



## crain's new york business

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### **Not-for-profits throw hats in ring for stim funds: Myriad groups pitch projects large and small; confusion reigns on requirements, process**

Local nonprofits are scrambling to get a share of the federal stimulus money soon to start moving into New York state for “shovel-ready” construction projects.



*Photo by Roger Hgadone*

The soliciting organizations range from arts groups to low-income housing agencies. Their projects include fixing the sidewalk in front of a Manhattan theater and creating a three-acre park on Roosevelt Island.

Desperate for the cash as donations dwindle, nonprofit executives are pitching projects to every government official they can find. But no one knows how the decision-making process will work or how much money is actually available.

“Everybody's sitting on tenterhooks, waiting to see how quickly this money is going to flow,” says Kim Whitener, producing director of Here Arts Center in downtown Manhattan.

The organization is asking for about \$1 million to cover a number of projects, including \$750,000 to set up two rehearsal spaces in Brooklyn. “We are applying anywhere we can for these funds,” Ms. Whitener says.

#### **Process unclear**

The process is confusing. The funds are to be distributed from different pots—state, municipal and federal—and it is unclear how much each will be allocating for construction projects.

New York state is getting \$25 billion, for example, but not all of that will be allotted to construction work. The mayor's office will have about \$500 million to assign to shovel-ready projects, and an unknown amount will come directly from Washington.

Nationwide, 1,065 nonprofits are looking for funding on shovel-ready projects that are worth an estimated \$166 billion, according to a recent study by the Johns Hopkins University. New York, with 59 projects worth an estimated \$18.9 billion, ranks second only to California on the list.

Proposing groups include Selfhelp Community Services Inc., which is seeking nearly \$14 million to upgrade infrastructure at two senior citizen residences in Flushing, Queens, and the New York Botanical Garden, which wants \$20 million for a parking facility connected to a Metro-North station.

The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute wants roughly \$25 million to create a park on Roosevelt Island that was designed years ago by legendary architect Louis Kahn to honor the 32nd president.

“We can begin construction in June, provide 300 jobs and be an incredible tourist attraction for New York,” says former diplomat William vanden Heuvel, who founded the institute.

Mr. vanden Heuvel has dispatched detailed applications to Gov. David Paterson, Sen. Charles Schumer and other power brokers, but he has no idea when to expect an answer.

### **Guidance to propose**

In some cases, elected officials have spurred groups to apply for funding. State Sen. José Serrano, D-Bronx, for instance, asked organizations in the 16th District to submit proposals for shovel-ready projects.

**Officials at the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp., say they were given two days to prepare and submit a plan to Mr. Serrano. The agency is asking for \$650,000 to make its main low-income residence energy-efficient, as well as for \$700,000 to build a training center for at-home day-care providers.**

**“This idea of 'shovel-ready' came about very quickly,” says Valerie Neng, director of housing and community development at WHEDCo. “This entire stimulus package just whooshed by.”**

Pamela Green, executive director of the Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn, an African-American historical society, submitted a \$5 million request to the New York Department of Cultural Affairs and to several of the city's elected officials.

The city has already provided Weeksville with much of the \$25 million it needs for a 19,000-square-foot performance and education space that the center plans to break ground on in June.

Stimulus money would enable Weeksville to add a parking lot and a fence, but Ms. Green is uncertain about her odds.

“We don't know who else is on the list, and we don't know who we are competing against,” she says. “And we also have no idea what the requirements were.”