REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

NEW YORK GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURS PROGRAM

Issued: October 2, 2026

Designated Contacts for this solicitation:

Primary Contact: Toby Garcia
Secondary Contact: Laura Welch

All contacts/inquiries shall be made by email to the following address:
NYGEP@esd.ny.gov

Applications must be submitted through the online web portal at:
https://esd-nystar.submittable.com/submit

This RFA is posted on the Empire State Development website:
https://esd.ny.gov/doing-business-ny/requests-proposals

Submission Deadline: 2:00 PM ET on November 19, 2026
Applications deemed to have arrived late will not be accepted

INTRODUCTION

The mission of Empire State Development ("ESD") is to promote a vigorous and growing state economy, encourage business investment and job creation, and support diverse, prosperous local economies across New York State through the efficient use of loans, grants, tax credits, real estate development, marketing, and other forms of assistance.

A. **Program Summary**

The New York Global Entrepreneurs Program (NYGEP) aims to attract and retain highly trained international entrepreneurs[1] within New York State. The mission of the program is to incentivize international entrepreneurs to launch innovative startups[2] in New York, rather than taking their skills and knowledge elsewhere due to limitations on visa availability. NYGEP will offer new opportunities for international entrepreneurs in New York, boost the innovation economy, create jobs, and bolster the status of New York's research universities.

B. Request for Application Schedule

Anticipated RFA Timeline	Date
RFA Release	Friday, October 2, 2026
Applicant Information Session*	Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at 3:00 PM ET **AND** Thursday, October 22, 2026, at 3:00 PM ET
Deadline for Questions	Thursday, November 5, 2026
ESD Responses to Questions Posted	Thursday, November 12, 2026
Application Deadline	Thursday, November 19, 2026, at 2:00 PM ET

Please note, the Corporation reserves the right to change any of the dates stated in this RFP.

*To participate, please submit your request to NYGEP@esd.ny.gov.

II. PROGRAM GUIDELINES

A. Overview

NYGEP provides grants to selected universities, and/or affiliated not-for-profits,[3] (the "grantees") to support the establishment or, if applicable, expansion of Global Entrepreneurs in Residence

[1] An international entrepreneur shall refer to a non-citizen from a country of origin other than the United States who plans to establish or co-found a business within the United States.

[2] For purposes of NYGEP, a start-up is a business which is involved, at the time of investment, in activities related to the development of initial product or service offerings, such as prototype development or establishment of initial production or service processes.

[3] To achieve its mission, NYGEP must align its implementation with the federal requirements of the H-1B Visa process. Therefore, for the purposes of this program, eligible grantees include Institutions of higher education, as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 1001(a); Nonprofit organizations or entities related to or affiliated with institutions of higher education; and Nonprofit research organizations or governmental research organizations, as defined in 8 CFR 214.2(h)(19)(iii)(C).

("GEIR") Programs,[4] as described in this section. These programs will provide valuable, relevant part-time work opportunities as well as guidance, mentorship, and other support services, such as access to operating space, to international entrepreneurs who have committed to launching new business ventures within New York State (the "founders").

In order to participate in NYGEP, the grantees, as H-1B visa cap-exempt employers, are expected to file an H-1B visa petition for each participating founder in their respective program. As sponsored employees, the founders will work for the grantees to share their expertise with students and venture communities as defined and determined by the grantee. The H-1B visa – secured by the cap-exempt grantees – will enable the founders to grow their new business in New York and benefit university programming, including New York State supported assets such as NYSTAR accelerators, incubators, and hot spots.

While engaged in part-time work for the grantee, as authorized under the cap-exempt H-1B visa, participating founders are expected to apply for a separate, concurrent visa[5] through their new business. Founders supported by the NYGEP program are also expected to maintain their business operations in New York for no fewer than three years following completion of the program.

Grant funds may be used for expenses associated with the establishment or expansion of a GEIR program or substantially similar program[6] as described in the footnotes of this document.

B. **Eligibility**

Public and private institutions of higher education, and affiliated not-for-profit organizations, in New York State are eligible to apply for grant funding under NYGEP. All applicants must submit a complete application in accordance with Sections 6 and 8 below.

Note to Not-for-Profit Organizations:
Not-for-profit applicants must include in their application a partnership agreement (see Exhibit A of this solicitation) with an H-1B cap-exempt public or private institution of higher education for the purposes of NYGEP grant implementation. Additionally, not-for-profit organizations who are successful in receiving grants must meet the following requirements prior to ESD Directors' approval and execution of a Grant Disbursement Agreement: (1) be prequalified in New York State Grants Gateway; (2) be registered and up-to-date with filings with the New York State Office of the Attorney General's Charities Bureau; and (3) be registered and up-to-date with the New York State Office of the State Comptroller's VendRep System. Additionally, it is strongly advised that all not-for-profit organizations register with Grants Gateway upon application.

[4] Global Entrepreneur in Residence ("GEIR") Programs help create an avenue for highly skilled foreign entrepreneurs to start businesses, and create jobs in partnership with top tier universities.

[5] A concurrent H-1B visa allows an employee to work for a second employer while maintaining their primary cap-exempt H-1B job. This second role can be with a cap-subject employer, and the employee may begin once they file a valid Form I-129, without becoming subject to the H-1B cap again during the same validity period.

[6] For purposes of this program, a "substantially similar program" is a program that, while differing in its structure, delivery model, or participant experience from a traditional Global Entrepreneurs in Residence program, is designed to further NYGEP's purpose of attracting, supporting, and retaining international entrepreneurs in New York State and is otherwise consistent with the objectives and requirements of NYGEP, as determined by ESD

C. **Funding**

Successful grantee applicants will be awarded grants to establish or expand a GEIR Program or a substantially similar program, including the direct employment of entrepreneurs by an H-1B cap exempt public or private institution[7] or affiliated not-for-profit for purposes commensurate with the H-1B visa requirements while the entrepreneur establishes their company in New York.

The maximum grant amount to any single entity is $1,500,000. The grant term is four years. ESD may consider an extension to the term of the grant at the request of a grantee on a case-by-case basis with good cause, as defined by ESD. Grantees are required to submit a budget based on the reasonably estimated needs of their program. ESD reserves the right to determine the final grant amount awarded to each grantee after reviewing the provided budget.

Applicants are expected to provide at least a 25% cash match to the grant, with higher cash matches receiving additional consideration. In-kind contributions shall not count towards the 25% cash match but shall favorably impact an application.

D. Eligible Expenses

Grant funds may be used for expenses relating to establishment or expansion of a GEIR program or substantially similar program as described above. Such expenses may include:

- Experience/Capacity building
- Salaries for staff directly involved in administration of the program;
- Participating entrepreneur wages;
- Necessary legal expenses expressly limited to the implementation and administration of the GEIR program and the obtainment of cap-exempt H-1B visas, including any associated application fees;
- Immigration/visa compliance software or related systems;
- Outreach materials, excluding marketing or promotional merchandise such as clothing, bags, or water bottles;
- Supplies required for program implementation, excluding technology such as laptops, tablets, cellular phones, and related items;
- Additional items as approved by ESD.

Capital expenses and legal fees unrelated to a grantee sponsored cap exempt H-1B visa and program implementation (e.g., other visa type for permanent residency) are ineligible expenses.

III. Reporting

Each successful grant recipient is required to provide financial and progress reports to ESD at minimum once per quarter. Upon execution of a grant disbursement agreement, ESD will provide specific reporting guidelines and forms, which are expected to include success stories, key project impact and metrics as well as financial data pertaining to use of grant funds.

[7] A **cap-exempt H-1B visa** is a U.S. work visa granted to foreign professionals in specialty occupations that is not subject to the annual numerical cap of 85,000 visas, allowing eligible employers—such as institutions of higher education, nonprofit entities affiliated with such institutions, and nonprofit or governmental research organizations—to file H-1B petitions year-round without participating in the lottery system.

IV. Application Information

Applicants must provide a narrative that includes the below information in the following order using the headings listed below. Submitted applications are expected to be written succinctly. If applications include materials not requested by the RFA, ESD will remove the extra materials prior to the review. During the review process, applicants may be requested to submit additional written documents to answer questions or provide clarification of issues raised during the review process.

The application should include the following information:

A. Glossary of Terms Used (if required)
B. Executive Summary (1 Page)
C. Proposal (10 page maximum)
    a. Program Description
        i. Provide a general overview of the program, including, but not limited to, a description of:
            1. How entrepreneurs will be identified, recruited, and selected;
            2. How employment opportunities for entrepreneurs will be designed and how they will enrich ongoing educational or related activities,
            3. How entrepreneurs and their companies will be supported during and after their engagement with the grantee;
        ii. Expected number of entrepreneurs enrolled each year of the grant.
    b. Ecosystem Activation & Company Retention
        i. Describe how you will identify and recruit companies with strong ties to, or existing operations in, New York State.
        ii. Describe how you will work with NYSTAR-supported programs and other statewide partners to identify and support companies.
        iii. Describe your plan to retain supported companies in New York for at least three years after program completion, including next steps and follow-on pathways.
    c. Timeline
        i. Provide a timeline, corresponding to the Program Description, outlining how the program will be developed, marketed, implemented, and tracked. Include any key project milestones or metrics.
    d. Organization's Experience and Qualification
        i. Demonstrate knowledge, expertise and experience cultivating and supporting entrepreneurs and start-ups.
        ii. Demonstrate capacity to effectively administer the program, including capacity to secure and comply with cap exempt H-1B visas. If this involves subcontracting, please provide the names of any subcontractors or a description of how they will be procured.
        iii. List strategic partners and how they will strengthen the program.
        iv. Demonstrate staff's knowledge, ability and role. Respondent must provide a detailed plan identifying any intended use of subcontractors associated with this project.
    e. Funding
        i. Provide a budget detailing the anticipated use of grant funds, including any matching funds.
        ii. Provide a commitment letter regarding any cash or in-kind match.
    f. Metric of success

i. While ESD shall provide standard reporting requirements, indicate any metrics of success or key performance indicators that will be used to measure outcomes.

D. Partnership Agreement (*Not-for-Profit Applicants Only*)

Provide any additional information regarding how the not-for-profit and university partner will collaborate to successfully implement the program. Include details on any similar past collaborations. Include a copy of the signed partnership agreement.

V. Selection Criteria

Applications to NYGEP will be reviewed and scored by ESD. ESD intends for NYGEP to be a statewide program and seeks to expand access to international entrepreneur support services in regions not currently served by NYGEP. Accordingly, the geographic distribution of awardees, their ability to serve multiple ESD regions, and their capacity to recruit, serve, and retain international entrepreneurs outside New York City and the Capital Region will be considered in the selection of awardees. Applications are expected to be evaluated and judged using the below general criteria:

- Experience/Capacity (30 points)
  - Demonstrated capacity to effectively manage and implement the grant.
  - Experience supporting and collaborating with entrepreneurs and founders.
  - Experience accelerating the growth of start-up companies.
  - Previous work with providers for immigration visa support for employees, faculty or other staff members.
  - Demonstrated capacity and a clear plan to obtain cap-exempt (university-based) H-1B visas for participating founders, meet ongoing visa compliance requirements, and remain current with and responsive to relevant changes in federal immigration policy and regulations.
  - Identify key metrics of success or key performance indicators.

- Budget (20 points)
  - Alignment of budget with proposed activities
  - Realism and Efficiency of costs
  - Detail and clarity of budget narrative
  - Staff and Resource allocation relative to scope

- Leveraging Additional Resources & Ecosystem Engagement (20 points)
  - 25% or greater cash grant match.
  - In-kind grant match.
  - Additional resources that will be leveraged by state grant assistance.
  - Leveraging of other State-supported programs and funding such as NYSTAR-supported Venture Accelerators, Business Pitch Competitions, Hot Spots, Incubators, Centers of Excellence, or Centers of Advanced Technology.
  - Ability to impact entrepreneurs beyond applicant's own network across multiple ESD regions.

- Planning (15 points)
  - Plan to generate educational or other community benefits through employment of participating entrepreneurs.
  - Plan to collect and evaluate metrics of success.
  - Plan to support participating entrepreneurs and their ventures over the term of the grant.

- Plan, if any, to sustain the program following the grant term.

- Entrepreneur Identification, outreach, and selection processes (15 points)
  - How the program evaluates both the entrepreneurs' and their companies' suitability for the program, considering readiness, visa viability, and alignment with program goals.
  - The methods used to ensure program information effectively reaches relevant and qualified entrepreneurs.
  - Clarity and rigor of the criteria and processes used to select ventures and entrepreneurs, ensuring their readiness, sustainability, and long-term viability in the U.S.

The maximum number of points any Application may receive is 100.

VI. Submission of Applications

All applications should be completed and submitted through the online application portal, Submittable. The application can be accessed at the following link, https://esd-nystar.submittable.com/submit/. Applications must be submitted no later than **2:00 PM ET** on **Thursday, November 19, 2026**.

Applications deemed to arrive late will not be considered for award.

VII. Questions

All questions, comments, requests for clarification or any other communication regarding this RFA must be submitted by email to NYGEP@esd.ny.gov no later than **Thursday, November 5, 2026**. Your subject line should state: "[*Name of Applicant] – RFA Inquiry, New York State Global Entrepreneurs Program".*

VIII. General Provisions

The issuance of this RFA and the submission of a response by an applicant or the acceptance of such a response by ESD does not obligate ESD in any manner. ESD reserves the right to:

i. amend, modify, or withdraw this RFA;
ii. revise any requirement of this RFA;
iii. require supplemental statements or information from any responsible party;
iv. accept or reject any or all responses hereto;
v. extend the deadline for submission of responses hereto;
vi. negotiate potential contract terms with any Respondent;
vii. communicate with any Respondent to correct and/or clarify responses which do not conform to the instructions contained herein;
viii. cancel, or reissue in whole or in part, this RFA, if ESD determines in its sole discretion that it is its best interest to do so; and
ix. extend the term of any agreement on terms consistent with this RFA.

ESD may exercise the foregoing rights at any time without notice and without liability to any responding firm or any other party for its expenses incurred in preparation of responses hereto or otherwise. All costs associated with responding to this RFA will be at the sole cost and expense of the Respondent.

All information submitted in response to this RFA is subject to the Freedom of Information Law ("FOIL"),

which generally mandates the disclosure of documents in the possession of ESD upon the request of any person unless the content of the document falls under a specific exemption to disclosure. In addition, Applications may be discussed at meetings of the ESD Directors, which meetings are subject to the Open Meetings Law.

ESD reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to retain and use all the materials and information, and the ideas and suggestions therein, submitted in response to this solicitation (collectively, the "Response Information") for any purpose. By submitting an application, each Respondent waives any and all claims against ESD relating to ESD's retention or use of the Response Information.

IX. Solicitation Forms and Requirements

Additional requirements for this RFA are described below. Relevant forms, where required to be submitted, must be executed, and included in the submission in the same order as listed below:

1. Conflict of Interest
2. State Finance Law Sections139 J&K
3. Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire
4. Insurance Certificate
5. Non-Discrimination and Contractor & Supplier Diversity Requirements
6. W-9

Other Required Documentation:

7. Most current audited financial statements – two years
8. Current financial pro-forma statements
9. List of Board of Directors
10. Resumes of proposed Program staff

1. Conflicts of Interest

Respondent must attest it has read, understood and will comply with the following provisions https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/Conflict-of-Interest-Attestation-June-2019.pdf. ESD may disqualify any Respondent to this RFA or terminate any contract entered into as a result of this RFA should ESD determine that the Respondent has violated any of these requirements.

A. Gifts and Offers of Employment: Respondent has not and shall not during this procurement and during the negotiation of any contract resulting from this procurement, offer to any employee, member or director of ESD, any gift, whether in the form of money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, thing or promise, or in any other form, under circumstances in which it could reasonably be inferred that the offer was intended to influence said employee, member or director, or could reasonably be expected to influence said employee, member or director, in the performance of the official duty of said employee, member or director or was intended as a reward for any official action on the part of said employee, member or director. Respondent may not make any offers of employment or discuss the possibility of such offers with any employee, member or director of ESD who is involved in this procurement and/or resulting contract negotiation within at least 30 days from the time that the employee's involvement in this matter closed.

B. Disclosure of Potential Conflicts: Respondent shall disclose any existing or contemplated relationship with any other person or entity, including relationships with any member, shareholders of 5% or more, parent, subsidiary, or affiliated firm, which would constitute an actual or potential conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety, relating to other clients/customers/employers of the Respondent or former officers and employees of ESD, in connection with your rendering services enumerated in this RFP. If a conflict does or might exist, Respondent must describe how it would eliminate or prevent it.

C. Disclosure of Ethics Investigations: Respondent must disclose whether it, or any of its members, shareholders of 5% or more, parents, affiliates, or subsidiaries, have been the subject of any ongoing investigation or disciplinary action by the New York State Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government or its predecessor State entities (collectively, "Commission"), and if so, a description must be included indicating how any matter before the Commission was resolved or whether it remains unresolved.

2. State Finance Law Sections 139J and 139K forms

State Finance Law Sections 139-j and 139-k (collectively, the "Procurement Requirements") apply to this RFA. These Procurement Requirements: (1) govern permissible communications between potential Respondents and ESD or other involved governmental entities with respect to this RFA; (2) provide for increased disclosure in the public procurement process through identification of persons or organizations whose function is to influence procurement contracts, public works agreements and real property transactions; and (3) establish sanctions for knowing and willful violations of the provisions of the Procurement Requirements, including disqualification from eligibility for an award of any contract pursuant to this RFA. Compliance with the Procurement Requirements requires that all communications regarding this RFA, from the time of its issuance through final award and execution of any resulting contract (the "Restricted Period"), be conducted only with the designated contact persons listed above; the completion by Respondents of the Offeror Disclosure of Prior Non-Responsibility Determinations, and the Offeror's Affirmation of Understanding and Agreement pursuant to State Finance Law; and periodic updating of such forms during the term of any contract resulting from this RFA.

Respondents must submit the Offeror Disclosure of Prior Non-Responsibility Determinations, and the Offeror's Affirmation of Understanding and Agreement pursuant to State Finance Law as part of their submittal. Copies of these forms are available at:
https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/SF-Law139-JK-2025.pdf.

The Procurement Requirements also require ESD staff to obtain and report certain information when contacted by Respondents during the Restricted Period, make a determination of the responsibility of Respondents and make all such information publicly available in accordance with applicable law. If a Respondent is found to have knowingly and willfully violated the State Finance Law provisions, that Respondent and its subsidiaries, related or successor entities will be determined to be a non-responsible Respondent and will not be awarded any contract issued pursuant to this solicitation. In addition, two such findings of non-responsibility within a four-year period can result in debarment from obtaining any New York State governmental procurement contract. The designated contact account for this solicitation is referenced on the cover of this RFA.

This is not a complete presentation of the provisions of the Procurement Requirements. All potential Respondents are solely responsible for full compliance with the Procurement Requirements. Both the prime consultant and any sub-consultants complete the forms required above.

3. Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire

All Respondents to this RFA must be "responsible," which in this context means that they must have the requisite financial ability, organizational capacity and legal authority to carry out its obligations under this RFA, and in addition must demonstrate that both the Respondent and its principals have and will maintain the level of integrity needed to contract with New York State entities such as ESD. Further, the Respondent must show satisfactory performance of all prior government contracts. Accordingly, the contract to be entered into between ESD and the Respondent, if any, shall include clauses providing that the Respondent remain "responsible" throughout the term of the contract, that ESD may suspend the contract if information is discovered that calls into question the responsibility of the contracting party, and that ESD may terminate the contract based on a determination that the contracting party is non-responsible. On request, model language to this effect will be provided to any Respondent to this RFA.

To assist in the determination of responsibility, ESD requires that all Respondents register in the State's Vendor Responsibility System ("Vend-Rep System"). The Vend-Rep System allows business entities to enter and maintain their Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire information in a secure, centralized database. New York State Procurement Law requires that state agencies award contracts only to responsible vendors. Respondents are to file the required Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire online via the Vend-Rep System or may choose to complete and submit a paper questionnaire. Please include a copy of your Vend-Rep submission receipt or paper questionnaire with your proposal. Your Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire must have been completed within one year of submission of your proposal.

To enroll in and use the Vend-Rep System, please visit: www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep. For direct Vend-Rep System user assistance, the Office of the State Comptroller's Help Desk may be reached at 866-370-4672 or 518-408-4672 or by email at itservicedesk@osc.state.ny.usitservicedesk@osc.state.ny.us.

Respondents opting to file a paper questionnaire can obtain the appropriate questionnaire from the Vend-Rep website (http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep/forms_vendor.htm) and execute accordingly pertaining to the company's trade industry. Bidders are required to complete the questionnaire which best matches the business activity (either "Construction" or "Non-Construction") and business type (either "For-Profit" or "Not-for-Profit") from the four (4) available options.

In addition, please see link to EO-192: https://ogs.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/09/eo-192-vendor-integrity_0.pdf.

4. Insurance Requirements

The selected Respondent will be required to provide the following insurance (at a minimum and to the extent applicable):

- Commercial General Liability of $1 million per occurrence and $2 million in the aggregate;
- In the event that you are using a vehicle in business, Commercial Automobile insurance with a limit of not less than $1 million;

- Professional Liability $1 million;
- Must show evidence of Worker's Compensation & Employer's Liability insurance at State statutory limits;
- Must show evidence of Disability insurance coverage at State statutory limits;

NYS Urban Development Corporation d/b/a Empire State Development (ESD) must be named as additional insured on a primary and non-contributory basis on all of the following policies: Commercial General Liability and Auto Liability. All policies above should include a waiver of subrogation in favor of ESD.

5. Non-Discrimination and Contractor & Supplier Diversity Requirements

Pursuant to New York State Executive Law Article 15-A and Article 3 of New York State Veterans' Services Law, ESD recognizes its obligation under the law to promote opportunities for maximum feasible participation of certified minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBEs) and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses (SDVOBs) in the performance of ESD projects. The Recipient shall be required to use Good Faith Efforts (pursuant to 5 NYCRR §142.8 and 9 NYCRR § 252.2(n) to achieve MWBE and SDVOB Participation. In addition, ESD's MWBE and SDVOB Participation/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy will apply to this program. Specific goals related to the total value of ESD's funding will be established on a grant-by-grant basis.

ESD has an agency-wide goal of 30% for MWBE participation, 15% for New York State certified Minority-owned Business Enterprise ("MBE") participation and 15% for New York State-certified Women-owned Business Enterprise ("WBE") participation (based on the current availability of MBEs and WBEs). ESD has an agency-wide goal of 6% for SDVOB participation, based on the current availability of qualified SDVOBs.

6. W-9 Form

Provide a completed W-9 form (https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf), submit with proposal.

APPENDIX A: ESD IT Security Standard Brief
https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/ESD-Security-Standard-Brief.pdf

Exhibit A

Example Agreement Between Non-Profit and Institutions of Higher Education