to be applied to the project. Sponsors interested in using in-kind services are strongly encouraged to discuss the proposed activities with HOCTC and it can put you in touch with your Regional Local Projects Liaison (RLPL) at Region 2 to determine eligibility as noted in the Local Projects Manual (LPM), Chapter 3, Section 3.11.1 Flexible Match.

Can CHIPS funding be used as part of the 5% local share requirement?

CHIPS funding is considered a local fund source and eligible to be used as local share on this program.

What is the recommended reimbursement time frame for Sponsor payments to consultants and contractors?

NYSDOT recommends reimbursement requests be submitted monthly. See NYSDOT Local Projects Manual, Chapter 5 Accounting and Reimbursement Procedures for additional information.

What is the reimbursement process for this program?

The process is as follows:

1. Sponsor receives authorization to proceed
2. Work is performed
3. Sponsor pays contractor/consultant for completed work
4. Sponsor submits payment documentation to NYSDOT
5. NYSDOT reimburses Sponsor for eligible costs

The average time between the Sponsor submitting payment documentation to NYSDOT and NYSDOT sending out reimbursement is 4 to 8 weeks.

General Project Request Form Questions

Does inspection documentation need to be from a specific source, for example, NYSDOT? Is inspection documentation from a Town engineer acceptable?

For reviewers to evaluate the infrastructure need of the project, inspection reports and photographs of the existing conditions should be included with the project request submission. The information contained in the inspection report and how well it depicts the condition of the structure does affect the scoring.

Is a letter signed by a NYS Professional Engineer (PE) required as part of the Bridge Preliminary Engineering Program request?

A signed certification letter stating that the NYS PE performed a Quality Assurance review of the project request is not required and will not receive additional weight during the scoring process.

Is the Sponsor required to pass a resolution for the project request?

A resolution is not required at the time of project request.

Is the Sponsor required to hold a public hearing on the project request?

NYSDOT does not require a public hearing for project request submission.

Project Development Process/Coordination

Can a municipality bundle several projects together?

Project Requests for bridges must be submitted individually and will be scored on an individual basis.

Will the Right of Way (ROW) acquisition process need to follow the flowcharts shown in section 11.2 GUIDELINES FOR ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY BY SPONSORS (LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCIES) of the Local Projects Manual (LPM) or can we follow our County process?

The Right-of-Way acquisition process should follow Section 11.2 of the Local Projects Manual.

If we do not have town right of way, is it ok to simply get an easement over private property?

Sponsors should contact HOCTC to discuss.

How does a Sponsor/owner prove it owns the bridge?

The applicant should provide the basis of its assertion of ownership of the bridge, including any documentary support. Absent conflicting evidence, a substantive and rational basis of ownership will be deemed sufficient.

How will the NYSDOT consider/rate projects that do not have the required documentation of property rights of way (ROW) necessary for the project?

Inconclusive information regarding ROW ownership and needs will increase the deliverability risks and therefore may have an impact on the project score.

Have the text fields been expanded to accept as much text as the sponsor inputs, or are they limited in character length?

Text fields in the project request form are not limited.

Can an employee of the municipality (town engineer, county engineer, or other) develop a project request for the municipality? This would include filling out the project requests, creating estimates, etc.

Yes. The municipality can develop a project request with their own staff. Hiring a consultant to develop the project request is not required.

When sponsoring a project for a bridge owned or partially owned by a railroad, is a letter of support from the owner required?

While a letter of support is not required, it will help address deliverability concerns. Inconclusive information regarding owner project support will increase the deliverability risks and therefore may have an impact on the project score.