



Jefferson County Local Development Corporation

800 Starbuck Avenue, Suite 800 • Watertown, New York 13601

2025 Annual Report

Jefferson County Local Development Corporation (JCLDC)

CEO's ANNUAL MESSAGE--- 2025

As we reflect on the past year, Jefferson County Economic Development efforts continue to be guided by a clear and practical objective: preparing our communities for long-term growth by investing in the foundational assets that employers require to succeed. Chief among those assets are reliable infrastructure and a portfolio of development-ready sites capable of supporting modern industry.

Throughout 2025 and moving forward into 2026, Jefferson County has taken deliberate steps to strengthen its infrastructure capacity in collaboration with utility partners, state agencies, and local governments. These efforts recognize that access to dependable, scalable power, water, and sewer is no longer a competitive advantage—it is a prerequisite. By proactively addressing current and future demand, the County is positioning itself to attract energy-intensive industries, advanced manufacturing, and technology-driven employers while supporting the continued expansion of existing businesses.

Equally important has been our focus on site development and readiness. Jefferson County Economic Development has worked to identify, plan, and advance available sites across the County, ensuring they are appropriately zoned, infrastructure-served, and aligned with market demand. This work reduces development timelines, improves project certainty, and signals to prospective employers that Jefferson County is prepared to move quickly and responsibly when opportunities arise.

These initiatives are not undertaken in isolation. They reflect a broader commitment to regional collaboration, fiscal responsibility, and thoughtful growth that respects our communities while expanding economic opportunity. Investments in infrastructure and site readiness support job creation, strengthen the local tax base, and enhance the County's ability to compete for investment in an increasingly competitive economic landscape.

Looking ahead, Jefferson County remains focused on building momentum. We will continue to pursue strategic infrastructure investments, advance shovel-ready sites, and engage partners at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure our communities are positioned for sustainable economic success.

On behalf of our Board, staff, and partners, thank you for your continued support and collaboration. Together, we are laying the groundwork today for the employers and opportunities of tomorrow.

F. Marshall Weir
Chief Executive Officer

JCLDC Mission Statement

The Corporation was established pursuant to the LDC Act with purposes and powers as set forth within the Certificate. The Corporation's Mission includes undertaking projects and programmatic initiatives in furtherance of and to **advance the job opportunities, health, general prosperity and economic welfare of the people of the County and to improve their recreation opportunities, prosperity and standard of living.** In furtherance of the purposes and powers vested in the Corporation pursuant to the LDC Act, the Corporation shall undertake projects, programs and initiatives to achieve the purposes as set forth within the LDC Act. In addition, and in doing so, the Corporation shall adhere to its adopted policies and applicable statutory requirements, including PAAA, PARA, OML, FOIL, and SEQRA. The Corporation's goals include continued compliance with current obligations and responsibilities associated with ongoing projects and programs, in addition to identifying new projects and programs that will achieve the Corporation's purposes and Mission. In furtherance of these stated goals, the Corporation will endeavor to comply with all applicable provisions of the Act, PAAA and PARA. With these stated goals established, the Corporation's values are to maintain the highest ethical standards applicable to public officials and local authorities.

JCLDC Performance Review Measures

The Corporation shall annually review this Mission Statement and identify whether the Corporation (i) continues to meet its stated mission, goals and values; (ii) can quantify measures of improvement better to meet its stated mission, goals and values; (iii) can become more effective and efficient; and (iv) is meeting the interests of the Corporation, the Agency and the County. In furtherance of the foregoing Performance Measures, the Corporation shall further undertake the following annual measures:

- 1) Assure that all current Corporation Members have acknowledged that they have read and understood the mission of the Corporation;
- 2) An annual review and affirmation of the Corporation's membership, board, committee and management structure;
- 3) An annual review and affirmation of its policies, along with Corporation appointment of Management of the Corporation, along with articulation of the Respective roles, goals and expectations of each.

Activities:

ADVOCATE DRUM / Drum Country Business

The Drum Country Business initiative includes the Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence County economic development agencies and the Development Authority of the North Country working together through ADVOCATE DRUM to promote the tri-county region's collective assets and its proximity to Fort Drum to attract business investment to the region. Funding from the project partners is matched by a grant to FDRLO by project sponsor National Grid. The initiative includes regional advertising and direct outreach to prospective businesses.

This year Drum Country, NY continued working with BLK DOG, a digital marketing company to aid in a campaign entitled "Let's Meet." This campaign will work through social media, email, and the www.drumcountryNY.com website. All are geared to increase engagement with people both inside and outside the area.

North Country Regional Economic Development Council

JCED staff participates in the Council's work groups and are actively involved in preparing the regional plan submission as part of the Governor's annual competition for economic development funding. The staff has also assisted local businesses and organizations in submitting successful funding applications to the program.

North Country Alliance

The NCA is a private-public alliance of businesses and economic development organizations working together to grow the economy of New York's seven-county North Country region. JCED is a member organization with a seat on the NCA's board of directors. The NCA administers a regional revolving loan fund—often in partnership with local revolving loan funds. NCA is also an advocate for ensuring that the region's economic interests are fairly addressed at the state level.

JCLDC Current Projects

RLF's

	Name of Company	Amount of Loan	Loan Date	Maturity Date	Purpose
1	Clayton Island Tours, LLC	\$ 40,000.00	4/29/2020	5/1/2026	Repair of flood damage and prevent future damage
2	Clayton Yacht Club Inc.	\$ 40,000.00	8/4/2021	8/1/2027	Complete repairs from damage due to high water flooding during the spring and summer of 2019
3	JCIDA	\$ 1,500,000.00	10/1/2025		For water/sewer project at the Business Complex
4	North Branch Farms	\$100,000.00 (ESD Grant \$45,000) (Bal. \$55,000 termed out)	4/26/2017	7/1/2026	Construct and equip a 1,500 sq. ft. combined packing and cold storage house in Belleville, NY
5	WICLDC	\$ 200,000.00	12/1/2010	1/1/2031	Building A roof replacement

COVID-19 LOANS

	Name of Company	Amount of Loan	Loan Date	Maturity Date	Purpose
1	Busted Grapes LLC	\$ 10,000.00	4/29/2020	5/1/2026	Working Capital
2	Painfull Acres	\$ 10,000.00	5/8/2020	6/1/2026	Working Capital

Clayton Loan Program

	Name of Company	Amount of Loan	Loan Date	Maturity Date	Purpose
1	DiPrinzio's Kitchen	\$ 5,000.00	1/7/2021	2/1/2027	Working Capital
2	DiPrinzio's Market	\$ 5,000.00	1/7/2021	2/1/2027	Working Capital

2025 Agricultural Highlights

In 2025, **Jefferson County Economic Development (JCED)** continued to advance a multifaceted agricultural economic development agenda in Jefferson County, NY. Its work spanned *food system resiliency, business attraction, workforce support, agribusiness infrastructure, local food production support, and industry engagement events* — connecting public, private, nonprofit and educational partners to strengthen the agricultural sector and rural economy. 2025 was the 25th anniversary of this program in Jefferson County.

Food Resiliency & Local Food System Support

A cornerstone of JCED's work in 2025 was the **Jefferson County Food Resiliency Grant Program**, designed to enhance *local food production, processing capacity, and agritourism opportunities* for farms and food-based businesses within the county.

- The program provides competitive micro-grants for *value-added processing and production projects*, with up to **\$10,000 available for value-added processing and production expansion projects** in fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, dairy, honey and maple syrup. It also includes support for food-based agritourism capacity improvements.
- Earlier rounds had already awarded significant funds (e.g., *Round I provided ~\$400,000 across 26 projects*), helping producers invest in meat, dairy, fruit and specialty food ventures and stimulating local food supply growth.
- JCED leadership actively monitors grant recipients' progress, connecting farmers with resources and coordinating follow-ups as part of ongoing program delivery.

This grant initiative is part of a broader effort to increase *local food self-reliance and processing capacity*, which was highlighted as a priority after vulnerabilities were exposed in food and supply systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program was funded by a grant from Jefferson County

JCED's food resiliency work also dovetails with *broader community food system planning* initiatives — including stakeholder collaborations like the **Jefferson County Food Policy Council** which connects agricultural producers, service providers and community partners to address food insecurity and strengthen enterprise opportunities.

CWT Farms Hatchery & Agribusiness Infrastructure

A key economic development milestone tied to agricultural industry growth was the continued progress on the **CWT Farms International chick hatchery** — a major new agribusiness investment in Jefferson County:

- Developed in the **Thousand Islands International Agriculture and Business Park**, this facility is producing tens of millions of day-old chicks annually to serve regional poultry producers and export markets, representing one of the largest poultry-related investments in the region.
- The project has drawn state and regional support through **Empire State Development (ESD)** and North Country REDC investments, reflecting JCED's role in site development, business attraction and cross-sector coordination to bring major ag production infrastructure to the region.

By supporting infrastructure projects such as CWT's hatchery, JCED aims to *expand ag industry scale and diversification*, strengthen export linkages with Canadian markets, and create year-round employment opportunities.

Education, Networking & Industry Events

Agricultural economic development in 2025 included *multiple conferences and speaking engagements* supported or hosted by JCED:

- ◆ **Jefferson County Agricultural Development Conference — April 4, 2025**

This annual conference brought together agricultural producers, service organizations and business stakeholders for discussions on economic trends, labor resources and risk management in farming. Topics included *insurance futures, succession planning and demographic workforce challenges*, highlighting issues critical to farm business viability.

- ◆ **Collaboration with *Naturally Lewis* Economic Conference**

Jay Matteson, Jefferson County Agricultural Coordinator, was a speaker at the **Naturally Lewis Economic Development Conference**, fostering regional collaboration on agricultural workforce and growth opportunities between neighboring counties — expanding cross-county conversations about rural business development.

- ◆ **Media and Podcast Engagement**

Through regular media appearances and the agency’s outreach platforms, including podcasts discussing agricultural themes, JCED amplified its programmatic work and connected with broader audiences on ag economic topics and opportunities.

Cross-Sector & Long-Term Strategy

JCED’s agricultural development activities in 2025 are aligned with broader **Jefferson County economic resiliency and growth strategies**, including ongoing workforce development initiatives, partnerships with institutions like Cornell Cooperative Extension, and integration with comprehensive county planning efforts. These strategies emphasize *business retention, infrastructure investment, and sector diversification*, especially within agriculture and food systems.

Conclusion

In 2025, **Jefferson County Economic Development** continued to build upon its agricultural economic development framework by *advancing local food resiliency efforts, facilitating agribusiness infrastructure projects such as the CWT Farms hatchery, hosting educational forums and building partnerships that support producers and enterprises across the county*. These efforts reflect a long-term vision to strengthen local food systems, diversify economic opportunities in agriculture, and create sustainable pathways for rural business growth in the North Country.

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