



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Reginald Goodson, City Manager
Carl Best, Development Services Director
Jon Hawley, Grants Administrator

Date: April 8, 2026

Re: Consideration - Authorization to Apply, Golden LEAF SITE Program

BACKGROUND:

The Golden Long-term Economic Advancement Foundation (Golden LEAF) is a state nonprofit that invests in rural and economically distressed communities. Golden LEAF has most recently invested in Elizabeth City to assist with disaster recovery and flood mitigation on and around Dawson Street. However, Golden LEAF also offers many standing programs to support economic development, none of which the City have recently participated in.

As a step towards bolstering economic development and new, high-paying jobs, City staff are proposing to collaborate with Pasquotank County to apply to the SITE Program. Through SITE Program participation, we will evaluate properties city- and county-wide to identify and prioritize new industrial sites. This will include improving existing industrial sites/parks, and will consider target industries, utility capacity/constraints, job creation goals, and other factors. There is no cost to participate, and the next deadline to apply is May 14.

ANALYSIS:

The SITE Program provides support for the Identification, Due Diligence, and Development of industrial sites. Identification helps assess and prioritize potential industrial sites, Due Diligence performs detailed assessments and mapping for specific sites, and Development prepares sites for industrial use, including investing in necessary public infrastructure.

City staff consider an application to the SITE Program very timely. As the Council is well aware, our community is seeing rapid residential and commercial growth. Simultaneously, the City is updating many of its long-term plans and ordinances, including a new Land Use Plan, Unified Development Ordinance, Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Parks and

Recreation Master Plan, and more. There are also many efforts underway to modernize and expand our utilities to meet our community's growing demand. In all these efforts to prepare Elizabeth City for the future, we should not overlook industrial development, and the many, good-paying jobs that may come with it. The SITE Program could identify untapped industrial potential while ensuring the City pursues companies and projects that align with our broader community vision and goals.

Accordingly, we are proposing to apply for SITE – Identification assistance. If selected, Golden LEAF would provide consultant services to review existing data (zoning, GIS, infrastructure availability, wetlands/floodplain, etc.), collect community input on economic development strategy and target industries, and develop Exploration Zones that identify and prioritize properties for development.

The City is eligible to apply directly to this program. However, Golden LEAF leadership have emphasized that the SITE Program prefers to work at the county-level. This helps ensure counties and municipalities are working in concert, and that properties outside municipal boundaries are not overlooked. Therefore, City staff are proposing to submit a SITE application for a countywide project. Pasquotank staff are aware of our interest in the program, and we will ensure the final proposal is acceptable to both the City and County before submission. As a joint project, it is also City staff's expectation that Pasquotank will provide necessary and appropriate support, data, and engagement to ensure the project's successful outcomes and follow-through.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

By motion: Authorize City staff to submit a Golden LEAF SITE Program application for industrial site Identification services, as described herein.



SITE Program - Identification

Guidelines

Golden LEAF will provide support to identify potential industrial sites in communities that do not currently have quality industrial sites to market. The process will involve communication between site development consultants and the applicant to gather information to guide identification of potential sites and to help narrow those sites for further consideration by the community.

Use of Funds

If selected for funding in this phase, a team of site development consultants engaged directly by Golden LEAF will work with the applicant to learn more about the community's economic development opportunities and strategies and gather information about the community's infrastructure and assets. Using that information, the consultants will conduct a GIS review of the community to identify exploration zones to consider. The team will conduct site visits with the applicant to review those exploration zones for potential industrial sites.

At the conclusion of the process, the consultants will provide recommendations regarding targeted development opportunities, sites that merit further evaluation, the development potential of those sites, strengths and weaknesses of each site, and the timeframe for potential development.

See [Timeline and Scope](#) for additional details.

Requirements

- Applicants must be a county government or an eligible governmental entity or 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides a letter of support from the county government. Golden LEAF anticipates that there will be only one application for the Identification phase per county.
- Successful communities will be able to show a plan for economic development and how site identification with the proposed project will further the goals of that plan.

Applicants in the Golden LEAF SITE Program - Identification will be asked to provide information on the following topics in addition to general organizational information:

- [Project Description](#)
- [Strategic Goals and Commitment](#)
- [Need for Site Identification](#)
- [Infrastructure Capacity](#)

Resources

- [Contact Golden LEAF Staff](#)
- [SITE Program Resources \(including access to the application portal and Glossary and FAQ\)](#)
- [Application Attachments Checklist](#)

Timeline and Scope for Project Implementation

- Step 1:** Phone call with the community. Discuss process and schedule; gather preliminary data; address questions.
- Step 2:** Collect community and economic development data via a questionnaire and requested attachments.
- Technical: zoning, water and sewer data, existing sites/parks (if applicable)
 - Qualitative: economic development strategy, target industries, marketing strategy, other site development initiatives
- Step 3:** GIS Screening. Apply the following data layers to the search region:
- Exclusion Factors
 - Wetlands and floodplain
 - Land density data
 - Data for analysis
 - Topography
 - Location of interstates and 4-lane highways
 - Location of rail (if appropriate)
 - Utility infrastructure
 - Parcel data
- Step 4:** Identification of Exploration Zones. Based on the screening in Step 3, the team will identify exploration zones that should be further evaluated.
- Step 5:** Virtual meeting with the local team to discuss the identified exploration zones and gather additional information about the zones that may not be apparent from GIS.
- Step 6:** Site visits to communities to inspect the exploration zones.
- Step 7:** Prepare a presentation report. This report will include recommendations on the following:
- Development type / target end uses (e.g., light industrial, warehouse and distribution)
 - Development potential (low, medium, high)
 - Time frame (long-term, near-term)
 - Strengths and weaknesses
- Step 8:** Virtual meeting to review findings and recommendations.

Application Process

Applications must be submitted via Golden LEAF's online portal. The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the required short answer questions and supporting attachments.

Unless otherwise specified, please use the following document formatting guidelines for attachments:

- Use a font no smaller than 10 points
- Use only black as the font color—no colored text
- Documents should be single-spaced with 1" margins
- Format to standard, letter-sized paper (8.5" x 11") (technical reports and maps may be on larger paper sizes)
- Combine multiple documents into a single file for each requirement
- Label each document with your organization name and the appropriate label from the attachment title column of the [Application Attachments Checklist](#) below.

Project Description

Project Summary

Describe the project for which you are seeking Golden LEAF support, including any specific areas within which you would focus site identification efforts, e.g., specific towns, areas of a county, etc.

Strategic Goals and Commitment

1. Economic development strategies and goals

Provide an overview of the applicant's economic development strategies and goals. How would support for site identification address those strategies and goals?

2. Economic development program

Describe the applicant's economic development program, including staffing, marketing, outreach, and similar efforts.

3. Applicant and community engagement

Successful site identification will require engagement of the community to determine community needs and assess information about potential sites. Please describe the support the applicant will commit to the site identification process, e.g., economic development staff, elected officials, public works professionals, participation by local businesses, etc.

4. Collaboration with other economic development organizations

List economic development organizations other than the applicant that are active in the applicant's county. Describe any collaboration between the applicant and those organizations.

Need For Site Identification

5. **Current inventory of industrial sites**

How many publicly owned or publicly controlled industrial sites are in your community? Enter "0" if none. [You will be asked to provide a list of-sites and their characteristics as an attachment to this application.]

6. **Need for support**

If there are currently industrial sites in your community offered for development by economic development organizations, why is your community seeking support to identify additional sites? For example, are the sites currently offered not attractive for industrial development for some reason, not available at a reasonable price, not near the applicant's community, etc.

7. **Community efforts**

Is your community currently undertaking any efforts to identify potential industrial sites? For example, has your community secured property that might be a candidate for development, undertaken GIS analyses, met with landowners about potential sites, etc. If so, please describe the status of those efforts.

8. **Previous site marketing efforts**

Have economic development organizations previously offered industrial sites for development in your community? If so, please describe the results of those efforts? For example, has your community successfully developed industrial sites or sold industrial sites to companies for development?

9. **Previous industry interest in locating in the community**

Describe the interest of companies or industries in locating in your community within the past three years. [You will be asked to provide both an example of a recent response to a Request for Information (RFI), if available, **and** a list of companies/projects that have shown interest in your community as attachments to this application.]

10. **Unanswered RFIs or Prospect Inquiries**

Describe specific RFIs or Prospect Inquiries received in the past three years to which your community has not been able to respond primarily because of lack of suitable industrial sites. What characteristics (site size, utility access, etc.) were requested that the community was not able to provide? If there have been no inquiries enter "None."

Infrastructure Capacity

Please provide the following information about your community:

11. **Zoning**

Does your community have zoning? Yes or no

12. **Water**

- a. Name of water provider(s) serving the area
- b. Available treatment capacity of the system(s) for new projects
- c. Planned upgrades

Identify any planned upgrades to each water system, including the schedule and source of funding for the project.

d. Moratoria

Are there any moratoria affecting water systems? If so, please describe.

13. Wastewater

a. Name of wastewater provider(s) serving the area

b. Available treatment capacity of the system(s) for new projects

c. Planned upgrades

Identify any planned upgrades to each sewer system, including the schedule and source of funding for the project.

d. Moratoria

Are there any moratoria affecting sewer systems? If so, please describe.

14. Other Utilities

Provide information about the providers and the available capacity for the following utilities in your community.

a. Electric

i. Name of provider

ii. Available capacity for new projects (MW)

iii. Planned upgrades, including anticipated timeframe

b. Gas

i. Name of provider

ii. Available capacity for new projects (MCF)

iii. Planned upgrades, including anticipated timeframe

c. Communications

i. Name of provider

ii. Available capacity for new projects (Mbps)

iii. Planned upgrades, including anticipated timeframe

Application Attachments Checklist

This checklist includes items mentioned in short answer questions as well as required attachments related to this phase of the SITE Program. Rows not marked as required are requested to be attached if available. Some numbers are intentionally omitted.

Required	Attachment Title	Description
✓	1 - Certification and Signature Form	Download the document from the SITE Program Resources page . This document should be signed and dated by two authorized officials of the applicant organization. For 501(c)(3) organizations, one signatory must be a member of the applicant's board of directors.
✓	2 - Board of Directors	List of the applicant's board members along with their addresses and occupations. For governmental entities, this is the members of the governing body, e.g., town council or county commissioners.
✓	3 - Evidence of Tax-Exempt Status	For 501(c)(3) organizations – A copy of the current IRS exemption determination letter. For governmental entities – A description of governmental status.
✓	4 - Most Recent Fiscal-Year End Financial Statements	A PDF including Balance Sheet, Statement of Financial Position, and Statement of Cash Flows, or a link to these documents if available online. Provide audited statements, if available.
✓	5 - Applicant's Budget for the Current Year	The applicant's budget for the current year.
✓	6 - Applicant's Budget for the Period Covered by the Grant Request	The applicant's budget for the period covered by the grant request, if available. If the budget is not available, provide a brief statement explaining why, e.g., it has not yet been adopted.
	7 - Most recent management letter/report on internal controls	For 501(c)(3) organizations and governmental entities. Provide from audited statements, if available.
✓	8- Prior two years of financial statements	For 501(c)(3) organizations only – A PDF including the Balance Sheet, Statement of Financial Position, and Statement of Cash Flows, or a link to these documents if available online.
	10 - Community/ County Partners	A list providing contact information for your partners in the communities served by your project. Provide the roles and responsibilities for each.

Required	Attachment Title	Description
**	ID-1: Letter of support from county	Letter of support from county government (**required if the applicant is not the county). Golden LEAF anticipates that there will be only one application for site identification per county.
✓	ID-2: Economic development staff list	List of staff who will be involved in the project, their length of service, brief job descriptions, and their roles in the implementation of the project. Include all economic development staff, including those that only provide part-time support for economic development.
✓	ID-3: Marketing documents	Applicant's marketing documents/website address.
✓	ID-4: Economic development budget	Applicant's annual economic development budget for the most recent fiscal year.
	ID-5: Economic development strategic plan	Economic development strategic plan.
	ID-6: Marketed sites	<p>For each industrial site in the applicant's community that is marketed for development by economic development organizations (provide any that are available):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A spec sheet containing relevant data on the site (site size, utilities, etc.) • A map indicating the location of the site • An aerial or similar visual of the site
✓	ID-7: Current inventory of public industrial sites	Download document from the SITE Program Resources page and complete the table with key characteristics of publicly owned or publicly controlled industrial sites, including whether the site is currently marketed for development. This information should be consistent with your answer to Question 5 in the application.
	ID-8: Response to RFI	An example of a recent response by your community to a Request for Information (RFI).
✓	ID-9: Information from RFIs/company engagement	Download the document from the SITE Program Resources page and complete the table with a list of companies that have shown interest in location or expanding in your community in the last three years, including the expected job creation, wages, and capital investment (if known). Specifically indicate if there was interest in the site that is the subject of this request. This information should be consistent with your answer to Question 9 in the application.

Required	Attachment Title	Description
	ID-10: Water/sewer map	A PDF map of all water and sewer infrastructure in your community.
	ID-11: Zoning map	A PDF map of the zoning in your community including how much acreage is zoned for industrial development. If not available, a land use plan is acceptable (if available).