Database of Economic Incentives

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. **What is the Database of Economic Incentives?**

The Database of Economic Incentives (Database) is a public, user-friendly dataset of economic development projects that are administered by Empire State Development (ESD), the State of New York State's chief economic development agency. The Database is downloadable, is updated quarterly, and includes instructional materials to help users interact with and analyze the data.

2. **Why was the Database created?**

In April 2019, following the passage of the State's 2020 Budget, Governor Cuomo directed Empire State Development "to build a searchable online database that will give the public more current and relevant information on projects that receive ESD assistance." ESD has created the Database pursuant to that objective.

3. **Where else can I find information on ESD-supported projects?**

ESD is dedicated to sharing information about its work with the public. The ESD Reports Page contains updates on program activities, and includes more than 50 quarterly and annual reports that ESD provides each year, detailing key New York State economic development projects and initiatives. In addition, ESD maintains a comprehensive archive of public meeting videos and materials in the ESD Media Center.

In addition to ESD's library of published reports, New York State:

- Posts 100+ economic development-related datasets at data.ny.gov;

- Provides access to detailed progress reports published annually by the 10 Regional Economic Development Councils at regionalcouncils.ny.gov

4. **Where is the Database hosted?**

The Database of Economic Incentives is hosted on data.ny.gov as part of Governor Cuomo's Open NY initiative, an award-winning series of policies, programs, and tools that provide public access to digital data for collaboration and analysis. As of the October 2020 quarterly update, the Open NY initiative includes more than 645 million records, published by 58 state agencies and authorities.

5. **What types of projects are included in the Database?**

The Database provides information on ESD loan, grant, and tax credit projects that support community priorities such as infrastructure, innovation, place-making and revitalization, tradable sectors, and workforce development. Upon launch, projects featured in the Database will include those projects approved on or after January 1, 2018, which remain active, as well as certain tax credits that have recently been closed.

6. **Why are there only projects that were initiated in 2018 or later in the Database?**

The Database of Economic Incentives will initially include over 1,000 active projects approved by ESD since January 1, 2018, and will add more projects over time. The launch of the Database follows an extensive data streamlining effort in 2018 by ESD to implement a new data management system, Microsoft Dynamics. For this reason, ESD is initially able to include only projects approved since 2018.

7. **How is the data in the Database best analyzed?**

By hosting the data on data.ny.gov, ESD has enabled users of the Database to utilize many open data features such as the ability to search, filter, sort, visualize, download, export and use Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) in conjunction with the Database.

In summing the data, however, users are cautioned that certain complexities within the data may result in erroneous conclusions or calculations. As one example, simply summing all projects without accounting for the fact that a project is listed twice to reflect its receipt of multiple forms of assistance would result in the double-counting of certain project-related metrics. For this reason, when summarizing data, users are advised to utilize the official summary statistics contained within the Database Snapshot, which ESD has published to assist users [here](#).

8. **What types of projects are not included in the Database?**

The Database will continue to grow as new projects are added upon each quarterly update. However, the Database does not provide information on projects that were approved prior to January 1, 2018. Details on these projects can be found in historical ESD reports. The Database also does not include information on projects that are administered by other State agencies. Further, projects that are no longer active will be reported under a corresponding archived project dataset, and a limited set of programs, such as film tax credits, are reported separately from the Database.

9. **What information is available on projects that are included in the Database?**

The Database features project ID, recipient name, project name, project description, project address, county, postal code, region, industry, start date, end date, assistance type, total ESD assistance awarded, total public-private investment, disbursements to-date, project status, reason for non-compliant status, penalties applied, rationale for termination, job creation commitments, job retention commitments, jobs created to-date, and jobs retained to-date.

10. **How does ESD select projects which receive funding?**

ESD funds projects through several different avenues. In most cases, ESD competitively awards funding to applicants, pursuant to specific program criteria. Additionally, ESD may provide funding to discrete projects that are outlined in state budget appropriations to receive assistance, as agreed upon through the legislative process. Lastly, in limited instances, ESD may administer projects sponsored by the legislature, in accordance with the legislative process.

11. **Why do certain projects have blanks or report "N/A" for certain fields?**

For these cases, there was no applicable data available for the project at present. For example, ESD supports projects that include a minimum job creation/retention requirement, and projects that produce direct, long-term, or other economic benefits without a direct job commitment.

For infrastructure and capacity-building projects where the recipient has no direct job commitment, the Database fields for jobs would include "N/A".

12. Why do certain projects have "Various" listed for location-related fields?

This will occur when a project takes place in various locations, or when the locational data point is not available. For example, projects related to grants for broadband infrastructure deployment often span multiple regions.

13. Do any data fields have different meanings across projects?

While most data fields have a consistent meaning across projects, the definition for a data field may vary in limited cases. For example, when counting a committed or created "Job," certain programs have different statutory definitions that must be met, which might vary slightly in terms of the minimum hours worked, or length of time an employee must have worked before a "Job" can be counted. . Another example is "Start Date" – this field refers to the most relevant milestone by which ESD approved a project. Often, this approval is driven by the approval of ESD's board of directors. However, for lower dollar-total awards, this approval may be driven by the authorization of ESD's President, Chief Executive Officer and Commissioner, and, in other cases, it may be driven by the project's formal acceptance into a tax credit program.

14. Do all ESD projects have job creation and retention commitments?

No, in fact, many ESD incentives fund efforts such as community or infrastructure projects, which may be funded without any specific job creation or retention commitments. For such projects, the fields for job creation and retention will display "N/A."

Job Commitment Projects include a minimum job creation/retention requirement that must be met to receive ESD support. Such projects have economic development benefits beyond job creation, but are tied to minimum job-creation/retention requirements. Examples include: certain Excelsior Jobs Program Tax Credit projects, START-UP NY, many REDC projects, and many New York Works projects.

Infrastructure and Capacity-Building Projects produce direct, long-term, or other economic benefits, and while such projects indirectly support job creation/retention, the recipient has not direct job commitments. Examples include: Broadband Program Office projects, community or infrastructure development projects, Lake Ontario Business Flood Recovery projects, and Market NY projects.

15. Why are some projects displaying fewer jobs created to-date than their commitment?

In the vast majority of cases, for several reasons, displaying fewer jobs created than committed does not mean a project is out of compliance.

First, a project's job creation commitment typically reflects an ultimate commitment, not necessarily jobs that must be created in the first year. Full implementation of economic development projects occurs over time and in stages. The projects in the Database are primarily Early-Stage projects (started in 2018 – 2020). Early-Stage projects have recently been announced and are engaging in the essential work that must occur to prepare a job site (site acquisition, design, permitting/approvals, environmental remediation, construction, building

retrofits, and purchasing of machinery and equipment); job creation generally follows this stage.

Second, most economic development projects that report on jobs report only on an annual basis, typically with a limited grace period at the end of each reporting period. In such cases, the number of jobs displayed in the Database could be based on recipient reports that do not yet reflect recent job creation.

Finally, in limited cases, it is possible that a project did not create the number of jobs that it was required to create as of a specific milestone. In these cases, the project is marked "No" under the "Compliant?" field.

16. Recently, ESD announced a new project, but it is not included in the Database. Why not?

A project is added to the Database only after it has reached the relevant ESD approval milestone. In some cases, the announcement of plans for a project may indicate the beginning of a public approval process, during which ESD must first study factors such as any environmental impacts from the project before approving it. In this case, a project will eventually be added to the Database once it is officially approved.

17. If I have comments or questions on the Database, who can I contact?

Please email database@esd.ny.gov for additional questions.