



COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

March 6, 2026

Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

RE: Authorization to Accept Funding and Enter into Agreements for Erie County and New York State America 250 Programming

Dear Honorable Members:

Enclosed please find a memorandum and proposed resolution from the Department of Environment and Planning requesting authorization to accept funding from the New York State Department of Education on behalf of the New York State 250th Commemorative Commission, to carry forward available 2025 funds into 2026, and to enter into agreement with Visit Buffalo for the administration of Erie County's America 250 commemorative programming. This resolution will enable Erie County to coordinate countywide historical and cultural events in recognition of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Should your Honorable Body require further information, I encourage you to contact Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development, Zachary Evans, at the Department of Environment and Planning. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Poloncarz".

Mark C. Poloncarz, Esq.

Erie County Executive

MCP/db
Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature
From: Department of Environment and Planning
Re: Authorization to Accept Funding and Enter into Agreement with Visit Buffalo for Administration of Erie County America 250 Commemoration Programming
Date: March 6, 2026

SUMMARY

It is recommended that the Erie County Legislature authorize the acceptance of \$64,100 in funding from the New York State Department of Education on behalf of the New York State 250th Commemorative Commission, authorize the carry-forward of available 2025 funds into 2026, and authorize the County Executive or Deputy County Executive to enter into contract with Visit Buffalo in the amount of \$342,300 for the administration and distribution of funding to cultural and historical organizations across Erie County as part of the commemoration of 250 years of American history since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for this initiative consists of \$64,100 in State Aid Revenue to be accepted into the Department of Environment and Planning's 2026 Adopted Budget (Fund 110, Funds Center 16200), \$322,300 in available funding to be carried forward from the Department of Environment and Planning's 2025 Adopted Budget Account 516020 – Professional Services, Contracts & Fees, and \$20,586.20 in available funding to be carried forward from Account 517595 – Erie County Historical Commission.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The New York State 250th Commemorative Commission has provided funding to support local and regional programming that commemorates this historic milestone.

Erie County seeks to coordinate countywide commemorative activities that highlight the County's historical significance, support local cultural organizations, and promote public engagement and tourism. Visit Buffalo serves as the region's designated tourism promotion organization and maintains established relationships with cultural institutions, historical organizations, and community partners throughout Erie County. The organization possesses the infrastructure and expertise necessary to administer funding, coordinate programming, and promote commemorative activities in a timely and efficient manner.

Due to the specialized nature of these services and the time-sensitive implementation of America 250 programming, a waiver of Section 26.08 of the Erie County Administrative Code is necessary to enter into contract with Visit Buffalo.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The New York State 250th Commemorative Commission was established to support statewide activities recognizing the 250th anniversary of American independence. Erie County has committed to participating in this commemoration through coordinated programming, public events, and partnerships with local cultural and historical organizations.

The Department of Environment and Planning, in coordination with the Erie County Historical Commission, is overseeing the County's involvement in America 250 activities. Funding from the New York State Department of Education, along with previously appropriated and available funds within the Department's 2025 Adopted Budget, will support these efforts.

Visit Buffalo is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting tourism, economic development, and regional cultural assets throughout Erie County and Western New York. Through this agreement, Visit Buffalo will administer funding to eligible cultural and historical organizations, coordinate promotional efforts, and assist in planning and executing commemorative events across the County.

The proposed contract term shall be January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

If this resolution is not approved, Erie County will be unable to fully participate in and coordinate America 250 commemorative programming, state funding may not be effectively administered, and cultural and historical organizations throughout Erie County may lose access to financial support necessary to plan and host events recognizing the 250th anniversary of American independence.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

Upon approval of the resolution, the Department of Environment and Planning will execute the necessary agreements with the New York State Department of Education and the New York Public History Trust. The Division of Budget and Management will implement the authorized budget adjustments and carry-forwards. The County Executive or Deputy County Executive will execute an agreement with Visit Buffalo for administration of funds. Program implementation, grant distribution, and coordinated promotional activities will begin thereafter.

A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY:
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

RE: Authorization to Accept Funding and Enter into Agreement with Visit Buffalo for Administration of America 250 Commemorative Programming

WHEREAS, the year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, representing a historic opportunity to commemorate the founding of the United States and recognize the nation's shared heritage and democratic values; and

WHEREAS, the New York State 250th Commemorative Commission has provided funding to support local and regional activities commemorating this milestone; and

WHEREAS, Erie County has committed to participating in the commemoration through coordinated programming, public events, and partnerships with cultural and historical organizations throughout the County; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environment and Planning, in coordination with the Erie County Historical Commission, is overseeing the County's America 250 activities; and

WHEREAS, Visit Buffalo possesses the regional expertise, tourism promotion infrastructure, and organizational capacity necessary to administer funding and coordinate countywide commemorative programming; and

WHEREAS, due to the specialized nature of these services and the time-sensitive implementation of America 250 activities, a waiver of Section 26.08 of the Erie County Administrative Code is appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature finds that these actions serve a valid public purpose by promoting cultural enrichment, tourism, economic development, and public education for the residents of Erie County;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature hereby authorizes the County Executive or Deputy County Executive to enter into contract with the New York State Department of Education to accept \$64,100 in funding on behalf of the New York State 250th Commemorative Commission into the Department of Environment and Planning's 2026 Adopted Budget (Fund 110, Funds Center 16200) as follows:

Department of Environment and Planning
Fund 110, Funds Center 16200

REVENUES	CHANGE
409000 State Aid Revenue	\$64,100
TOTAL	<u>\$64,100</u>

APPROPRIATIONS	CHANGE
516020 Professional Services, Contracts & Fees	\$64,100
TOTAL	<u>\$64,100</u>

and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is hereby given to the County Executive or Deputy County Executive to enter into contract with the New York Public History Trust in order to distribute \$44,100 in funding awarded to the organization by the New York State 250th Commemorative Commission; and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is hereby given to the Division of Budget and Management to carry-forward \$322,300 in available funding within the Department of Environment and Planning’s 2025 Adopted Budget (Fund 110, Funds Center 16200) Account 516020 – Professional Services, Contract and Fees into 2026; and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is hereby given to the Division of Budget and Management to carry-forward \$20,586.20 in available funding within the Department of Environment and Planning’s 2025 Adopted Budget (Fund 110, Funds Center 16200) Account 517595 – Erie County Historical Commission into 2026; and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is hereby given to the County Executive or Deputy County Executive to waive Section 26.08 and enter into contract with Visit Buffalo in the amount of \$342,300 for the administration of funds to cultural and historical organizations across Erie County to plan and hold events as part of the commemoration of 250 of American history since the signing of the Declaration of Independence; and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is hereby given for the Division of Budget and Management to make any technical adjustments necessary to effectuate this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution will be forwarded to the Erie County Executive’s Office, Department of Environment and Planning, and Division of Budget and Management.