



NEW YORK
CITY BAR

December 1, 2023

Mayor Eric Adams
Office of the Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Rohit T. Aggarwala
New York City Department of Environmental Protection
59-17 Junction Boulevard
Flushing, NY 11373

Director Elijah Hutchinson
Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

RE: Invitation to the NYC Mayor's Office Regarding Justice40 Grants

Dear Mayor Adams, Commissioner Aggarwala and Director Hutchinson:

We submit this letter on behalf of the Environmental Law Committee and New York City Affairs Committee of the New York City Bar Association and the Environmental and Energy Law and the Local and State Government Law Sections of the New York State Bar Association.

As you are aware, the Inflation Reduction Act (“IRA”) presents enormous opportunities for municipalities, school districts and other local organizations around the State to secure federal grants for projects designed to mitigate and adapt to climate change. These grants could provide significant assistance to our communities in implementing clean energy projects, reducing air pollution, providing cooling centers and developing the infrastructure needed to protect against flooding and other risks posed by the changing climate. Many billions of dollars are earmarked under the IRA for these and other purposes nationwide, including: \$65 billion for clean energy and energy efficiency projects; \$21 billion for remediation and reduction of legacy pollution; and \$55 billion for the development of water-related infrastructure projects. These funding opportunities are particularly welcome because under federal policy a substantial portion - some 40 percent - of the benefit to be derived from the funding is to be directed to disadvantaged communities.

About the Association

The mission of the New York City Bar Association, which was founded in 1870 and has over 23,000 members, is to equip and mobilize a diverse legal profession to practice with excellence, promote reform of the law, and uphold the rule of law and access to justice in support of a fair society and the public interest in our community, our nation, and throughout the world.

However, major challenges confront our local communities in capitalizing on these opportunities, because many do not have the resources or experience needed to assure that they are aware of grant announcements as they arise, or to prepare successful applications and administer grant monies once the projects they propose have been approved.

The Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) has taken some steps towards addressing such concerns. For instance, EPA has appointed and provided substantial funding to WE ACT For Environmental Justice (“WE ACT”) to serve as a “Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center” to assist local entities in our region in navigating the grant programs. However, much of the funding now available will lapse in a few years, so a great deal of information, training and other assistance must be provided to a multiplicity of local entities in a very short time.

The State and City Bar Associations have a long track record of holding events to educate the legal profession and the general public on matters pertaining to environmental and municipal law. Drawing on our experience and resources, we would be pleased to work with the involved City officials to organize one or more conferences, webinars or round table events aimed at providing municipal lawyers and local public officials with the information and tools they need to participate successfully in the IRA programs. We have had preliminary conversations with WE ACT and the Association of Towns and they have expressed an interest in co-sponsoring this effort.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the appropriate officials in your administration to plan this outreach initiative. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jullee Kim and John Rousakis, Co-Chairs
Environmental Law Committee
New York City Bar Association

Erik Rubinstein, Secretary
New York City Affairs Committee
New York City Bar Association

Yvonne Hennessey, Chair
Environmental and Energy Law Section
New York State Bar Association

Lisa M.Cobb, Chair
Local and State Government Law Section
New York State Bar Association

Cc: Deputy Mayor for Operations Meera Joshi

Contact

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