



# OCED

U.S. Department of Energy  
Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

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# ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS IN RURAL OR REMOTE AREAS – FISCAL YEAR 2025 RELEASE

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**Funding Opportunity Number: DE-FOA-0003428**

**Concept papers due: February 27, 2025, 5:00pm ET**

**Applications due: August 28, 2025, 5:00pm ET**

*Questions about this funding opportunity? Email [ERA2024@hq.doe.gov](mailto:ERA2024@hq.doe.gov)*

*Problems with OCED eXCHANGE? Email [OCED-ExchangeSupport@hq.doe.gov](mailto:OCED-ExchangeSupport@hq.doe.gov) and include the  
funding opportunity title and number in subject line.*

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# Before you begin

If you believe you are a good candidate for this funding opportunity, secure your SAM.gov and other registrations now. If you are already registered, make sure your registration is active and up to date. All registrations are free.

[See Step 3: Submit Your Application](#)

## SAM.gov registration (this can take several weeks)

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You must have an active account with [SAM.gov](#). This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

## OCED eXCHANGE (this can take 48-72 hours)

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You must register with OCED eXCHANGE. A [Login.gov](#) or [ID.me](#) account is necessary to register.

## FedConnect (this can take 48-72 hours)

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You must register with FedConnect. Registering with [FedConnect](#)® is fast and easy. Only individuals who are designated as Points of Contact in SAM.gov can create a new company account.

## Grants.gov registration (this can take several days)

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You must have an active [Grants.gov](#) registration. Doing so requires a [Login.gov](#) registration as well.

## Apply by

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Concept papers are due on February 27, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

Applications are due on August 28, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

# STEP 1:

# REVIEW THE FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

## IN THIS STEP

Basic Information

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# Basic Information

## Funding detail

**Announcement Type:** Initial

**Expected total available funding:** \$400 million<sup>1</sup>

**Expected number and type of awards:** 20–50 awards as Cooperative Agreements

**Expected dollar amount of individual awards:** \$2 million–\$50 million Federal share

**Expected award project period:** Project periods depend on the scope of the projects and will not exceed 7 years

## Statutory Authority

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, Public Law 117-58), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, authorized the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations.<sup>2</sup> This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is supported under the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas program.<sup>3</sup>

## Agency contact information

Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations

U.S. Department of Energy

1000 Independence Ave SW

Washington, D.C. 20585

Email: [OCED@hq.doe.gov](mailto:OCED@hq.doe.gov)

Phone: 202-586-OCED

For questions relating to this specific solicitation, please use [ERA2024@hq.doe.gov](mailto:ERA2024@hq.doe.gov).

## KEY FACTS

**Funding Opportunity Title:**

Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas – Fiscal Year 2025 Release

**Funding Opportunity Number:**

DE-FOA-0003428

**Assistance Listing:**

81.255

## KEY DATES

**Concept Paper Deadline:**

February 27, 2025

**Application Deadline:**

August 28, 2025

**Anticipated Selection**

**Announcement:**

Spring 2026

NOTE: The [2024 Revisions](#) to 2 CFR 200 will be in effect for awards issued under this NOFO.

<sup>1</sup> Depending on the number and quality of applications, DOE may choose to not award the full NOFO funding amount.

<sup>2</sup> IIJA Section 41201 (42 U.S.C. § 18861).

<sup>3</sup> IIJA Section 40103 (42 U.S.C. § 18712(c)).

## Executive summary

Rural and remote areas often have higher energy costs and burden,<sup>4</sup> less resilient energy systems, and fewer alternatives for accessing clean energy compared with their urban counterparts. Furthermore, small communities do not always have the available time, money, or other resources to pursue clean energy options.

This Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas (ERA) funding opportunity provides support for rural and remote communities to build clean energy projects that benefit their communities.

The goals of the program are to:

1. **Deliver measurable and sustained benefits to people who live in rural or remote areas** by funding replicable clean energy projects that lower energy costs, improve energy access and resilience, increase economic opportunity, and/or reduce environmental harm.
2. **Demonstrate effective rural or remote energy system approaches** using climate-resilient technologies, business structures that promote economic resilience, accessible and appropriate financing mechanisms, and/or best practices in community leadership and engagement, and workforce development.
3. **Build clean energy knowledge, experience, capacity, and self-reliance in rural and remote parts of America.**

This program serves communities of 10,000 people or fewer.<sup>5</sup> Applicants must propose projects that support at least one of these eligible activities:

- A. Improving overall cost-effectiveness of energy generation, transmission, or distribution systems;
- B. Siting or upgrading transmission and distribution lines;
- C. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from energy generation in rural or remote areas;
- D. Providing or modernizing electric generation facilities;
- E. Developing microgrids; and
- F. Increasing energy efficiency.

Applications may include any technology that meets these eligible activities, as long as those technologies are commercially available (see [Technology and System Requirements](#) for details on “commercially available”).

The following entities are eligible to apply: (1) Indian Tribes; (2) state and local governmental entities; (3) nonprofit organizations; and (4) for-profit organizations. See the Applicant Eligibility Guidance on the [Apply for Funding Opportunities](#) page for details.

Applicants must choose one of the four topic areas for their project’s application. See [Table 1](#) and pgs. 15-19 for more details on the topic areas.

<sup>4</sup> Based on data from the Low-Income Energy Affordability Data tool, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/lead-tool>. In 2023, counties with <20,000 people had an energy burden of 4%, vs. 3.12% for counties with ≥20,000 people.

<sup>5</sup> See the [Eligibility](#) section for further details on what this program considers to be a “rural or remote community.”

**Table 1. Program overview. Details to be determined through merit reviews and project negotiations.**

<b>Expected Total Available Funding</b>	\$400M (million)
<b>Project Funding</b>	\$2M–\$50M contribution from DOE; 5–50% minimum required non-Federal cost share (i.e., from applicant). Amount depends on applicant type and topic area. See <a href="#">Cost Sharing</a> and <a href="#">Table 2</a> for details on cost share.
<b>Expected Project Count</b>	20–50 projects
<b>Requirements</b>	This program serves rural and remote communities with 10,000 people or fewer. See the <a href="#">Eligibility</a> section for details.
<b>Topic Areas</b>	<p><b>1. Open category</b>  Expected award size per project: \$10M–\$50M  Total expected award amount for topic area: \$150M  Cost share from applicant: 50%, or 20% for Indian Tribes, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education</p> <p><b>2. Dual use and co-location</b>  Expected award size per project: \$10M–\$50M  Total expected award amount for topic area: \$175M  Cost share from applicant: 50%, or 20% for Indian Tribes, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education</p> <p><b>3. Smaller-scale community-centered</b>  Expected award size per project: \$2M–\$10M  Total expected award amount for topic area: \$50M  Cost share from applicant: 20%, or 5% for Indian Tribes, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education</p> <p><b>4. Isolated microgrids &amp; unelectrified buildings</b>  Expected award size per project: \$2M–\$10M  Total expected award amount for topic area: \$25M  Cost share from applicant: 20%, or 5% for Indian Tribes, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education</p>
<b>Priorities</b>	<p>This funding opportunity prioritizes (see <a href="#">Funding Priorities</a> for details):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various types of communities that may experience additional historical and current burdens; and</li> <li>• Teams that credibly represent the needs and priorities of project communities.</li> </ul>

## Eligibility

Section 40103(c) of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law defines rural or remote areas as a “city, town, or unincorporated area that has a population of not more than 10,000 inhabitants.” Applicants must identify at least one area in the United States (including U.S. territories) with a population of not more than 10,000 (using the 2020 Census Bureau figures) that will benefit from the proposal. The identified area must be either: (a) a city, town, or other incorporated municipality, or (b) a Census Designated Place (CDP), Census County Division (CCD), or similarly discrete and identifiable community that is not located within an incorporated municipality.

For purposes of this funding opportunity, zip code tabulation areas (five digit) (ZCTA5), census tracts, and other similar census geographic entities are not discrete and identifiable communities. Applications that do not satisfy this requirement will be considered ineligible and removed from further evaluation. See the *Applicant Eligibility Guidance* linked under the [Eligibility](#) section for information on how to use the U.S. Census Bureau Data to determine a community’s population.

Projects ideally should be sited within the rural or remote area they are designed to benefit. Projects proposed to be built outside of a rural or remote area may be considered for funding but must clearly define the rural or remote area(s) of not more than 10,000 inhabitants receiving the benefits. All areas identified as directly benefitting from the proposed project must meet the definition of rural or remote area.

All projects must be built within the United States.

DOE will not make eligibility determinations for potential applicants until after the application deadline.

## Eligible applicants

The following types of entities<sup>6</sup> are eligible to apply for this funding—either as a recipient or subrecipient:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Indian Tribes <sup>7</sup>                         | 7. Farming associations and cooperatives |
| 2. State and local governmental entities <sup>8</sup> | 8. Labor unions                          |
| 3. Nonprofit organizations                            | 9. Institutions of higher education      |
| 4. For-profit organizations                           | 10. Incorporated consortia               |
| 5. Tribal organizations                               | 11. Unincorporated consortia             |
| 6. Rural electric cooperatives                        |  |

<sup>6</sup> See the Applicant Eligibility Guidance on the [Apply for Funding Opportunities](#) page for definitions and descriptions of entities.

<sup>7</sup> For purposes of this funding opportunity, “Indian Tribe” (per section 4 of the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. § 5304)), means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. § 1601, et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians. Federally Recognized Tribes and Tribal entities, whether or not they have land, are also considered disadvantaged (or Justice40) communities for the purposes of the Justice40 Initiative as discussed in this NOFO per the [Addendum to the Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative, M-21-28, on using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(M-23-09\)](#).

<sup>8</sup> State includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.



Applicants and any subrecipient(s) must be domestic entities. (See the next section on Foreign Entities for details on limited exceptions.) To qualify as a domestic entity, the entity must be organized, chartered, or incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of a particular state or territory of the United States or under the laws of the United States; have majority domestic ownership and control; and have a physical place of business in the United States, or otherwise qualify as an Indian Tribe or tribal organization.

In addition, Department of Energy (DOE) Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) are eligible to apply for funding as a subrecipient but are not eligible to apply as a recipient. The funding for the FFRDC will flow through the recipient. Non-DOE FFRDCs are eligible to participate as a subrecipient, subject to approval of their sponsor agency, but are not eligible to apply as a recipient. Notwithstanding the above, Federal agencies, instrumentalities, and corporations (other than DOE) are eligible to participate as a subrecipient but are not eligible to apply as a recipient.

Entities banned from doing business with the U.S. government such as entities debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible from participating in Federal programs are not eligible.

Entities identified on a Department of Homeland Security, Binding Operational Directives as an entity publicly banned from doing business with the United States government are not eligible. See [Cybersecurity Directives](#) for more information.

Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that engaged in lobbying activities after December 31, 1995, are not eligible to apply for funding. Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)5 of the Internal Revenue Code are eligible to apply for funding. See the *Applicant Eligibility Guidance* located on the [Apply for Funding Opportunities](#) page for more information.

## Other Eligibility Criteria

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### Foreign Entities

In general, foreign entities are not eligible to apply as either a recipient or subrecipient. In limited circumstances, DOE may allow a foreign entity to participate as a recipient or subrecipient. A foreign entity may apply to this funding opportunity, but the application must be accompanied by a disclosure of the foreign entity's participation. Likewise, if the applicant seeks to include a foreign entity as a subrecipient, the applicant must submit a separate disclosure in the application for each proposed foreign subrecipient.

Foreign entity disclosure information can be found in the Foreign Entity Participation and Performance of Foreign Work in the United States Guidance which is located on the [What Other Information May be Requested?](#) page. DOE's decision concerning foreign entity participation or foreign entity work is not appealable.

## Cost sharing

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Applicants must provide a certain percentage of the total project costs to meet the cost share requirement. The amount varies by topic area and type of applicant. See the [Topic Areas](#) section for details on the cost share amount. Applicants who believe their project qualifies for the reduced cost share must be able to provide verification that they are an entity identified as eligible for the reduced cost share.

Cost share may be provided in the form of cash or cash equivalents, or in-kind contributions.<sup>9</sup> The cost share must come from non-Federal sources unless otherwise allowed by law. Cost share may come from project recipients, subrecipients, state or local governments, or other third-party financing. Generally, realized tax credits may be used as cost share.<sup>10</sup> In general, deferred or avoided costs may not be used as cost share.

Applicants may not leverage Federal financing, such as DOE Loan Guarantees, to provide the required cost share or to otherwise support the same scope that is proposed under the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas program.

Program income (see details in [Program Income](#) section) should not be included as cost share in the applicant's budget. Non-Federal cost share can include Tennessee Valley Authority power sales revenue, which is specifically allowed under the Energy Policy Act of 2005. See 42 U.S.C § 16352(c) (Section 988 of Energy Policy Act of 2005) and 2 CFR 910.130(d)(2)(v).

To assist applicants in calculating proper cost share amounts, DOE has an information sheet and sample cost share calculation in the Cost Sharing Guidance located on the [Preparing Your Budget](#) page.

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<sup>9</sup> Applicants may meet the cost share requirement through staff time, municipal or tribal budgets, philanthropic funds, or other contributions from a third-party entity to support project implementation or increase impact. See here for an explanation of cost share: <https://www.energy.gov/oced/apply-funding-opportunities#budget>

<sup>10</sup> Tax credits authorized by the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-169) are considered a non-Federal source and are not a Federal award for purposes of cost sharing.

# Program Description

## Purpose

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The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law authorizes DOE to invest \$1 billion in energy improvements in rural or remote areas. Rural and remote areas often have higher energy costs and burden,<sup>11</sup> less resilient energy systems, and fewer alternatives for accessing clean energy compared with their urban counterparts. Furthermore, small communities do not always have the available time, money, or other resources to pursue clean energy options.

This funding opportunity provides support for rural and remote communities to build clean energy projects that benefit their communities. Benefits could include cleaner, more resilient, more reliable, and/or more affordable local energy sources for rural and remote communities. These projects could also increase local energy independence, tax revenue, economic development and diversification, and local jobs, and reduce environmental and health burdens.

This program aims to increase communities' capacity to plan, build, and operate clean energy systems, e.g., by developing available technical expertise locally and with partners, and/or increasing community engagement with those projects. We (i.e., the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations, unless noted otherwise), also expect that this opportunity will enable projects and people to demonstrate inspiring and practical paths to clean energy so an even broader range and number of rural and remote communities can benefit from clean energy.

Funding will support materials, equipment, time, labor, and other resources to build clean energy projects in rural or remote communities and other allowable costs arising from activities as proposed (e.g., collaboration, outreach, and engagement with stakeholders and tribes, or workforce development programs).

This program serves communities of 10,000 people or fewer.<sup>12</sup>

This funding opportunity builds on previous rounds of this Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas program, which include:

- The Energizing Rural Communities Prize (67 winners for phase 1 across 32 states and territories, announced July 2023; 33 of those teams won phase 2, announced in September 2024)<sup>13</sup>
- A funding opportunity announcement (17 selected projects across 20 states, for \$366M total, announced February 2024)<sup>14</sup>
- A grant opportunity (19 selected projects across 12 states, for \$78M total, announced April 2024)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Based on data from the Low-Income Energy Affordability Data tool, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/lead-tool>. In 2023, counties with <20,000 people had an energy burden of 4%, vs. 3.12% for counties with ≥20,000 people.

<sup>12</sup> See the [Eligibility](#) section for details of this program's definition of rural or remote communities.

<sup>13</sup> See prize winners here: <https://americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/rural-energy/results> and <https://americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/rural-energy/results>.

<sup>14</sup> See selection announcement here: <https://www.energy.gov/oced/energy-improvements-rural-or-remote-areas-selections-award-negotiations>.

<sup>15</sup> See selection announcement here: <https://www.energy.gov/oced/energy-improvements-rural-or-remote-areas-grant-selections-award-negotiations>.

## Barriers to adoption highlighted in this funding opportunity

This funding opportunity focuses on a few of the barriers to adoption, many of which are non-technical, that rural and remote communities face when building clean energy projects. Tending to these barriers can improve overall project success and will be an important part of any project we fund through this opportunity.

We also aim to support projects and teams that will partner with DOE, the National Laboratories, other rural and remote communities, and other parties to develop, share, and help apply the lessons learned from the funded project to other communities working to deploy clean energy infrastructure in rural and remote communities across the country.

The Department of Energy uses the “Adoption Readiness Level” framework<sup>16</sup> to describe these non-technical barriers. Specifically, we seek projects that demonstrate how to address at least one of these items:

- **Community perception:** Members of communities where clean energy projects are proposed frequently raise concerns about conflict with other forms of land and water use, economic development opportunities, and changes to community character. Proponents of clean energy projects can work with community members to choose appropriate technologies, locations, and ownership structures that help build community support for the project and ultimately generate more positive perceptions of and experience with clean energy infrastructure. Including community members and local labor in decision-making; using community ownership or equity models; building effective partnerships; and working with local, trusted messengers for communication are a few potential approaches for addressing community perception.
- **Permitting & siting:** Rural and remote communities interested in deploying clean energy infrastructure are grappling with new permitting challenges. These challenges can include zoning ordinances that ban or restrict project development, and policies that limit where clean energy can go. Applicants can work with communities and government agencies, build local experience on these topics, coordinate projects with plans that consider ecosystem-wide impacts, or other approaches to overcome these siting challenges.<sup>17</sup>
- **Downstream value chain:** Ensuring that a clean energy project provides direct benefits such as reduced energy costs, increased clean energy reliability and access, improved environmental quality, or increased economic opportunities to the people who pay the financial, environmental, and social costs of that project can help make it more successful.

Applicants may describe other adoption barriers in their community and how their project plans to address those barriers.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.energy.gov/technologytransitions/adoption-readiness-levels-arl-complement-trl>

<sup>17</sup> See here for more information on renewable energy siting: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/siting-large-scale-renewable-energy-projects>

## Program goals and objectives

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The overall goals of this program are to:

1. **Deliver measurable and sustained benefits to people who live in rural or remote areas** by funding replicable clean energy projects that lower energy costs, improve energy access and resilience, increase economic opportunity, and/or reduce environmental harm.
2. **Demonstrate effective rural or remote energy system approaches** using climate-resilient technologies, business structures that promote economic resilience, accessible and appropriate financing mechanisms, and/or best practices in community leadership and engagement, and workforce development.
3. **Build clean energy knowledge, experience, capacity, and self-reliance in rural and remote parts of America.**

## Award contribution to goals and objectives

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In order to achieve the program's goals and objectives, we seek to support projects and teams that will:

- Build projects that will lower local energy costs; reduce outages for part or all of the community; and reduce greenhouse gases and other pollution.
- Provide data, experiences, and lessons learned about financial costs and impacts; system performance; overall process; and other aspects of planning and developing clean energy systems that can be analyzed by and shared with DOE, the National Laboratories, peer communities, and various interested stakeholders to inform clean energy adoption in rural and remote communities across the country.

## Funding priorities

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This funding opportunity prioritizes the following (definitions are described in the footnotes below):

- Communities and populations with at least one of these characteristics (referred to as “priority communities and populations” in this funding opportunity):
  - Disadvantaged communities as defined by the Justice40 Initiative<sup>18</sup> and identified in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool;<sup>19</sup>
  - Energy communities as defined by the Inflation Reduction Act<sup>20</sup> or communities that are likely to become energy communities in the near future;

<sup>18</sup> The Justice40 Initiative, established by Executive Order 14008, sets a goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities. Consistent with Justice40 guidance, DOE recognizes disadvantaged communities as the census tracts defined and identified as disadvantaged by the White House Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), located at <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/>, as well as all Federally Recognized Tribes (whether or not they have land). See [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/M-23-09\\_Signed\\_CEQ\\_CPO.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/M-23-09_Signed_CEQ_CPO.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool is located here: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>

<sup>20</sup> Energy communities are defined here: <https://energycommunities.gov/energy-community-tax-credit-bonus/>

- Low-income communities and populations;<sup>21</sup>
- Communities or populations, including workers, that have been underrepresented (e.g., have faced barriers, underinvestment, lack of opportunity);
- High energy burden communities and populations;<sup>22</sup> and
- Frontline communities and populations, i.e., those hit first and worst by climate change.<sup>23</sup>
- Teams that include members who are:
  - Highly familiar with local community priorities and dynamics;
  - Members of (or who represent) priority communities or populations (as referenced above);
  - Part of labor unions or other local workforce development organizations;
  - Credible with and trusted by community members;
  - Residents of proposed host community(ies);
  - Experienced in project development with proposed technologies in similar geographic and cultural contexts; and
  - Capable of efficiently and effectively administering government funding.
- Projects that demonstrate learnings which are applicable to other rural or remote communities across the United States and territories.

## Technology and System Requirements:

Applicants must propose projects that support at least one of these eligible activities:

- A. Improving overall cost-effectiveness of energy generation, transmission, or distribution systems;
- B. Siting or upgrading transmission and distribution lines;
- C. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from energy generation in rural or remote areas;
- D. Providing or modernizing electric generation facilities;
- E. Developing microgrids; and
- F. Increasing energy efficiency.

Applications may include any technology that meets these eligible activities, as long as those technologies are commercially available (see next paragraph).

<sup>21</sup> Low income as defined in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/methodology#low-income>

<sup>22</sup> High energy burden as defined in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool:  
<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/methodology#energy-burden>

<sup>23</sup> Frontline communities are defined here as those communities who are the most vulnerable to and will be the most adversely affected by climate change and inequitable actions because of systemic and historical socioeconomic disparities, environmental injustice, or other forms of injustice. See: <https://cpo.noaa.gov/climate-program-office-cpo-climate-adaptation-partnerships-program-fy2024/>

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, commercially available technology is defined as a product that has been offered for sale, lease, or license to the public. Applicants can establish that the technology is commercially available by showing the product can be warranted, can be purchased from a commercial vendor for the intended purpose, or some other justification the applicant chooses. The technology must be considered Technology Readiness Level (TRL)<sup>24</sup> 8–9 (the highest two levels) as defined by DOE before construction begins.

## Topic Areas:

This funding opportunity includes the following topic areas. Each application you submit must be for a unique project, and each application must be for a specific topic area. The amount we expect to award per topic area is approximate.

For all topic areas, we welcome project aggregators, i.e., entities that identify and propose several projects together in one application. The project aggregator approach could be used to reduce overall project costs and/or to include communities that may not have capacity to apply for this funding on their own.

**Table 2. Topic area summary.**

Topic Area	Award Size per Project	Total Expected Award Amount for Topic Area	Cost Share from Applicant	Cost Share from Applicant: Eligible for Lower Amount <sup>25</sup>
<b>1 Open category</b>	\$10M–\$50M	\$150M	50%	20%
<b>2 Dual use and co-location</b>	\$10M–\$50M	\$175M	50%	20%
<b>3 Smaller-scale community-centered</b>	\$2M–\$10M	\$50M	20%	5%
<b>4 Isolated microgrids &amp; unelectrified buildings</b>	\$2M–\$10M	\$25M	20%	5%

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.directives.doe.gov/directives-documents/400-series/0413.3-EGuide-04/@@images/file>

<sup>25</sup> For all topic areas, Indian Tribe, state and local government, institution of higher education, and nonprofit primary applicants are eligible for the lower cost share amount.

## Topic Area 1: Open Category

### Purpose

Offer a path to funding rural or remote clean energy infrastructure for many different project types, demonstrating approaches to addressing one or more relevant adoption barriers. (See “[Barriers to adoption highlighted in this funding opportunity](#)” for details.)

### Eligible technologies and activities

Applicants may propose any project type that best serves the community’s need and that reduces environmental impacts, within the program’s six eligible activities. (See “[Technology and System Requirements](#).”)

### Priority technologies and project types

This topic area prioritizes the following technologies or project types:

Solar, battery energy storage systems, wind, water power (marine energy and hydropower), geothermal (heating and cooling or power generation), biomass/biofuels, microgrids,<sup>26</sup> distribution, converting fossil fuel-powered equipment to electric, and repowering existing renewable energy systems.

### Example projects

These examples of projects or components of projects offer some ideas for potential applications. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive, and that some examples could be relevant for more than one topic area. Also consider that projects should align with community priorities.

- Installation of microgrids to provide power regulation or backup electricity to the grid.
- Siting or upgrading less than 30 miles of subtransmission or distribution lines ( $\leq 69\text{kV}$ ), grid stability and resilience with substation improvements, or other electrical infrastructure improvements (hardware or software).
- Use of biogas from agricultural waste, either from biogas capturing or biogas generation through anaerobic digestion, to fuel onsite equipment and/or for pipeline injection.
- Replacement of a non-clean backup energy generation system, such as a diesel generator, with a clean energy generation backup system and/or energy storage system, at a water treatment plant or pump station, or other critical facility.
- Replacement of fossil fuel-powered heating with heat pumps in community buildings or in a residential neighborhood.
- Upgrades to distribution systems to reduce outages and improve resilience.
- Installation of a geothermal heating and cooling system, including geothermal heat pumps, as part of a networked, community-scale geothermal system.

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<sup>26</sup> A microgrid is a group of interconnected loads and distributed energy resources within clearly defined electrical boundaries that acts as a single controllable entity with respect to the grid. A microgrid can operate in either grid-connected or in island mode, including entirely off-grid applications. See [https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/46060\\_DOE\\_GDO\\_Microgrid\\_Overview\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_RELEASE\\_508.pdf](https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/46060_DOE_GDO_Microgrid_Overview_Fact_Sheet_RELEASE_508.pdf).



## Topic Area 2: Dual use and co-location

### Purpose

Provide funding for clean energy demonstration projects in rural and remote communities that either:

- Allow for using land or water for both energy supply and other activities; or
- Are co-located with other activities and result in additional benefits beyond energy supply and reduced pollution.

Demonstrations could help to:

- Address potential conflicts between clean energy and other land and water uses in rural or remote areas;
- Maximize tangible, measurable co-benefits of clean energy projects beyond supplying energy and reducing pollution—including but not limited to economic, workforce, health, social, cultural, and environmental benefits; and/or
- Increase equitable access to clean energy through new business models and financing structures.

### Eligible project types

Applicants may propose projects that provide co-benefits to communities beyond supplying energy and reducing pollution, e.g., reducing land use conflicts, conserving water, diversifying incomes, and/or enhancing partnerships.

For agrivoltaics projects, dual use is defined as agricultural production, such as crop or livestock production, underneath or adjacent to solar panels (i.e., not solar on barn rooftops).

### Example projects

These examples of projects or components of projects offer some ideas for potential applications. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive, and that some examples could be relevant for more than one topic area. Also consider that projects should align with community priorities.

- Deployment of small hydropower in existing conduits to generate recurring revenue that enables reinvestment in other community infrastructure.
- Innovative siting of solar panels, such as on agricultural land (agrivoltaics) or over canals, to reduce local siting constraints, preserve undisturbed land where possible, and enable new ownership structures.
- Distributed wind for farmers or farm groups.
- Conduit hydro in irrigation systems.
- Community geothermal heating and cooling systems.
- Use of business structures that promote economic and electric system resilience, accessible and appropriate financing mechanisms, and/or best practices in community leadership, community ownership, capacity building, and engagement with rural and remote farmers, small businesses, communities, and electric utilities.

## Topic Area 3: Smaller-scale community-centered

### Purpose

Fund smaller-scale clean energy projects that are initiated, driven, and/or broadly supported by residents of the host community(ies).

- Projects should increase long-term local capacity for future clean energy projects in the applying community and/or in nearby or peer communities. This could include increasing the availability of technical expertise to plan and develop projects or improving community perception.
- We encourage applicants to collaborate with relevant partners, particularly tribal governments and community-based organizations that are familiar with the local community, and/or entities (e.g., nonprofits or extension schools) that have experience with developing renewable energy projects in similar areas.

### Eligible technologies and activities

Applicants may propose any project type that best serves the community's needs and that reduces environmental impacts, within the program's six eligible activities. (See "[Technology and System Requirements](#).")

### Priority technologies and project types

This topic area prioritizes the following technologies or project types (the same as for topic area 1):

Solar, battery energy storage systems, wind, water power (marine energy and hydropower), geothermal (heating and cooling or power generation), biomass/biofuels, microgrids,<sup>27</sup> distribution, converting fossil fuel-powered equipment to electric, and repowering existing renewable energy infrastructure.

### Example projects

These examples of projects or components of projects offer some ideas for potential applications. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive, and that some examples could be relevant for more than one topic area. Also consider that projects should align with community priorities.

- Installation of a community-owned solar and battery project to reduce electricity cost and increase energy resilience.
- Installation of a distributed wind, solar, and battery storage microgrid system to reduce electricity costs and increase energy resilience.
- Installation of standalone microgrids in community-serving locations to ensure continuation of services during natural disasters.

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<sup>27</sup> See [footnote 26](#) for a description of microgrids.

## Topic Area 4: Isolated microgrids and unelectrified buildings

### Purpose

Build clean energy projects for either:

- Isolated microgrids<sup>28</sup> (often located in ultra-remote areas and served primarily by diesel generators); or
- Unelectrified homes or community buildings not currently served by an electrical grid.

Projects should demonstrate approaches to addressing one or more relevant adoption barriers. (See [“Barriers to adoption highlighted in this funding opportunity”](#) for details.)

### Eligible technologies and activities

Applicants may propose any project type that best serves the community’s needs and that reduces environmental impacts, within the program’s six eligible activities. (See [“Technology and System Requirements.”](#))

### Example projects

These examples of projects or components of projects offer some ideas for potential applications. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive, and that some examples could be relevant for more than one topic area. Also consider that projects should align with community priorities.

- Installation of a distributed wind plus battery storage and/or solar plus battery storage microgrid to reduce electricity cost and increase energy resilience through reducing demand on diesel in a remote community.
- Connecting homes to the grid previously not served by local power lines.

## Applications Specifically NOT of Interest

We do not expect to fund the following project types through this opportunity:

1. Large transmission projects (i.e., projects >69kV, or proposals of lines  $\geq 30$  miles). If you believe that using higher voltage and/or longer lines is crucial to the success of the project, you may justify why you are including those components in the application.
2. Single-campus projects that serve only the regular operation of that facility (e.g., solar on individual hospitals or schools). For topic areas 3 and 4, applicants may propose single-campus projects that include backup power from emission-free sources for critical community-serving buildings (e.g., solar plus battery storage for a cultural center that serves as a command center and warming shelter during power outages).
3. Electric vehicles (EVs). See bullet below about EV charging.
4. Projects solely focused on EV charging. EV charging infrastructure may be a component of a broader, otherwise eligible project.
5. Projects including only weatherization.

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<sup>28</sup> See [footnote 26](#) for a description of microgrids.

## Expected award and project management structure

Awards selected under this funding opportunity will likely follow a four-phased project management structure for managing scope, schedule, deliverables, and budget. Projects typically have one “Budget Period”<sup>29</sup> per phase but may have more. DOE may adjust the phases or approaches for smaller, less complex projects. DOE will determine those options on a case-by-case basis, after we select projects and as we negotiate terms and conditions.

Figure 1 shows an example of the phase progression, major work activities, funding proportion, and timeline. This includes involvement from local communities and workers, relevant stakeholders, and tribes, as described within each of the phases below. All of the project’s activities will also be further defined during award negotiations and subsequent negotiations between Budget Periods. DOE anticipates that we will fund all awarded projects through all phases, pending successful Go/No-Go reviews between and within phases (see section on [Transitions Between Budget Periods](#)).

While Figure 1 and the narrative text below provide approximate timetables for each phase, these timetables are representative only. While phases are used to conceptually describe the progression of project development, awards will be managed in Budget Periods as defined in 2 CFR 200.1 “Budget Period.”

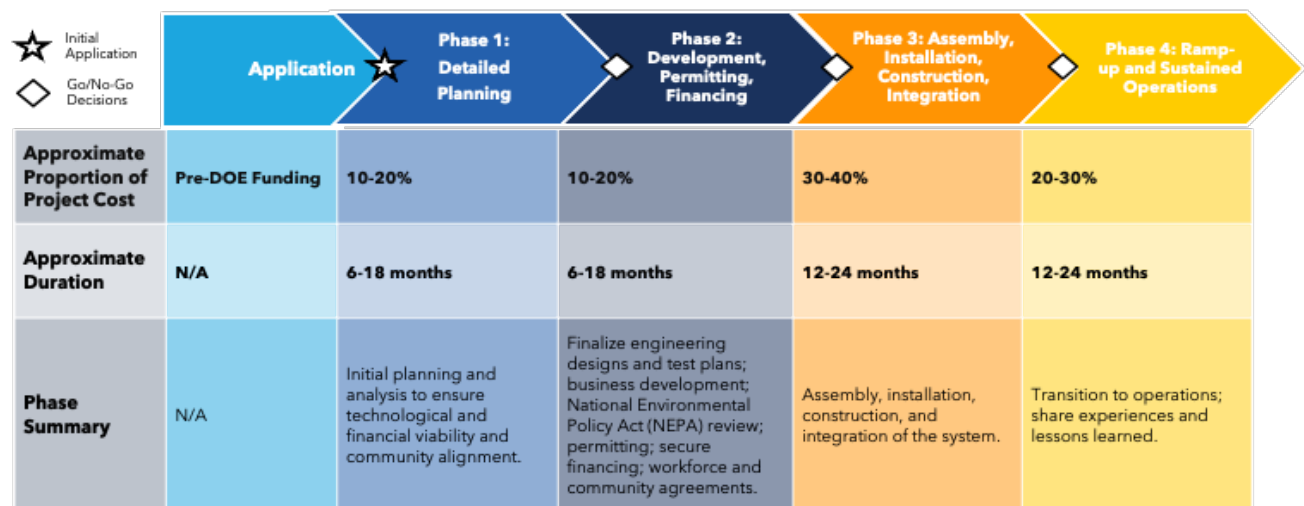


Figure 1. High-level summary of the expected phase structure for projects funded through this opportunity

### Phase 1 – Detailed Planning

Phase 1 activities will focus on developing specific aspects of the overall project plan and completing analysis to refine projections submitted as part of the proposal. These activities must provide assurance to DOE that the overall project plan is technologically, financially, and legally viable, with buy-in from relevant local and community stakeholders and tribes. This could include any plans to develop a skilled local labor pool, retain workers through quality jobs, establish partnerships with minority serving institutions and community based-organizations, and provide community benefits through Workforce and Community Agreements.

<sup>29</sup> Budget Period means the time interval from the start date of a funded portion of an award to the end date of that funded portion during which recipients are authorized to expend the funds awarded, including any funds carried forward or other revisions pursuant to [§ 200.308](#). See [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200#p-200.1\(Budget%20period\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200#p-200.1(Budget%20period)).

Community and labor engagement should continue throughout Phase 1 to align project characteristics and decisions with community priorities and to publicly share project developments and community impacts as they become clearer.

Recipients will complete preliminary engineering and construction designs. This will include finalization of a Project Management Plan, a Risk Management Plan, the initial Safety Plan, an initial Financial Plan for all phases, and final site selection and procurement plan for the various components to be included in the award.

As specified by DOE, recipients will prepare an environmental information volume (EIV)<sup>30</sup> or an environmental considerations summary (ECS) to support DOE's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) evaluation of construction and operating impacts. Recipients should fully engage with the DOE's NEPA team as they develop environmental and regulatory plans to prepare for permitting and approval processes in Phase 2. See the *NOFO Supplemental Requirements* document located on the [Funding Opportunities](#) page for more information about NEPA, EIVs, and ECSs.

## Phase 2 – Project Development, Permitting, and Financing

Phase 2 is for advanced planning activities. Recipients will finalize their project development plans, workforce and staffing plans, commercial agreements, workforce and community agreements, financial structure, and fabrication plans, and complete the necessary permitting and approval activities required to begin construction. By the end of Phase 2, engineering and operational designs should be sufficiently mature to support completion and execution of relevant fabrication, procurement, or construction contracts and starting major project execution tasks.

In Phase 2, recipients may start procurement of items with long lead times, with prior DOE approval. Third-party financing agreements should be completed and any relevant offtake agreements in place. Risk management plans should be revised and updated to reflect progress made and risks mitigated as well as new or emerging risks and corresponding management plans.

By the completion of Phase 2, safety and security plans should be finalized and execution ready. All necessary permits and regulatory approvals should be in place to prepare for construction, including completion of DOE's NEPA review. All procurement plans should be finalized. Community and labor engagement should have progressed, and updated comprehensive community benefits commitments should reflect community and labor input and collaboration to date and set the stage for ongoing engagement. Community impact targets should be finalized, and tracking plans should be in place to monitor economic, environmental, and social impacts of the projects.

## Phase 3 – Assembly, Installation, Construction, and Integration

Phase 3 activities will focus on implementation. Recipients will employ industry standard project management tools and will be required to provide regular status updates and reports. Plans recipients develop in the preceding phases will be revised and updated as appropriate to reflect actual performance. Engineering drawings may be further developed within this phase. Operational protocols and controls will be finalized within this phase.

<sup>30</sup> For more information about the environmental information volume, see here: <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/GUIDANCE%20ON%20PREPARATION%20OF%20THE%20ENVIRONMENTAL%20INFORMATION%20VOLUME%2003333024.pdf>.

Previously and newly developed risks will be tracked, actively managed, and regularly reported to DOE. Reporting frequencies and content requirements will be unique to each award and negotiated prior to Phase 3 commencement.

While recipients will manage implementation, DOE will closely monitor progress and evaluate it against the plans developed through Phase 2. DOE and/or its third-party representatives will visit the site(s) regularly to verify progress and collect data, including data related to community benefits, consistent with the established reporting requirements.

During Phase 3, recipients will continue to advance their community benefits commitments, including commitments to quality jobs, and provide ongoing mechanisms for community and labor input that will support meaningful benefits and minimize any project negative impacts. Outcomes and impacts related to community benefits efforts will be tracked to assess progress.

Phase 3 may look significantly different for each award as there will be varying amounts of construction and retrofitting. Specific details will be addressed for selected projects during the negotiation phase.

## Phase 4 – Ramp-Up and Sustained Operations

In Phase 4, recipients will transition to operations. By the end of Phase 4, each award will have operated over an extended period with a plan for workforce continuity. For this program, it is expected that Phase 4 will have a minimum duration of one year and may extend as long as three years.

A key objective this program is to demonstrate successful approaches, visions, and paths to share with and support similar communities pursuing clean energy planning and projects. To meet this key objective, Phase 4 is likely to include financial, socio-economic, environmental, and operational data collection and reporting to DOE. In addition, we expect all projects to generate high-fidelity operational data sets that enable detailed technical and financial modeling, and assessments such as environmental impacts and the social cost of greenhouse gas avoided<sup>31</sup> from the project.

## Transitions Between Budget Periods

All projects will be required to complete regular Go/No-Go reviews prior to the end of a Budget Period to determine if the project will continue to receive Federal funding. For each selected project, we will negotiate specific Go/No-Go criteria for transitions from one Budget Period to the next.

The Go/No-Go criteria may include a requirement to submit a standardized set of data to provide quantitative and qualitative insight on metrics spanning the technological, environmental, economic, market, workforce, community benefits, and other components of the project's analysis activities. DOE may also require the negotiation of additional Go/No-Go decision points within phases (i.e., phases may include one or more Budget Periods with Go/No-Go points at the end of each Budget Period). Applicants must propose quantitative Go/No-Go criteria for Budget Periods as part of the workplan.

If DOE determines that an award is making insufficient progress, DOE or its representatives may add additional scrutiny and oversight and negotiate corrective measures.

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<sup>31</sup> Recipients may use the social cost of greenhouse gases calculation such as that developed by the Environmental Protection Agency, found at <https://www.epa.gov/environmental-economics/scghg>.

DOE may discontinue awards at any of the Go/No-Go decision points if the recipient does not meet the Go/No-Go criteria, project, and/or program requirements. If awards are proceeding on an accelerated schedule, it may be possible to move to a Go/No-Go review earlier than originally planned and advance to the next Budget Period if the review is successfully completed.

DOE will negotiate specific project structure details with each recipient on a project-by-project basis to produce the best possible balance between project outcomes and DOE risk exposure. Examples of factors that may be considered as part of such negotiations include project and risk management processes, team capabilities, cost share amounts, financial contingencies, and engagement of independent monitors such as independent engineers and/or community benefits consultants. DOE will require access to project performance and financial data necessary to track progress against a project baseline (or similar).

We expect these projects to continue as self-sustaining entities operating fully independent of Federal funds. DOE may also request financial sustainability plans or long-term disposition and/or decommissioning plans as part of future decision points. This may include proposed sources of funding/revenue and the business model which will support the projects beyond the DOE award.

## Cooperative Agreement Substantial Involvement

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A Cooperative Agreement is an award funding type where there will be substantial Federal scientific or programmatic involvement. Substantial involvement includes but is not limited to the following:

1. DOE shares responsibility with the recipient for the management, control, direction, and performance of the project.
2. DOE may intervene in the conduct or performance of work under this award for programmatic reasons. Intervention includes the interruption or modification of the conduct or performance of project activities.
3. DOE may redirect or discontinue funding the project based on the outcome of DOE's evaluation of the project at the Go/No-Go decision point(s).
4. DOE participates in major project decision-making processes.

## Unallowable Costs

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All expenditures must be allowable, allocable, and reasonable in accordance with the applicable Federal cost principles. Pursuant to [2 CFR 910.352](#), the cost principles in the Federal Acquisition Regulations ([48 CFR 31.2](#)) apply to for-profit entities. The cost principles contained in [2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E](#) apply to all entities other than for-profits.

## Pre-Award Costs

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Applicants selected for award negotiations (selectees) must request prior written approval to charge pre-award costs. Pre-award costs cannot be incurred prior to applicants receiving notification of selection for award negotiations.

Pre-award expenditures are made at the applicant's risk. DOE is not obligated to reimburse costs as outlined in the *Applicant Supplemental Budget and Cost Information* document located on the [Preparing Your Budget](#) page.

## Program Income

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Program income is gross income earned by the recipient or subrecipient that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the Federal award during the period of performance (except as provided in the Federal award or regulations).

Recipients are encouraged to review [2 CFR 200.307](#) regarding program income. For this funding opportunity, the default use of program income is "Addition," where program income may be added to the award with prior approval and must be used for the purposes of the award. Any other treatment of program income must be negotiated and approved by DOE.



# STEP 2:

# GET READY TO APPLY

## IN THIS STEP

Application Contents and Format

# Application Contents and Format

Component and Subcomponent	File Naming Convention	Page Limit	Format
Concept Paper	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_ConceptPaper.pdf	7	PDF
<b>Application</b>			
Application For Federal Assistance	Standard Form <a href="#">SF-424</a> ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_App424.pdf	N/A	PDF
Technical Volume	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_TechVol.pdf	20	PDF
Community Benefits Plan	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_CBP.pdf	5	PDF
Community Partnership Documentation	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_Partner_Doc.pdf	2	PDF
Impacting Indian Tribe Documentation	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_IMT_Doc.pdf	N/A	PDF
Resumes or Equivalent	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_Resumes.pdf	2	PDF
Letters of Commitment	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_LOCs.pdf	2 per letter	PDF
Budget	Standard Form <a href="#">SF-424-A</a> ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_App424A.pdf	N/A	PDF
Budget Justification Workbook	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_Budget_Justification.xlsx	N/A	Excel
Subrecipient Justification Workbook	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_Subrecipient_Budget_Justification.xlsx	N/A	Excel
Transparency of Foreign Connections	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_TransparencyFC.pdf	N/A	PDF
Potentially Duplicative Funding	ControlNumber_LeadOrganization_DupFund.pdf	N/A	PDF
Verification of Cost Share Eligibility	ControlNumber_Cost_Share_Eligibility.pdf	N/A	PDF

## Application Process

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This application process includes 2 stages:

1. Concept paper, and
2. Application.

The application and supplemental information you submit through electronic systems used by the DOE, including OCED [eXCHANGE](#) and [FedConnect.net](#), constitutes the authorized representative's approval and electronic signature.

Applicants for this funding opportunity may also be required to submit the following:

- Third-party information such as references, letters of support, or letters of commitment to the project or to contribute to cost sharing.
- A reference to any requirements to provide documentation to support an eligibility determination, such as proof of 501(c)(3) status or an authorizing tribal resolution.
- If applicable, the need to identify proprietary information.

## Document Format Requirements

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Your submission must conform to the form and content requirements described in this section, including maximum page lengths. We will issue you a control number when you begin the OCED eXCHANGE application process. The control number must be included with all application documents. The control number must be prominently displayed on the upper right corner of the header of every page and included in the file name (i.e., Control Number\_Applicant Name\_Application).

## Format Requirements

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- Each document must be submitted in **Adobe PDF** format unless otherwise stated (e.g., Budget in Excel)
- Include assigned **Control Number** in upper right corner of the header of every page along with the file name.
- Page numbers must be included in the footer of every page.
- You must not exceed the specified page limit for each section. DOE will only review the authorized number of pages.
- All documents must be written in **English**.
- All pages must format to fit 8.5x11-inch paper with margins no less than one inch on all sides.
- Use **Calibri** typeface, **black** font color, font size of **12-point** or larger. Figures and tables may use 10-point font.

- References must be included as footnotes or endnotes in a **font size of 10-point** or larger. Footnotes and endnotes are counted toward the maximum page requirement.
- The maximum file size that can be uploaded to the OCED eXCHANGE website is 50 megabytes (MB). OCED eXCHANGE will not allow you to upload files more than 50 MB, and hence you cannot submit them for review.
- If you would like to submit a file that exceeds 50 MB but is still within the maximum page limit specified, you must break the file into parts and mark it to that effect.

## Concept Paper

### Content

- Cover Page
- Responses to Concept Paper Questions:
  - Technical Solution
  - Business Case
  - Team
  - Project Plan
  - Community and Workers

**Total Concept Paper Maximum Page Limit: 7 pages**

Applicants must submit a concept paper by the specified due date and time to be eligible to submit an application. Applicants who do not submit a concept paper cannot apply. An applicant may submit more than one concept paper. Each concept paper must be limited to a single concept and topic area. The concept paper must conform to the requirements listed below, including the stated page limits. Applicants must submit each concept paper as a single file in OCED eXCHANGE.

The concept paper must address all the requirements described in this subsection. DOE will review only the authorized number of pages. Please note that applicants will need to substantiate all statements of expertise in the application.

DOE makes an independent assessment of each concept paper based on the criterion in Step 4: Application Review Information. DOE will encourage a subset of applicants to submit applications and will discourage the other applicants from submitting an application. See [Step 4: Award Notices](#).

The following are the concept paper components and their requirements. Each potential applicant must provide the following information as part of the concept paper.

## Concept Paper Cover Page(s):

We encourage applicants to use the cover page format shown at the [end of the Step 2 section](#).

The cover page must include all of the following:

- The project title.
- Topic area team is applying for.
- A short sentence describing the key attributes of the project (technology type, size, and location). DOE and reviewers may use this as a standalone summary of the application.
- The project team, including:
  - Name of the recipient (i.e., applicant),
  - Entity type and an explanation of eligibility as described in [Step 1](#),
  - Technical and business points of contact, and
  - Names of all team members and their organizations.
- Clearly identify the location and population of the communities identified for energy improvements (as defined by the Census Bureau or other legal boundary). Provide a link(s) to [Census Bureau](#) figures confirming the populations of the community(ies) where the project is located and that will directly benefit from the project and state the type of area benefitted (e.g., city, town, borough, parish, census county division, or census-designated place). The Applicant Eligibility Guidance located on the [Apply for Funding Opportunities](#) page provides more information on how to use the census website.
- Provide up to 20 census tracts<sup>32</sup> and 9-digit zip codes (i.e., zip+4 code) of project location(s) and benefitting community(ies).
- The total project cost, proposed Federal funding amount, cost share from applicant, and period of performance.<sup>33</sup>
- Any statements regarding confidentiality as described in the [Treatment of Application Information](#) section.

In the remainder of the concept paper (seven pages total, including the cover page(s)), applicants must address the following questions in each section. You do not need to respond to each question separately, but you should address each of the prompts within each section.

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<sup>32</sup> See here for additional guidance on finding your census tract: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/-/3/33.47/-97.5>. We ask for census tracts primarily to understand whether the project is located in a Justice40 community. Census tracts are not sufficient to determine whether the project is located within a rural or remote community. See [Eligibility](#) section for details on the definition of rural or remote for this funding opportunity.

<sup>33</sup> The period of performance is the time period during which the recipient and subrecipient may incur new obligations to carry out all administrative actions and award activities and incur costs. See <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/guide/part-8/g>.

### Technical Solution:

- What are your community's current energy challenges and priorities? Are there any particular challenges or barriers that are faced by members of priority communities and populations as described in the [Funding priorities section](#)?
- Tell us about your proposed project, including project and technology type, size, and location.
- Why is this technology or project type a good fit for your community?
- Which barriers to adoption will this project address, and how? (See "[Barriers to adoption highlighted in this funding opportunity](#)" for details.)

### Business Case:

- How do you expect energy costs and energy burden to change for community members because of this project?
- What local economic impacts do you anticipate from this project, including e.g., local tax revenue, workforce development, and other economic development?
- Why is this project worth the cost for you?
- How do you plan to provide the cost share for this project?
- How do you plan to pay for the project's operations and maintenance?

### Team:

- Tell us about your team and their experience, including partners involved in the project, their role(s) in the project, and how you have worked together and plan to work together for this project and in the future.
- How does your team represent the priority communities and populations as described in the [Funding priorities section](#)?

### Project Plan:

- Tell us about your approach to plan and complete this project.
- How do you plan to check on progress and adjust your approach along the way?
- What are the top 1–5 risks for completing this project, and how do you plan to mitigate those risks?
- What is your plan to ensure you have enough qualified people to plan, develop, build, and operate the project?

## Community and Workers:

- How will this project benefit your community and local workers, including any priority communities and populations as described in the [Funding priorities section](#)?<sup>34</sup>
- How have you worked with, and how will you continue to work with, community members and local workers on this project, and how have you included or will you include them as part of the decision-making process?
- What are the potential negative impacts of this project and how do you plan to mitigate them?

For additional information, see [About Community Benefits Plans](#). Please note that the Office of Clean Energy does not use the DOE Community Benefits Plan template.

## Application

### *Technical Volume Content*

- Cover Page
- Project Overview
- Technical Approach
- Financial and Market Viability
- Management and Organization
- Workplan

**Total Technical Volume Maximum Page Limit: 20 pages**

**Only applicants who have submitted an eligible concept paper will be eligible to submit an application. The application should reflect the project proposed in the concept paper.**

Applicants will have approximately 100 days from DOE's posting of the concept paper Encourage/Discourage notification on OCED eXCHANGE to apply.

Regardless of the date the applicant receives the Encourage/Discourage notification (see [Step 4: Award Notices](#)), the submission deadline for the application remains the date and time stated on the first page of this funding opportunity.

Each application must be limited to a single concept. Applications must conform to the content and form requirements listed below and must not exceed the stated page limits. Applications must provide sufficient citations and references to justify the claims and approaches. However, DOE and reviewers are under no obligation to review cited sources.

<sup>34</sup> Benefits may include investments or positive outcomes that contribute to DOE Justice40 policy priorities in disadvantaged communities: decreased energy burden; decreased environmental exposure and burdens; increased access to low-cost capital; increased job creation and training; increased clean energy enterprise creation and contracting; increased energy democracy and community ownership; increased parity in clean energy access and adoption; and increased energy resilience.

## Technical Volume

The Technical Volume is usually the longest part of the application and includes much of the key parts of the project information. The Technical Volume must include a table of contents, all items listed in the box above, and any associated figures, graphics and citations. Applicants should consider the review criteria and how DOE and reviewers will score the application, as well as how the review criteria are weighted (see [Step 4: Application Review Information](#)) when preparing the Technical Volume.

Applicants must address all elements of the Technical Volume; however, we expect applicants to tailor the information based on the type, size, and complexity of your proposed project.

## Application Cover Page:

We encourage applicants to use the cover page format shown at the [end of the Step 2 section](#). The cover page must include all of the following:

- The project title.
- Topic area team is applying for.
- A short sentence describing the key attributes of the project (technology type, size, and location). DOE and reviewers may use this as a standalone summary of the application.
- The project team, including:
  - Name of the recipient (i.e., applicant),
  - Entity type and an explanation of eligibility as described in [Step 1](#),
  - Technical and business points of contact, and
  - Names of all team members and their organizations.
- Clearly identify the location and population of the communities identified for energy improvements (as defined by the Census Bureau or other legal boundary). Provide a link(s) to [Census Bureau](#) figures confirming the populations of the community(ies) where the project is located and that will directly benefit from the project and state the type of area benefitted (e.g., city, town, borough, parish, census county division census-designated place). The *Applicant Eligibility Guidance*, located on the [Apply for Funding Opportunities](#) page, provides more information on how to use the census website.
- Provide up to 20 census tracts<sup>35</sup> and 9-digit zip codes (i.e., zip+4 code) of project location(s) and benefitting community(ies).
- The total project cost, proposed Federal funding amount, cost share from applicant, and period of performance.
- Any statements regarding confidentiality as described in the [Treatment of Application Information](#) section.

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<sup>35</sup> See here for additional guidance on finding your census tract: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/-/3/33.47/-97.5>. We ask for census tracts primarily to understand whether the project is located in a Justice40 community. Census tracts are not sufficient to determine whether the project is located within a rural or remote community. See [Eligibility](#) section for details on the definition of rural or remote for this funding opportunity.



## Project Overview:

We encourage applicants to use the project overview format shown at [the end of the Step 2 section](#).

The project overview section must include all of the following in the list below.

- Technology(ies) used in the project:
  - Basic description (a few words or a short sentence).
  - Select up to 5 from this list: Solar, battery energy storage system, wind, water power, geothermal, biomass/biofuels, microgrids, transmission or distribution, energy efficiency, converting fossil fuel-powered equipment to electric, repowering existing renewable energy systems, dual-use, other.
- Provide the following information based on technology type(s) included in project:
  - Electricity generation:
    - Generation type (solar, wind, water power, geothermal, biomass/biofuels, diesel, other)
    - Nameplate capacity of generation (kW)
    - Behind the meter (Yes/No)
  - Microgrid:
    - Isolated grid/microgrid (Yes/No)
    - Can island from the broader grid (Yes/No)
  - Energy storage:
    - Storage type (lithium-ion battery, flow battery, other electrochemical battery, thermal, pumped hydropower, other)
    - Nameplate storage capacity (kWh)
    - Peak power (kW)
    - Behind the meter (Yes/No)
  - Transmission or distribution upgrades:
    - Voltage rating of line(s) (kV)
    - Line-miles upgraded
  - Energy efficiency or conversion to electric equipment:
    - Technology type (heat pump, lighting, etc.)
    - Number of installations
    - Expected energy savings (kWh/year)
  - Electrification:
    - Number of meter connections
    - Connection type (residential, commercial, or industrial)

- Primary benefits the project provides to the community(ies):
  - Select up to 5 from this list: Reduces cost of energy, reduces GHG emissions, addresses energy resilience needs, addresses energy demand growth, improves energy access, improves energy efficiency, promotes economic development, addresses energy workforce challenges, addresses energy independence (community microgrids, self-sufficient industrial facility, domestic supply, etc.), provides other environmental benefits, other
- Applicant entity type:
  - Select 1 from list: Indian Tribes, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, incorporated consortia, and unincorporated consortia
- Narrative (a few brief sentences at most for each bullet below):
  - Energy challenges the community(ies) face
  - Why project team and community(ies) chose the technology(ies).
  - Why the project is important to the community(ies).

### Technical Approach:

Applicants must address the prompts below, as relevant for the project.

- Current community energy challenges
  - What are your community's current energy challenges, priorities, and needs, including of underrepresented groups? Include any priorities related to energy resilience and reliability, energy cost, clean energy access, environmental protection, human health, economic development, quality jobs, workforce development, or environmental justice.
  - What burdens does the community face that could be impacted by the project, including environmental, socioeconomic, or health burdens?<sup>36</sup>
  - How did you determine community priorities and needs, e.g., what community engagement did you do, and who or what type of community members provided input?
- Appropriateness of technology choice and project type
  - Why is this technology or project type a good fit for your community?
  - How does this project address the community's priorities and needs, including priorities related to identified burdens?
  - You may include quantitative (e.g., dollars saved) and/or qualitative (e.g., improvements in quality of life due to fewer outages) impacts.

<sup>36</sup> Applicants may use EJSCREEN (<https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>), the Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool (<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>), or other analytic tools to characterize community burdens.

- Technical feasibility of project and appropriate technology readiness
  - How well does this technology or project type work in similar contexts? (e.g., communities that have similar geographies, demographics, and/or cultures)
  - What is the technology readiness level of the technology(ies) used in this project? (See the [Technology and System Requirements](#) section.)
  - Project size, impact on emissions and pollution, and impact on grid resilience and reliability (a project may include one or more of these categories):
    - Electricity generation*
      - Planned usage of generation (e.g., primary power, backup power, meeting peak demand)
      - Where relevant: Proposed reduction (quantitative where possible) in greenhouse gas and other emissions and pollutants, and/or reduction in fuel use
      - Where relevant: How does this electricity generation match expected demand? (e.g., solar generation greater in the summer but demand is higher in the winter for heating with heat pumps)
    - Energy storage systems*
      - Planned usage of storage (e.g., used alongside generation, providing brief back-up power during outages, meeting peak demand)
    - Energy efficiency*
      - Expected reductions in electricity and/or fuel use
    - Reliability and resilience*
      - How will this project reduce the likelihood and impact of energy disruptions or outages? (e.g., baseline and expected changes in outage duration and frequency (e.g., SAIFI, CAIDI, and SAIDI<sup>37</sup>) on average or under certain conditions (e.g., Major Event Days) for customers impacted by project)
      - Who specifically will benefit most from this improved resilience?
      - Baseline and expected changes in climate resilience, e.g., reduced fire or flooding risk
      - Changes in water consumption and/or improved water quality
- Sharing results
  - How will you share your experience with the process and results of this project with neighboring or peer communities?
- Community capacity
  - How will this project increase community capacity to plan, build, and operate clean energy systems, e.g., by developing available technical expertise locally and with partners, and/or increasing community support for those projects?

<sup>37</sup> SAIFI = System Average Interruption Frequency Index. It is the number of non-momentary electric interruptions, per year, the average customer experienced. CAIFI = Customer Average Interruption Duration Index. It is average number of minutes it takes to restore non-momentary electric interruptions. SAIDI = System Average Interruption Duration Index. It is the minutes of non-momentary electric interruptions, per year, the average customer experienced.

- Offtakers
  - Who is buying and receiving the energy produced? (If applicable)

### Financial and Market Viability:

Applicants must address the prompts below, as relevant for the project.

- Long-term financial viability
  - How do you expect to financially sustain this project over its lifetime? (This could include using funding and other support from government, philanthropy, and other sources.)
- Business plan
  - What are the key success metrics for this project?
  - What are the expected total project costs? Please include a discussion of the major equipment and the basis of the estimate (e.g., vendor quote, experience)
  - How will the project ownership model (e.g., community ownership or equity models) benefit community members?
- Financial model
 

*For applicants in topic areas 1 and 2, and for all for-profit applicants:*

  - Project financial model in Excel:
    - Dynamic model with a base case indicating the most likely performance scenario as well as a scenario manager with sensitivities and input assumptions
    - Latest estimates of capital expenditures, revenues, and operating expenses over project's useful life
    - Timing and impact of operational, investing, and financing cash flows

*For all other applicants:*

  - Narrative and estimated value of any non-financial benefits, and a brief explanation of how you estimated those benefits
  - Project financial model or equivalent, including latest estimates of capital expenditures, revenues, and operating expenses over entire project lifetime
- Budget
  - Provide project budget covering planning through operations
- Sources of funds for cost share
  - How will you provide the cost share for this project?
  - What risks are there with those sources of funding?

## Management and Organization (Team):

Applicants must address the prompts below, as relevant for the project.

- Experience of applicant organization, team members and project partners
  - Who is on your team, and what is their experience relevant to the project and community?
  - How long has your organization been working on community clean energy projects?
  - What roles and responsibilities does each team member have in the project?
  - What time commitment will each team member have to the project (e.g., by hours per person or full-time equivalent workers)?
  - What is your team's previous experience working together and in the community?
- Team composition:
  - Describe how your team includes members who are:
    - Highly familiar with local community priorities and dynamics
    - Members of (or who represent) priority communities or populations (as referenced in the [Funding priorities](#) section.)
    - Part of labor unions or other local workforce development organizations
    - Credible with and trusted by community members
    - Residents of the local community
    - Experienced in project development with proposed technologies, in similar geographic and cultural contexts
    - Capable of efficiently and effectively administering government funding (e.g., by previously having managed Federal funds)
  - How do you plan to work together during and after the project?
  - Resumes or other descriptions of how each team member's experience supports their role in the project (up to 2 pages each).
- Partners
  - Which partners are involved in this project, and what are their roles?
  - How do those partnerships improve your ability to implement the project successfully and/or serve the community?
  - Describe any partnership strengths, challenges, plans, and any formal or informal agreements together.

## Workplan:

Applicants must address the prompts below, as relevant for the project.

- Plan for completing project on time and on budget.
- Provide a project management schedule with key milestones, including path to site control and permitting.
- Plan for anticipating, mitigating, and responding to risks of the project. Risks should include:
  - Identification of technical risks, including technology, systems integration, infrastructure, engineering, scale-up and similar elements.
  - Identification of security risks, including cybersecurity, physical security, internal and external threat identification and response, and similar elements.
  - Identification of financial risks including project finance, market and regulatory structures, commercial business models, and similar elements.
  - Identification of organizational risks, including project team, project management structure, and similar elements.
  - Identification of execution risks, including engineering, procurement, construction, permitting, safety, testing, and similar elements.
  - Assessment of the probability of occurrence of each risk and potential impacts.
  - Identification of proposed mitigations for identified risks.

## Community Benefits Plan

**The Community Benefits Plan must not exceed 5 pages total.**

Projects funded under this funding opportunity must 1) support meaningful community and labor engagement; 2) invest in the American workforce; 3) advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; and 4) contribute to the President's goal that 40% of overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities (the Justice40 Initiative).

Applications must include a Community Benefits Plan (CBP) describing how the project will incorporate these four objectives. For projects impacting multiple communities, Community Benefits Plans should address all four objectives across all those communities. We encourage you to provide [Community Partnership Documentation](#) that reflects your engagement with community partners in developing your Community Benefits Plan, and/or approval of the Community Benefits Plan by community partners.

The Community Benefits Plan should provide the most detail for the project's phase 1. For subsequent phases, the plan can offer a high-level summary of proposed goals, deliverables, outcomes, and implementation strategies. If a project is selected for award negotiations, DOE will provide guidance to selectees on how to update Community Benefits Plans across project phases, and to incorporate outcomes and findings in final reports.

In your responses to the questions below, we encourage applicants to describe ongoing efforts related to two-way engagement with communities, labor, and tribes; workforce and community agreements; workforce development and quality jobs; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility that are directly related to the proposed project. This may include, e.g., descriptions of existing community advisory bodies that would be consulted on the proposed project; community or workforce agreements that would cover the proposed project; workforce training programs that would train workers for the project; or electric cooperative member-owner meetings for projects led by co-ops. You may include any discussion about philanthropic efforts unrelated to the project when you describe your team's relationship with and experience in the community (Management and Organization (Team) section), but do not include these efforts in the Community Benefits Plan.

You can find detailed guidance on creating your Community Benefits Plan under the application documents section on the OCED Exchange website at <https://oced-Exchange.energy.gov>. We encourage you to read this guidance and use information generated in other portions of this funding opportunity to support developing your Community Benefits Plan.

Below is more detail on what each of the four sections of the plan should include.

**Community and Labor Engagement:** This section should describe your plans to engage and collaborate with community and labor stakeholders in all impacted communities, especially members of priority communities and populations (as referenced in [Program Description](#)), and any impacted tribes. Engagement and collaboration should reflect the priorities of impacted groups, ensure community and labor input can affect project decisions, and support transparency and accountability.

If awarded, recipients will work with their communities and DOE to continue to identify Federally recognized Indian Tribes, including Alaska Native village or regional or village corporations (who are not project partners) who may have interests at the proposed project locations. The recipient will support DOE's tribal engagement, which acknowledges tribes' consultation policies, traditions, and expectations, and adheres to DOE Order 144.1<sup>38</sup> on tribal consultation.

- Provide any additional detail about the project team's prior and ongoing efforts to engage and collaborate with community stakeholders, tribes, workforce organizations, labor unions, and members of priority communities or populations not covered in the Technical Volume and Management and Organization (Team) section.
- Describe the project engagement strategy, including high-level objectives, approaches, and timelines for engaging and collaborating with workforce organizations, labor unions, community organizations, and community members, including members of priority communities or populations.
- How will engagement methods help meet project goals?
- How will input from community and labor stakeholders and tribes impacted by the project guide or inform project decisions, characteristics, or site selection?

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<sup>38</sup> See DOE Order 144.1: Department of Energy American Indian Tribal Government Interactions and Policy (2009) for details: <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/DOE%20O%20144.1.pdf>.

- Describe any plans to negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement, Project Labor Agreement, Community Workforce Agreement, and/or other collective bargaining agreements. Applicants should consider pursuing multiple agreements. Projects impacting multiple communities should strongly consider developing such agreements with each community. Describe any existing agreements that will cover the proposed project. If there are no plans to negotiate agreements, describe other strategies to ensure the benefits will flow to impacted communities and workers, and to integrate community and labor input into project decision-making.

**Investing in the American Workforce:** This section should describe plans to create and retain high-paying quality jobs and develop a skilled local workforce, which can support project stability, continuity, and success, and help meet program goals. Applicants who will not directly employ a workforce should demonstrate how they will select and work with anticipated employers to ensure project jobs are quality jobs, support workforce development, and uphold worker rights.

- Summarize the project team’s previous or ongoing efforts to invest in the local workforce and create quality jobs, invest in workforce development, and protect worker rights.
- How will the project team attract and retain a skilled, local, and diverse workforce for construction and ongoing operations? This may include a description of how the project team will select contractors or vendors that will attract and retain a skilled, local, and diverse workforce.
- Describe the anticipated quality of jobs and anticipated number of jobs, including the number of construction, operations, and maintenance jobs. Describe the anticipated breakdown of hourly and salaried jobs, and benchmark wages and benefits against local prevailing wage or average wages for the industry and occupations.<sup>39</sup> Provide a timeline for job creation and duration.
- Describe any plans for investing in workforce development, which may include workforce education and training for local workers that leads to employment and support for opportunities for advancement. Provide a timeline for any workforce development activities.
- Describe any plans or commitments to support worker organizing and collective bargaining, so that workers can form and join unions of their choosing. Describe how workers will have the opportunity to organize with the purposes of exercising collective voice in the workplace in both construction and ongoing operations.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA):** This section should detail how DEIA objectives will be incorporated into the project and describe how you will partner with underrepresented businesses, educational institutions, and training or workforce development organizations that serve workers facing barriers to quality jobs, and/or other partners to help support DEIA.

- Describe your prior and ongoing DEIA efforts and specifically how they will be incorporated into the project.
- Describe DEIA goals and implementation strategies, aligned with project phases and workplans. This may include plans to provide comprehensive supportive services (to improve representation and access to jobs) and partner with underrepresented businesses, vendors, or suppliers and/or organizations serving underrepresented communities and those facing barriers to employment.

<sup>39</sup> [About Community Benefits Plans | Department of Energy](#) see heading “What is a good job?” for indicators of quality jobs.



**Justice40 Initiative and Equitable Impacts:** This section should include an assessment of project impacts and where they flow, and strategies to maximize benefits, minimize negative impacts, and track and report impacts. It should also describe how the project aligns with any community priorities not covered in the Technical Volume.

- To which communities or groups will the project benefits identified in the Technical Volume flow? Specifically, estimate the extent to which project benefits flow to Justice40 communities.
- What are the project's potential negative impacts?<sup>40</sup> Describe where/to whom impacts are expected to flow and the extent to which these impacts flow to Justice40 communities.
- How will you maximize benefits, minimize negative impacts, and track and report impacts? Indian Tribe, tribal organization, local government, or nonprofit primary applicants may describe plans to develop strategies to achieve these outcomes (e.g., contracting with organizations that can support this work as part of this funding opportunity).
- How will you ensure community and worker accountability and transparency and capture feedback (e.g., Workforce and Community Agreements and public access to project data)?

## Community Partnership Documentation

**Each supporting document must not exceed 2 pages total.**

In support of the Community Benefits Plan, applicants may submit letters, Memoranda of Understanding, or other similar agreements from partnering tribes, labor unions, and/or community entities specifically describing the nature of existing or planned partnerships. Applicants may also submit letters of support from impacted tribes, labor unions, community entities, and local governments. If the applicant intends to enter into a Workforce and Community Agreement, please include letters from proposed partners.

## Impacted Indian Tribe Documentation

For any project that potentially impacts Indian Tribes, including when the potentially impacted Indian Tribe is the applicant, applicants are required to submit additional documentation at the time of application, and possibly during negotiation and prior to award. Potential impacts to Indian Tribes determined after application will also require additional documentation (see Community Benefits discussion on [consultation](#)).

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<sup>40</sup> Negative impacts may include ecological (e.g., effects on natural resources and on components, structures, and functioning of ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health impacts.

## Documentation from Potentially Impacted Indian Tribes

Applicants are required to submit documentation demonstrating that an authorized representative<sup>41</sup> of each potentially impacted Indian Tribe known to the applicant is, at a minimum, aware of the nature of the application and its potential impacts to the relevant Indian Tribes. The notified authorized representative must be holding their position while the award is open for applications, and documentation must demonstrate affirmative awareness of the application (e.g., a delivery record from certified mail, a reply by the authorized representative). Documentation demonstrating support (see [Tribal Land or Tribal Subsurface Rights](#) below) submitted at the time of application will be considered to also demonstrate awareness of an Indian Tribe.

An applicant's failure to submit documentation of an Indian Tribe's awareness, or a letter of support, when required as described in this section, may constitute grounds for determining an application ineligible, non-responsive to the NOFO, not subject to further review, and/or not otherwise subject to selection or award.

### *Tribal Land or Tribal Subsurface Rights*

For any project intended to be sited on tribal land(s)<sup>42</sup> or known by the applicant to intersect with tribal subsurface rights, applicants are required to submit documentation demonstrating support from the relevant Indian Tribes at the time of application.

Documentation may include either:

- A letter of support from tribal leadership. The letter must be signed by an authorized representative of the Indian Tribe. The signer(s) must be holding their position while the award is open for applications.
- A Tribal Council Resolution, Board resolution (including the Board of Directors of an Alaska Native Corporation (ANC)), or similar act passed by the legislative body of the Tribal government or Board of Directors of an ANC, expressing support for the project.

Applicants are encouraged to reference any applicable community benefits agreements in the tribal support documentation, and to also reference any tribal support documentation in the [Community Benefits Plan](#) as appropriate.

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<sup>41</sup> An authorized representative must be an elected official or designated leader according to the traditions, constitution, or charter of the Indian Tribe, or someone with relevant delegated authority within the Tribal government. Examples include: Chief, Chairman, Chairwoman, Governor, Nation Representative, President, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Speaker of the Council, Speaker of the Congress, Tribal administrator.

<sup>42</sup> Tribal land means "Indian land" and "tribal land" as defined by 25 U.S.C. § 3501. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2023-title25/pdf/USCODE-2023-title25-chap37-sec3501.pdf>.

### ***Other Potential Impacts***

For projects not intended to be sited on tribal land(s) or not known to intersect with tribal subsurface rights, but that are known by the applicant to have other potential impacts on tribal resources or reserved rights, letters of support or resolutions of support are strongly encouraged and, depending on the nature of the impact, may be required if selected for negotiation of an agreement. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to Indian Tribes as early as possible in the application process to give Indian Tribes ample time to evaluate and respond. Potential impacts include impacts to cultural sites, sacred sites, water rights, fishing rights, and hunting rights.

The following resources may be useful to help determine if a project may impact an Indian Tribe(s) resources or reserved rights and the appropriate contacts:

- Map of Indian Lands: <https://bia-geospatial-internal.geoplatform.gov/indianlands/>
- Directory of Federally recognized Tribes and Tribal Leaders: <https://www.bia.gov/service/tribal-leaders-directory>

These resources are not exhaustive, and many Indian Tribes have resources or reserved rights which extend beyond their tribal lands, or are covered within treaties, statutes, or case-law.

### **Identification of Potential Impacts**

Applicants are required to document any efforts taken to identify any potential impacts to Indian Tribes, including any correspondence with Indian Tribes. These documents should be available on request to DOE.

If an applicant has reason to believe the proposed project has potential impacts to an Indian Tribe(s), the applicant must provide the project location and whether it is on tribal land or is known to intersect with subsurface rights, identify the potentially impacted Indian Tribe, and describe the potential impacts.<sup>43</sup>

The applicant must also describe how the applicant has engaged with potentially impacted Indian Tribe(s) before applying and plans to engage with potentially impacted Indian Tribe(s) during the period of performance of the agreement, and, if necessary, after the end of the period of performance.

If the applicant is an Indian Tribe, these elements should be addressed to ascertain potential impacts to Indian Tribes other than the applicant.

The Cooperative Agreement Standard Terms and Conditions, located on the [Award Terms and Conditions](#) page, require a recipient to obtain approval by DOE before any activities take place that could impact tribal resources or reserved rights, including but not limited to lands, cultural sites, sacred sites, water rights, mineral rights, fishing rights, and hunting rights. DOE will determine if formal government-to-government consultation is needed, and DOE will conduct that consultation accordingly.

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<sup>43</sup> Applicants do not need to reveal specific details about sacred sites such as specific location or specific ceremonies.

## Notice Concerning Application Information

Any application that may potentially impact Indian Tribe(s) may be shared with the potentially impacted Indian Tribe(s). Applicants should include a Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data identifying any business sensitive, trade secrets, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation of the application or to determine whether the proposed project affects an Indian Tribe(s).

## Resumes

**Each resume must not exceed 2 pages total.**

You must provide a resume for all senior and key personnel, or similar document that describes their background and experience. A resume provides information that can be used by reviewers to evaluate the individual's relevant skills and experience of the personnel.

## Letters of Commitment

**Each letter must not exceed 2 pages total.**

Submit letters of commitment from all subrecipient and third-party cost share providers. If applicable, the letter must state that the third-party cost share provider is committed to providing a specific minimum dollar amount or value of in-kind contributions allocated to cost sharing.

For third-party cost share providers, letters of commitment should include the following information: (1) the name of the organization; (2) the proposed dollar amount to be provided; and (3) the proposed cost sharing type (cash or in-kind contributions).

## Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

The Standard Form [SF-424](#) represents the government-wide standard form for application packages, and requires basic information about the applicant (name, address, telephone number, type of applicant, etc.), including a list of sources of proposed funding and a description of the proposed project. Complete all required fields in accordance with the instructions on the form. In Field 21 of the SF-424, the authorized representative must certify and agree with the Certification and Assurances found in [SAM.gov | Home](#).

Note: The dates and dollar amount on the SF-424 are for the complete project.

## Budget and Budget Justification Workbook

Applicants must provide a Budget, and a Budget Justification Workbook. For any subaward listed in the application, a separate Budget Justification Workbook must be provided for each subaward listed in the application. See the [Required Applications Documents](#) page and the *Applicant Supplemental Budget and Cost Information* document for guidance.

## Budget

Applicants must use the [Standard Form SF-424-A BUDGET INFORMATION - Non-Construction Programs](#) to submit their budget.

## Budget Justification Workbook

We encourage applicants to use the Budget Justification Workbook template available on OCED eXCHANGE at <https://oced-exchange.energy.gov/> and on the [Apply for Funding Opportunities](#) page. The Budget Justification Workbook includes built-in calculations to support a detailed and robust budget and a narrative which supports the information you provide in the Standard Form SF-424A. Applicants must complete each tab within the “Budget Justification Workbook” for the project, including all work to be performed by the recipient and its subrecipients and contractors. If the applicant elects to not use the Budget Justification Workbook template, they must provide all data elements and justifications which follow the SF-424A and the Budget Justification Workbook template.

Applicants must include costs associated with implementing the various requirements specific to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act (e.g., Buy America requirements for infrastructure projects, Davis-Bacon, Community Benefits Plan, reporting, oversight, construction signage)<sup>44</sup> and with required annual audits and incurred cost proposals in their proposed budget documents. Such costs may be reimbursed as a direct or indirect cost.

## Transparency of Foreign Connections

Applicants must identify the following as they relate to the proposed recipient and subrecipients:

1. Entity name, website address, and physical address.
2. The identity of all owners, Principal Investigator/Lead Project Manager, and senior/key personnel, at the recipient and subrecipient level, who are a party to any *Foreign Government-Sponsored Talent Recruitment Program* of a foreign country of risk (i.e., China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia).
3. The existence of any joint venture or subsidiary that is based in, funded by, or has a foreign affiliation with any foreign country of risk.<sup>45</sup>
4. Any current or pending contractual or financial obligation or other agreement specific to a business arrangement, or joint venture–like arrangement with an enterprise owned by a foreign state or any foreign entity.
5. Percentage, if any, of foreign ownership (direct or indirect) in, or control of, the proposed recipient or subrecipient(s).
6. Percentage, if any, of foreign ownership (direct or indirect) in, or control of, the proposed recipient or subrecipient(s) by an entity of a foreign country of risk.

<sup>44</sup> After receiving a DOE award, recipients are encouraged to display DOE Investing in America signage during and after construction. Guidance can be found at: <https://www.energy.gov/design>. Proposed signage costs that meet these specifications are an allowable cost and should be included in the proposed project budget.

<sup>45</sup> Countries of risk may change but currently include the People’s Republic of China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea.

7. Percentage, if any, of venture capital or institutional investment by an entity that has a general partner or individual holding a leadership role in such entity who has an affiliation with any foreign country of risk.
8. Any technology licensing or intellectual property sales to a foreign country of risk, during the 5-year period preceding submission of the proposal.
9. Any equipment that is identified at the time of application, that will be used on the project, and that is made, or uses code written in a foreign country of risk.
  - a. Equipment originally made or manufactured in a foreign country of risk (including relabeled or rebranded equipment).
  - b. Coded equipment where the source code is written in a foreign country of risk.
  - c. Equipment from a foreign country of risk that will be connected to the internet or other remote communication system.
  - d. Any companies from a foreign country of risk that will have physical or remote access to any part of the equipment used on the project after delivery.
10. Any foreign business entity, offshore entity, or entity outside the United States related to the proposed recipient or subrecipient.
11. An organization chart to illustrate the relationship between your entity and the immediate parent, ultimate parent, and any intermediate parent, as well as any subsidiary or affiliates. Identify where each entity is incorporated.

DOE reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information based on the information submitted.

## Potentially Duplicative Federal Funding

If the applicant or project team member has other active awards of Federal funds, the applicant must determine whether the activities of those awards potentially overlap with the activities set forth in its application to this funding opportunity. If there is a potential overlap, the applicant must notify DOE in writing, within the part of the application that addresses potentially duplicative Federal funding, of the potential overlap and state how it will ensure any project funds (i.e., applicant cost share and Federal funds) will not be used for identical cost items under multiple awards.

Likewise, for projects that receive funding under this NOFO, if a recipient or project team member receives any other award of Federal funds for activities that potentially overlap with the activities funded under the DOE award, the recipient must promptly notify DOE in writing of the potential overlap and state whether project funds from any of those other Federal awards have been, are being, or are to be used (in whole or in part) for one or more of the identical cost items under the DOE award. If there are identical cost items, the recipient must promptly notify the DOE Grants and Agreements Officer in writing of the potential duplication and eliminate any inappropriate duplication of funding.

## Verification of Cost Share Eligibility

If seeking reduced cost share (see [Table 2](#) for cost share based on topic area and type of applicant), please include documentation verifying status of the prime recipient as an eligible entity type.

## Other Required Application Forms

### Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)

Recipients and subrecipients may not use any Federal funds to influence or attempt to influence, directly or indirectly, any officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress, in connection with any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement. In addition, if any registrants under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 have made a lobbying contact on behalf of the applicant (including with non-Federal funds) with respect to this funding opportunity, the applicant must complete and submit SF-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities" ([SF-424 Individual Family | Grants.gov](#)).

## Other Submission Requirements

### Applicant Disclosure of Existing Work or Relationship with National Laboratories

Applicants shall disclose any pre-existing work or relationship with National Laboratories that is prior to this funding opportunity's application and that is or may be relevant to the funding opportunity application.

## Example Cover Page(s) for Concept Papers and Applications

<b>Project Title:</b>	<b>OCED eXCHANGE Control Number:</b>		
<b>Applicant Name:</b>			
<b>Applicant Entity Type (see <a href="#">Eligible applicants</a>):</b>			
<b>Topic Area of Application:</b>			
<b>Project Location(s) by City, State, and Zip Code+4:</b> (Please separate locations by commas) Location, State, Zip	<u>City/Town/Unincorporated Area</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Zip Code+4</u>

<b>Population and Census Verification of Project Location and/or Directly Benefitting Community or Communities:</b>		Provide a link(s) to Census Bureau figures confirming the populations of the community(ies) that will benefit from the project, and state the entity type benefitting (e.g., city, town, borough, parish, census county division, or census-designated place (see data.census.gov)).	
<b>Census Tract(s) Directly Impacted by Project:</b> (Please separate tracts with commas)		Census Tracts Identified as Disadvantaged in Justice40 <sup>46</sup> :  Remaining Census Tracts:	
<b>Project Technologies (Select up to 5 from this list: solar, battery energy storage system, wind, water power, geothermal, biomass/biofuels, microgrids, transmission or distribution, energy efficiency, converting fossil fuel-powered equipment to electric, repowering existing renewable energy systems, dual-use, other):</b> (Please separate technologies by commas)			
<b>One-Sentence Project Description:</b>			
<b>Team Member Organizations (e.g., Sub-Recipients, Key Technology Providers, and Project Partners):</b>			
<b>Do the proposed recipient and <u>all</u> subrecipients qualify as domestic entities*?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <b>If not, specify which entities do not qualify as domestic entities and will require a foreign entity disclosure here and include necessary foreign entity disclosures with the application:</b>		* To qualify as a domestic entity, the entity must be organized, chartered, or incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of a particular state or territory of the United States; have majority domestic ownership and control; and have a physical place of business in the United States or otherwise qualify as an Indian Tribe or tribal organization.	
<b>Points of Contact</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
<b>Demonstration Project Manager:</b>			
<b>Business Point of Contact:</b>			
<b>Confidentiality Statement (if applicable):</b>			
<b>Total DOE Funding Request (\$M USD):</b>			
<b>Total Non-Federal Cost Share (\$M USD):</b>			
<b>Total Project Costs (\$M USD):</b>			
<b>Total Period of Performance (yrs):</b>			

<sup>46</sup> For details on identifying Justice40 disadvantaged communities, [see footnote 18](#).



## Example Project Overview for Applications

Location Description:		
Project Technologies ( <i>Select up to 5 from this list: solar, battery energy storage system, wind, water power, geothermal, biomass/biofuels, microgrids, transmission or distribution, energy efficiency, converting fossil fuel-powered equipment to electric, repowering existing renewable energy systems, dual-use, other</i> ):		
Project technology description:		
Primary benefits the project ( <i>Select up to 5 from this list: Reduces cost of energy, reduces GHG emissions, addresses energy resilience needs, addresses energy demand growth, improves energy access, improves energy efficiency, promotes economic development, addresses energy workforce challenges, addresses energy independence (community microgrids, self-sufficient industrial facility, domestic supply, etc.), provides other environmental benefits, other</i> ):		
Applicant Entity Type ( <i>Select 1 from list: Indian Tribes, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, incorporated consortia, and unincorporated consortia</i> ):		
Project Narrative:	Energy challenges the community(ies) face	
	Why project team and community(ies) chose the technology(ies)	
	Why the project is important to the community(ies)	
IF Project includes electricity generation:	Generation type (solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, water, diesel, other)	
	Nameplate capacity of generation (kW)	
	Behind the meter (Yes/No)?	
IF Project includes creating or upgrading existing microgrid:	Is already or planning to be a fully isolated grid/microgrid (Yes/No)?	
	Is already or planning to be capable of islanding independently from the broader grid (Yes/No)?	

<b>IF Project includes Storage:</b>	Storage type (lithium-ion battery, flow battery, other electrochemical battery, thermal, pumped hydropower, other)	
	Nameplate storage capacity (kWh or MWh)	
	Peak power (kW or MW)	
	Behind the meter (Yes/No)?	
<b>IF Project includes Transmission or Distribution Upgrades:</b>	Voltage rating of line(s) (kV)	
	Number of line-miles upgraded	
<b>IF Project includes Energy Efficiency:</b>	Technology type (heat pump, etc.)	
	Number of installations	
	Expected energy savings (kWh/year)	
<b>IF Project includes Electrification:</b>	Number of meter connections	
	Connection type (residential, commercial, or industrial)	

1. REVIEW

2. GET READY

3. SUBMIT

4. SELECTION

5. REQUIREMENTS

6. CONTACTS

# STEP 3: SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

## IN THIS STEP

Submission Requirements and Deadlines

# Submission Requirements and Deadlines

## Request application package

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All application, concept paper, forms, and instructions are available on OCED eXCHANGE. To access these materials, go to <https://OCED-exchange.energy.gov> and select the Notice of Funding Opportunity Number DE-FOA-0003428.

## Submission instructions

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### Actions to Take Prior to Applying

You must complete several one-time actions before applying to this funding opportunity. Some actions may take several weeks, and failure to complete them could interfere with your ability to apply to this funding opportunity, or to meet the negotiation deadlines and receive an award if the application is selected. These requirements are as follows:

### SAM.gov

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Effective January 1, 2020, the System for Award Management (SAM) is the central repository for common government-wide certifications and representations required of Federal grants recipients. Registration in SAM is required for eligibility for a Federal award and registration must be updated annually. Federal agencies use SAM information to comply with award requirements and avoid increased burden and costs of separate requests for such information, unless the recipient fails to meet a Federal award requirement, or there is a need to make updates to their SAM registration for other purposes.

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. Begin that process today. To register, go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and click Get Started. From the same page, you can also click on the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register.

Each applicant must:

1. Be registered in SAM.gov before submitting an application;
2. Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier in the application; and
3. Continue to maintain an active registration in SAM.gov with current information at all times during which you have an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal agency.

NOTE: Start the UEI and SAM registration process as soon as possible. If you have technical difficulties with the UEI validation or SAM registration process, use the Help feature on SAM.gov. Additional entity validation resources can be found here: [GSAFSD Tier 0 Knowledge Base - Validating your Entity](#).

DOE may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time DOE is ready to make a Federal award, the DOE will determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

## OCED eXCHANGE

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You must register with and submit application materials through OCED eXCHANGE at <https://oced-exchange.energy.gov>, OCED's online application portal. See detailed instructions at [Financial Opportunities: Manuals \(energy.gov\)](#). OCED eXCHANGE is designed to enforce the deadlines specified in this funding opportunity. The "Apply" and "Submit" buttons will automatically disable at the defined submission deadlines. If an applicant experiences technical difficulties with a submission, the applicant should contact the OCED eXCHANGE helpdesk for assistance ([OCED-exchangeSupport@hq.doe.gov](mailto:OCED-exchangeSupport@hq.doe.gov)).

## FedConnect

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Register in FedConnect at <https://www.fedconnect.net>. To create an organization account, your organization's SAM.gov Marketing Partner Identification Number is required. For more information about registration requirements, review the FedConnect Ready, Set, Go! Guide at: [https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/Marketing/Documents/FedConnect\\_Ready\\_Set\\_Go.pdf](https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/Marketing/Documents/FedConnect_Ready_Set_Go.pdf).

## Grants.gov

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Register in Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) to receive automatic updates when modifications to this NOFO are posted. However, please note that we will not accept concept papers and applications through Grants.gov. As applicable, we will post modifications to this funding opportunity on the OCED eXCHANGE website and the Grants.gov system. However, you will only receive an email when a modification is posted if you register for email notifications for this NOFO in Grants.gov. OCED recommends that you register as soon after the release of the NOFO as possible to ensure you receive timely notice of any amendments or other NOFOs.

## Submission dates and times

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### Concept Paper

You must submit your concept paper by February 27, 2025 at 5:00pm ET.

### Application

You must submit your application by August 28, 2025 at 5:00pm ET.

## Intergovernmental review

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Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.”

## Standards for Application Evaluation

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Applications that are determined to be eligible will be evaluated in accordance with this NOFO, by the standards set forth in the Notice of Objective Merit Review Procedure (76 Fed. Reg. 17846, March 31, 2011) and the guidance provided in the “DOE Merit Review Guide for Financial Assistance,” effective April 2024, which is available at: [Department of Energy Guide to Financial Assistance](#).

## Evaluation and Administration by Non-Federal Personnel

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In conducting the merit review evaluation and the Go/No-Go Reviews, DOE may seek the advice of qualified non-Federal personnel as reviewers. DOE may also use non-Federal personnel to conduct routine, nondiscretionary administrative activities, including DOE contractors. The applicant, by submitting its application, consents to the use of non-Federal reviewers/administrators. Non-Federal reviewers must sign conflict of interest and non-disclosure acknowledgements (NDA) prior to reviewing an application. Non-Federal personnel conducting administrative activities must sign an NDA.

## Treatment of Application Information

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Applicants should not include business sensitive (e.g., commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential), trade secrets, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information in their application unless such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project or to comply with a requirement in the NOFO. Applicants are advised to not include any critically sensitive proprietary detail.

If an application includes business sensitive, trade secrets, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information, it is furnished to the Federal government (government) in confidence with the understanding that the information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation of the application.

Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, DOE will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and to outside reviewers when necessary for merit review of the application or as otherwise authorized by law. This restriction does not limit the government's right to use the information if it is obtained from another source.

Applications, and other submissions containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be marked as described below. Failure to comply with these marking requirements may result in the disclosure of the unmarked information under the Freedom of Information Act or otherwise. The U.S. Government is not liable for the disclosure or use of unmarked information and may use or disclose such information for any purpose as authorized by law.

The cover sheet of the application, and other submissions must be marked as follows and identify the specific pages containing business sensitive, trade secrets, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information:

#### **Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:**

"Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain business sensitive, trade secrets, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information that is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes or in accordance with a financial assistance or loan agreement between the submitter and the Government. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source."

In addition, (1) the header and footer of every page that contains business sensitive, trade secret, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information must be marked as follows: "Contains Business Sensitive, Trade Secrets, Proprietary, or otherwise Confidential Information Exempt from Public Disclosure," and (2) every line or paragraph containing such information must be clearly marked with double brackets or highlighting. DOE will make its own determination about the confidential status of the information and treat it according to its determination.

In furtherance of OCED's mission, and to support the further private investment in and deployment of clean energy technologies, as well as to support clean energy markets, OCED may publish aggregated and anonymized data derived from unmarked application information (information that is not marked as business sensitive, trade secret, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information with the Notice of Restriction). The goal is to appropriately share aggregated and anonymized applicant data for the benefit the nation's broader clean energy ecosystem while ensuring robust protection of the underlying information or data.

Applicants should be aware that DOE may share information about an applicant's submission, which is not properly marked business sensitive, trade secrets, proprietary or otherwise confidential, with other Federal agencies on a limited, confidential basis to be used to prevent two or more agencies funding the same activity twice. Consideration by another agency for funding will not negatively affect a DOE applicant.

## Rights in Technical Data Under Award

The [Treatment of Applicant Information](#) section discusses data generated prior to the award that the applicant is submitting as part of the application. This section discusses data that will be part of or arises out of the award itself. The applicant should review this section in the *NOFO Supplemental Requirements* document, located on the [Funding Opportunities](#) page, before proceeding further.

Pursuant to special statutory authority, the funding program has determined for awards under this funding opportunity that Protected Data first produced in the performance of corresponding DOE awards may be protected from public disclosure for up to five years after the data is first produced. Protected Data is technical data or commercial or financial data first produced in the performance of the award which, if it had been obtained from and first produced by a non-federal party, would be a trade secret or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential under the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4) and which data is marked as being protected data by a party to the award. Such Protected Data must be marked as set forth in the award's intellectual property terms and conditions.

## Intellectual Property Management Plan

Awardees may be required to prepare and submit an executed Intellectual Property Management Plan (IPMP) between the members of the team. While the award IP terms will set forth the treatment of and obligations related to intellectual property rights between DOE and the individual members, the IPMP should describe how the members will handle intellectual property rights and issues between themselves while ensuring compliance with federal intellectual property laws, regulations, and policies. Refer to the *NOFO Supplemental Requirements* document located on the [Funding Opportunities](#) page, for additional information on IPMPs. For this funding opportunity, IPMPs will only be required at the request of OCED.

## Retention of Submissions

DOE expects to retain copies of all applications and other submissions. No submissions will be returned. By applying to DOE for funding, applicants consent to DOE's retention of their submissions.

## Personally Identifiable Information

All information provided by the applicant must to the greatest extent possible exclude Personally Identifiable Information (PII), which is information which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as their name, Social Security number, biometric records, alone, or when combined with other personal or identifying information which is linked or linkable to a specific individual, such as date and place of birth, or mother's maiden name. See OMB Memorandum M-07-16 dated May 22, 2007, found at: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/legacy\\_drupal\\_files/omb/memoranda/2007/m07-16.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/legacy_drupal_files/omb/memoranda/2007/m07-16.pdf).

By way of example, applicants must screen resumes to ensure that they do not contain PII such as personal addresses, personal landline/cell phone numbers, and personal emails. **Under no circumstances should Social Security numbers (SSNs) be included in the application.** Federal agencies are prohibited from collecting, using, and displaying unnecessary SSNs. See the Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014 (Pub. L. No. 113-283, Dec 18, 2014; 44 U.S.C. § 3551).



## Expectations for Data Collection and Use for Selected Projects

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To evaluate the success of specific projects and this program overall, we will require projects we select to provide data related to finances, technology performance, and community benefits (see [Community Benefits](#)) throughout the development of the project. When we evaluate projects and the program overall, we will consider these metrics in the context of a baseline and relative to program goals. We may share data with the National Laboratories to conduct this analysis and program evaluation. Examples of data include, but are not limited to:

- Capital and operational expenditures over the lifetime of the project
- Number and demographics of end-users of the project
- Changes in energy usage and source (electricity and/or other fuel sources) relative to baseline
- Cost breakdown and Federal share by equipment, labor, supplies, direct and indirect costs
- Planned operational usage and uptime of energy equipment
- Historical outage data and other relevant resilience indicators
- Asset ownership and revenue/offtake plan
- Impact on energy burden of project end-users
- Impact on GHG emissions and other local criteria air pollution
- Other indicators of local environmental impacts such as water and land usage changes
- Identification of all sources of additional funds whether debt, equity or other Federal/state/tax incentives.
- Utility interconnection approval and power purchase agreements (or utility bill impact) for grid-connected projects

To the extent data is first produced in performance of the award and constitutes Protected Data, DOE may share this information and the results of any analysis publicly, but only if it is possible to aggregate and anonymize the data in accordance with OCED protocols into quantitative and qualitative data analyses for the purpose of informing future public and private sector investment decisions. If DOE sees potential value in sharing specific, individual pieces of data publicly, DOE may ask your permission to do so—but you are not required to grant that permission.

Project teams are also encouraged, though not required, to disseminate operational data, lessons learned, financial, planning, and operations & maintenance strategies to the broader community and the public. Specific details and requirements for dissemination will be finalized during negotiations.

# STEP 4: LEARN ABOUT REVIEW AND SELECTION

## IN THIS STEP

[Application Review Information](#)

[Risk review](#)

[Award Notices](#)

# Application Review Information

## Responsiveness review

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We will deem the following concept papers and applications as nonresponsive, and will not review or consider them:

- Applications not based on established scientific principles.
- Applications proposing approaches identified specifically as not of interest.
- Applications that fall outside the technical parameters specified in the [Technology and System Requirements](#).
- Applications that do not benefit at least one rural or remote area as described in the [Eligibility](#) section.
- Applications including research, development, and pilot-scale activities.

## Review criteria

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### Compliance criteria

All submissions for concept papers and applications must:

- Comply with the applicable content and form requirements listed in [Step 2](#) of the funding opportunity.
- Include all required documents.
- Upload successfully in OCED eXCHANGE including clicking the “Submit” button.
- Comply with the submission deadline stated in the funding opportunity.
- DOE will not review or consider submissions submitted through means other than OCED eXCHANGE, submissions submitted after the applicable deadline, or incomplete submissions.

### Technical Review Criteria

#### Concept Papers

Concept papers are evaluated based on consideration of the following factors.

#### ***Concept Paper Criterion: Overall Funding Opportunity Responsiveness and Viability of the Project***

This criterion involves consideration of the following factors. Note that percentages listed below are approximate weights for each bullet:

- (25%) Applicant clearly describes how the proposed project aligns with the goals of this funding opportunity; is suited to the needs of the community; and is likely to function as designed.

- (20%) Applicant proposes a budget which is reasonable for the project and community.
- (20%) Applicant and proposed team have the qualifications, experience, capabilities, and other resources necessary to design, develop, build, and operate the proposed project.
- (15%) Applicant proposes a preliminary project plan and timeline that is likely to result in successful operation of the project within five years.
- (20%) Applicant has and will meaningfully collaborate with the local community, labor organizations, tribal entities, and other stakeholders as relevant for the local context. The project will provide meaningful and relevant benefits to local residents.

## Applications

### ***Criterion 1: Technical Approach and Impact (25%)***

This criterion considers the following factors:

- **Technology relevance:** Degree to which the proposed technology(ies) are suited to the needs of the community and are likely to function as designed. Proposed technologies and critical components are commercially available and will be TRL 8-9<sup>47</sup> by time of construction.
- **Energy improvements:** Degree to which the proposed project will effectively address community energy challenges and advance community priorities.
- **Demonstration for other communities:** Degree to which proposed project demonstrates compelling visions, pathways, and/or approaches that other communities or parties can follow to overcome barriers to adopting clean energy in rural or remote communities across the country.
- **Community capacity:** Degree to which proposed project is likely to increase community capacity to plan, build, and operate clean energy systems, e.g., by developing available technical expertise locally and with partners, and/or increasing community support for those projects.
- *For projects including generation or efficiency*
  - **Emissions reductions:** Degree to which the proposed project reduces or avoids new greenhouse gas emissions, appropriate for the size and type of the project and community.
- *For projects including resilience components*
  - **Resilience improvements:** Degree to which the proposed project improves resilience of energy systems for residents.
- *For topic area 1*
  - **Energy challenges:** Degree to which the community experiences significant energy challenges.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.directives.doe.gov/directives-documents/400-series/0413.3-EGuide-04/@@images/file>

- **Technical risks:** Degree to which the applicant demonstrates an understanding of the key technical, construction, regulatory, permitting, safety and occupational health, and infrastructure integration risks involved in the proposed work, and the quality of the mitigation strategies to address them.
- **Priorities:** Degree to which the proposed project aligns with [priority technologies or project types](#) for this topic area.
- *For topic area 2:*
  - **Technical risks:** Degree to which the applicant demonstrates understanding of the key technical, construction, regulatory, permitting, safety and occupational health, and infrastructure integration risks involved in the proposed work, and the quality of the mitigation strategies to address them.
  - **Objectives:** Degree to which the proposed project effectively addresses potential land use conflicts; maximizes co-benefits; and increases equitable access of clean energy.
- *For topic area 3:*
  - **Energy challenges:** Degree to which the community experiences significant energy challenges.
  - **Project process:** Degree to which applicant demonstrates understanding of overall project process.
  - **Priorities:** Degree to which the proposed project aligns with [priority technologies or project types](#) for this topic area.
- *For topic area 4:*
  - **Energy challenges:** Degree to which the community experiences significant energy challenges.
  - **Project process:** Degree to which applicant demonstrates understanding of overall project process.

### **Criterion 2: Financial and Market Viability (20%)**

This criterion considers the following factors:

- **Financial sustainability:** Degree to which owners and operators of the project will be able to financially sustain the project for the life of the project, including beyond the award.
- **Financial reasonableness:** Degree to which the budget is reasonable for the project and community.
- **Economic impact:** Degree to which the project is likely to generate positive economic impacts for communities, including through direct financial benefit, new jobs, tax revenue, clean energy enterprise creation, reduced energy cost or energy burden, and other economic development.
- **Cost share risk:** Degree to which sources of funds to be used for cost share are of reasonable risk for the project and community.

### ***Criterion 3: Management and Organization (Team) (20%)***

This criterion considers the following factors:

- **Team capability:** Capability of the prime recipient, the proposed team, and key personnel to manage and address all aspects of the proposed work—including project operation and maintenance and work related to community benefits—with a high probability of success and cost effectiveness.
- **Team composition:** Degree to which project team includes members who are:
  - Highly familiar with local community priorities and dynamics
  - Members of (or who represent) priority communities or populations (as referenced in the [Funding priorities](#) section).
  - Labor unions or other local workforce development organizations
  - Credible with and trusted by community members
  - Residents of the local community
  - Experienced in project development with proposed technologies, in similar geographic and cultural contexts
  - Capable of efficiently and effectively administering government funding
- **Partnerships:** Degree to which project partners strengthen project team's ability to execute project and/or benefit the community and workers.

### ***Criterion 4: Workplan (15%)***

This criterion considers the following factors:

- **Project timing:** Likelihood that construction of project will start within three years, and that operation will begin within five years.
- **Milestones:** Overall thoughtfulness and reasonableness of the proposed milestones.
- **Local labor:** Degree to which workplan includes reasonable path to hiring sufficient trained labor from local communities.
- **Site control:** Degree to which workplan includes current or clear and expected path to site control.

### ***Criterion 5: Community Benefits Plan (20%)***

This criterion considers the following factors:

- **Local engagement:** Degree to which project team has already demonstrated engagement and collaboration, and shows a clear plan to further meaningfully engage and collaborate with local stakeholders and impacted groups relevant for the local context, including labor unions, community-based organizations, and members of priority communities (as described in the [Funding priorities](#) section), as well as with tribes, in a manner that influences project decisions.

- **Alignment of community benefits:** Degree to which project benefits align with community priorities, and flow directly to members of priority communities (as described in the [Funding priorities](#) section).
- **Ownership approach:** Degree to which ownership models enable community decision-making, and maximize benefits to and minimize risks for the community.
- **Expanding job access, including for underrepresented groups:** Degree to which the project team will facilitate participation in planning, construction, operations, and other workforce opportunities from underrepresented groups, especially workers facing systematic barriers to employment.
- **Quality local jobs:** Degree to which construction and operation roles will be high-quality jobs drawing from local residents, particularly priority communities (as described in the [Funding priorities section](#)).
- **Resources:** Degree to which budget and time allocated for community benefits reflect what is needed for the proposed activities.

## Other selection factors

In addition to the above criteria, the Selection Official—the Federal staff person in the Department of Energy who approves which projects DOE will select in this funding opportunity—may consider the following **program policy factors** in determining which applications to select:

1. The degree to which project supports **priority communities** (as described in the [Funding priorities](#) section), or communities with an urgent energy challenge.
2. The degree to which the project, applicant, and partners represent **tribes and tribal perspectives, community support, involvement and decision-making**.
3. The degree to which projects are located in and/or benefit communities that are **relatively rural or remote**, i.e., considering proximity to metro and/or well-resourced areas.
4. The degree to which project optimizes **use of DOE funds** for programmatic objectives.
5. The degree to which the proposed project incorporates team members or partners from **Minority Serving Institutions** (e.g., Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)/Other Minority Serving Institutions), and partnerships with underrepresented businesses.
6. **Applicability** of project type or approaches to other rural or remote communities.
7. Diversity of **energy and other challenges communities face**, and types of solutions proposed compared with OCED and DOE portfolio.
8. Diversity of **geographic** distribution compared with OCED and DOE portfolio.
9. Diversity of **technology(ies)** compared with OCED and DOE portfolio.
10. Diversity of **applicant organizations** compared with OCED and DOE portfolio.
11. Number of selected **projects per topic area**.

## Review and Selection Process

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### Overview

The evaluation process consists of multiple steps. Each step includes an initial eligibility review and a thorough technical review, based on the criteria described in the [Technical Review Criteria](#) section. Experts in the subject matter of the funding opportunity will conduct rigorous technical reviews of eligible submissions. Ultimately, the Selection Official considers the recommendations of the reviewers, along with other considerations such as the program policy factors and risk reviews, in determining which applications to select.

### Pre-Selection Interviews

As part of the evaluation and selection process, DOE may invite one or more applicants to participate in pre-selection interviews or pre-selection site visits. Pre-selection interviews are distinct from and more formal than pre-selection clarifications. The invited applicant(s) will meet with DOE representatives to clarify the contents of the applications and to provide DOE an opportunity to ask questions regarding the proposed project. The information provided by applicants to DOE through pre-selection interviews contributes to DOE's selection decisions. DOE will not reimburse applicants for travel and other expenses relating to the pre-selection interviews or site visits, nor will these costs be eligible for reimbursement as pre-award costs.

Any pre-selection interviews and site visits may also include discussions with affected tribes, stakeholders, or communities potentially impacted to understand their views.

### Pre-Selection Clarification

DOE may determine that pre-selection clarifications are necessary from one or more applicants. Pre-selection clarifications are distinct from and less formal than pre-selection interviews. These pre-selection clarifications will solely be for the purposes of clarifying the application. The pre-selection clarifications may occur before, during or after the merit review evaluation process. Information provided by an applicant that is not necessary to address the pre-selection clarification question will not be reviewed or considered. Typically, a pre-selection clarification will be carried out through either written response to DOE's written clarification questions or video or conference calls with DOE representatives.

The information provided by applicants to DOE through pre-selection clarifications is incorporated in their applications and contributes to the merit review evaluation and DOE's selection decisions. If DOE contacts an applicant for pre-selection clarification purposes, it does not signify that the applicant has been selected for negotiation of award or that the applicant is among the top-ranked applications.

DOE will not reimburse applicants for expenses relating to the pre-selection clarifications, nor will these costs be eligible for reimbursement as pre-award costs.



## Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters

DOE, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (see 41 U.S.C. § 2313).

## Review for Research, Technology, and Economic Security

As DOE invests in critical infrastructure and funds critical and emerging technology areas, DOE considers possible vectors of undue foreign influence in evaluating risk. If high risks are identified and cannot be sufficiently mitigated, DOE may elect to not fund the award. As part of the research, technology, and economic security risk review, DOE may contact the applicant and/or proposed project team members for additional information to inform the review.

## Selection

The Selection Official may consider the technical merit, the Federal Merit Review's<sup>48</sup> recommendations, program policy factors, risk reviews, and the amount of funds available in arriving at selections for this funding opportunity.

## Risk review

Pursuant to [2 CFR 200.206](#), DOE will conduct an additional review of the risk posed by applications submitted under this funding opportunity.

Such risk assessment will consider:

1. Financial stability,
2. Quality of management systems and ability to meet the management standards prescribed in [2 CFR Part 200](#) as adopted and supplemented by [2 CFR Part 910](#),
3. History of performance,
4. Audit reports and findings, and
5. The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities.

DOE may make use of other publicly available information and the history of an applicant's performance under DOE or other Federal agency awards. Depending on the severity of the findings and whether the findings were resolved, DOE may elect not to fund the applicant.

In addition to this review, DOE must comply with the guidelines on government-wide suspension and debarment in [2 CFR Part 180](#) and must require non-Federal entities to comply with these provisions.

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<sup>48</sup> The Federal Merit Review Panel is a small group of Federal staff who review applications, input from merit reviewers, and other sources, to choose which projects to recommend to the Selection Official to select.

These provisions restrict Federal awards, subawards and contracts with certain parties that are debarred, suspended or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal programs or activities.

Before making a Federal award, DOE will review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov (see [41 U.S.C. 2313](#)). The applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov. Before making decisions in the risk review required by [2 CFR § 200.206](#), DOE will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

## Award Notices

### Notice of Selection and Award Negotiation

DOE will notify applicants that are selected for award negotiation, and selected applicants will be notified of their award negotiation.

### Concept Paper Notifications

DOE will notify applicants of its determination to encourage or discourage the submission of an application. DOE will post these notifications to OCED eXCHANGE. DOE may include general comments provided from reviewers on an applicant's concept paper in the encourage/discourage notifications.

Applicants may submit an application even if they receive a notification discouraging them from doing so. By discouraging the submission of an application, DOE intends to convey its lack of programmatic interest in the proposed project. Such assessments do not necessarily reflect judgments on the merits of the proposed project. The purpose of the concept paper phase is to save applicants the considerable time and expense of preparing an application that is unlikely to be selected for award negotiations.

### Application Notifications

DOE may stagger its selection determinations. As a result, some applicants may receive their notification letter in advance of other applicants. DOE will notify applicants of its determination via a notification letter by email to the technical and administrative points of contact designated by the applicant in OCED eXCHANGE. The notification letter will inform the applicant whether or not its application was selected for award negotiations. Alternatively, DOE may notify one or more applicants that a final selection determination on particular applications will be made at a later date, subject to the availability of funds or other factors.

### Successful Applicants

Receipt of a notification letter selecting an application for award negotiations does not authorize the applicant to commence performance of the project. If an application is selected for award negotiations, it is not a commitment by DOE to issue an award. Applicants do not receive an award until award negotiations are complete and the Grants and Agreements Officer executes the funding agreement, accessible by the recipient in FedConnect.

The award negotiation process may take several months. Applicants must designate a primary and a backup point-of-contact in OCED eXCHANGE with whom DOE will communicate to conduct award negotiations.

The applicant must be responsive during award negotiations by providing requested documentation, including documentation that DOE requests after selection, and must meet the negotiation deadlines. If the applicant fails to do so or if award negotiations are otherwise unsuccessful, DOE will cancel the award negotiations and rescind the selection. DOE reserves the right to terminate award negotiations at any time for any reason. See the *NOFO Supplemental Requirements* document located on the [Funding Opportunities](#) page for more information.

## Alternate Selection Determinations

In some instances, an applicant may receive a notification that its application was not selected for award and DOE designated the application to be an alternate. As an alternate, DOE may consider the application for Federal funding in the future. A notification letter stating the application is designated as an alternate does not authorize the applicant to commence performance of the project. DOE may ultimately determine to select or not select the application for award negotiations.

## Unsuccessful Applicants

DOE shall promptly notify in writing each applicant whose application has not been selected for award or whose application cannot be funded because of the unavailability of appropriated funds.

## Award Conditions and Reporting

Recipients of an award made under this funding opportunity must comply with all applicable Federal, state, and local laws, regulations, DOE policy and guidance, instructions in this funding opportunity, and the award terms and conditions. Recipients must require subrecipients' compliance with all applicable requirements. Reporting requirements are identified on the Federal Assistance Reporting Checklist, attached to the award agreement. For more information, see [Reporting](#) and the *NOFO Supplemental Requirements* document located on the [Funding Opportunities](#) page.

# STEP 5: LEARN ABOUT POST-SELECTION AND POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS

## IN THIS STEP

[Post-Selection Information Requests and Submissions](#)

[Post-Award Requirements and Administration](#)

[Terms and Conditions](#)

[Reporting](#)

## Post-Selection Information Requests and Submissions

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To reduce burden in the application process required under [Memorandum M-24-11 Reducing Burden in the Administration of Federal Financial Assistance](#), DOE has instituted Post Selection Information Requests and Submissions procedures. These procedures allow certain elements of an application to be submitted later in the application process, either prior to merit review or after merit review when the application is under consideration for funding.

Applicants will be notified (primarily by e-mail) when Post Selection Information is needed. This notification is not a Notice of Award, nor should it be construed to be an indicator of possible funding. Applicants should only submit this information when requested. DOE will notify an applicant as to what documents and materials to submit, the format required and where and when to submit.

The Post-Selection Information Requests and Submissions are detailed in the *NOFO Supplemental Requirements* document located on the [Funding Opportunities](#) page. Please review this document prior to applying. NOTE: These requirements are not requested during the initial application process.

## Post-Award Requirements and Administration

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If applicants are selected for funding DOE will require all award recipients to follow and accept requirements governed by laws and policies—both Federal government-wide and DOE- or program-specific. These post-award requirements include all National and Administrative Policy Requirements; financial assistance general Certifications and Representations; Build America, Buy America requirements; Davis-Bacon Act requirements; Foreign National Participation; Foreign Entity Participation and Foreign Work Disclosures; Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-Specific Requirements; Fraud, Waste and Abuse requirements; Safety, Security, and Regulatory requirements; and Environmental Review in Accordance with National Environmental Policy Act requirements.

These post-award Requirements and Administration are detailed in the *NOFO Supplemental Requirements* document (located on the [Funding Opportunities](#) page) which provides the requirements that all DOE award recipients must follow. Please review this document prior to applying.

## Terms and Conditions

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The OCED award terms and conditions are determined by statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements, as well as the circumstances of each individual award. If selected for funding the applicant must apply the terms and conditions of the award to all subrecipients (and contractors, as appropriate). The award terms will consist of the three distinct documents, the Cooperative Agreement Standard Terms and Conditions, Cooperative Agreement Program and Award-Specific Terms and Conditions, and Cooperative Agreement Intellectual Property Terms and Conditions.

The Cooperative Agreement Standard Award Terms and Conditions, located on the [Award Terms and Conditions](#) page, apply to all OCED awards.

The Program and Award-Specific and the Intellectual Property Terms and Conditions will be negotiated for each award.

## Reporting

DOE must measure project performance to show achievement of program goals and objectives, share lessons learned, improve program outcomes, and foster the adoption of promising practices. DOE and the selectee will establish project vision, goals and objectives during negotiations and incorporate them into the award terms. Projects awarded may be required to negotiate agreements with DOE National Laboratories to ensure quality data can be collected from demonstration projects and proprietary information is sufficiently protected.

To clearly communicate the specific reporting requirements to meet the program and project goals and objectives in the Federal award, DOE combined all reporting into one document, the Federal Assistance Reporting Checklist. This document provides any expected outcomes, indicators, targets, baseline data, or data collections that the applicant will be responsible for measuring and reporting. The Federal Assistance Reporting Checklist (FARC) is part of the award agreement.

DOE may require specific data collection to track progress toward key departmental goals: ensuring justice and equity, investing in quality jobs, boosting domestic manufacturing, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and advancing a pathway to private sector deployment. Examples of data that may be collected include:

- New manufacturing production or recycling capacity
- Jobs data, including:
  - Number and types of jobs provided, wages and benefits paid
  - Workforce demographics, including local hires
- Efforts to minimize risks of labor disputes and disruptions
- Dollar value of contributions to worker training; number of new employee certificates and training credentials; ratio of apprentice- to journey-level workers employed
- Number of individuals trained, number of trainees placed in new full-time employment, number of trainings partnering with community-based organizations or labor unions
- Justice and equity data, including:
  - Underrepresented businesses acting as vendors and subcontractors for bids on supplies, services, and equipment
  - Value, number, and type of partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (see [Program Policy Factors](#) for details)
  - Stakeholder engagement events, community engagement process
  - Other relevant indicators from the Community Benefits Plan
- Number, type and efficiency rating of energy efficient and clean energy equipment installed
- Number, type and capacity rating of generation and storage equipment installed

See the *NOFO Supplemental Requirements* document located on the [Funding Opportunities](#) page for more information.

# STEP 6: CONTACTS AND SUPPORT

## IN THIS STEP

[Agency Contacts](#)

[Helpful Websites](#)

# Agency Contacts

## Program and solicitation questions

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### OCED Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas

Project Management Division

U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations

Email: [ERA2024@hq.doe.gov](mailto:ERA2024@hq.doe.gov)

Note that DOE staff are only allowed to communicate with applicants about this funding opportunity by posting responses to questions received through this email address above.

You must submit questions to this email address ([ERA2024@hq.doe.gov](mailto:ERA2024@hq.doe.gov)) at least three business days before the concept paper or application due date and time.

## OCED eXCHANGE

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If you need help with the eXCHANGE system, please contact [OCED-ExchangeSupport@hq.doe.gov](mailto:OCED-ExchangeSupport@hq.doe.gov).

## Grants.gov

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Grants.gov provides 24/7 support. You can call 1-800-518-4726 or email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). Hold on to your ticket number.

## SAM.gov

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If you need help, you can call 866-606-8220 or live chat with the [Federal Service Desk](#).

## Helpful Websites

- [Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations | Department of Energy](#)
- [OCED Application Process](#)
- [Applicant Eligibility Guidance](#)



