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## **“Local Champions” Offers \$8,000 Grants for Climate Smart Communities**

### **HUDSON VALLEY, NY:**

Lifeboats HV, a new funding initiative sponsored by The New World Foundation, has launched a pilot project aimed at helping Hudson Valley communities become more climate smart. The project, known as “Local Champions” will award \$8,000 grants to six communities to support the hiring of “climate smart coordinators.” These individuals will participate in a six-month program of training and technical assistance as they shepherd their communities through the NY State Climate Smart Communities bronze certification process.

Lifeboats HV co-founder Paige Ruane says, “New York State offers millions of dollars to help communities lower carbon emissions and prepare for climate change, but a critical first step to receiving State funding is to become bronze certified through the State’s Climate Smart Communities program. This requires dedicated time and expertise that are a hurdle for most municipalities. Lifeboats HV intends to help Hudson Valley municipalities cross that hurdle.”

The Local Champions program has been designed with the partnership of leading regional organization Cornell Cooperative Extension, Tighe & Bond, an engineering firm specializing in green infrastructure, and The Regenesys Group, who will facilitate workshops using a systems thinking approach. These partners will provide a broad range of support for individuals appointed by their municipality to serve as Climate Smart Coordinators. These individuals will form a cohort that meets via Zoom over a six-month period, guided by staff from Local Champions and partner organizations.

Local Champions coordinator Vanessa Bertozzi, who served as CSC Task Force Coordinator for the Village of Rhinebeck, said, “Having guided my village through the certification process, I had to become my own advocate and look for help wherever I could find it. We designed Local Champions to make the entire process easier for everyone. We’re hoping to also build a strong network of support across the Hudson Valley for everyone who wants to help make their communities more resilient.”

The program is open to cities, towns, and villages within Dutchess, Columbia Greene and Ulster Counties. Applications for the program are due by December 14. For more information, consult the Local Champions website at [www.localchampionshv.org](http://www.localchampionshv.org).

Lifeboats HV, with fiscal sponsorship from The New World Foundation, provides financial and strategic support to those working to build a more resilient future in the Hudson Valley. Local Champions is their first launch.

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