Opportunity Announcement for the Community Renewable Energy Grant Program

Opportunity Announcement #25-043

Grant dollars to support planning activities for a community renewable energy project that also qualifies as a community energy resilience project.

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Schedule

The program schedule for the fourth opportunity round of the Community Renewable Energy Grant program is located on the program webpage.

Contents

Section 1: Purpose and General Information

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this Community Renewable Energy Grant Program opportunity announcement is to create an application, competitive review, and grant award process that follows the requirements of the legislation and rules under which the Community Renewable Energy Grant Program is administered to determine which projects will receive grant funding.

1.2 Objectives

The Community Renewable Energy Grant Program provides grants to:

- Support offsetting the cost of planning and developing community renewable energy projects;
- Make community renewable energy projects economically feasible for qualifying communities;
- Promote small-scale renewable energy projects; and
- Provide direct benefits to communities across this state in the form of increased community energy resilience, local jobs, economic development, or direct energy cost savings to families and small businesses.

This opportunity announcement aims to support planning activities for a community renewable energy project that qualifies as a community energy resilience project.

1.3 Grant availability

The Department has **$12,000,000** in grant funds available for four open Community Renewable Energy Grant Program opportunity announcements. A minimum of 50 percent of these funds are reserved for projects that qualify as a community energy resilience project, and a minimum of 50 percent is reserved for community renewable energy projects that primarily serve a qualifying community. A minimum of $400,000 is reserved for planning projects that qualify as a community energy resilience project, $200,000 for planning projects that do not qualify as a community energy resilience project, $8,000,000 for construction projects that qualify as a community energy resilience project, and $3,400,000 for construction projects that do not qualify as a community energy resilience project. The Department may opt not to award a grant to an applicant even if funding remains if the system in the application is determined to not be technically feasible, does not meet minimum technical requirements for renewable energy systems, would not operate in accordance with the representations made by the applicant, or does not score highly enough during the competitive review. If there are not enough complete and eligible applications that are awarded a grant to use all of one of the reserved minimum budget allocations, the remaining funds may be awarded to other project types based upon the evaluation of the criteria within the four opportunity announcements.

The maximum grant available for planning a community renewable energy project, whether it qualifies as a community energy resilience project or not, is $100,000 and it may be used to cover up to 100 percent of the reasonable planning costs.

Qualifying communities include communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, tribal communities, rural communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth and persons with disabilities.

This is a reimbursable grant. A 30% preliminary payment is the only funding available prior to completion of the grant eligible project. Applicants must have the funding or financing to complete the grant eligible project. The applicant's ability to fund or finance the renewable energy project to completion will be scored in the competitive review. Grant disbursement occurs after the grant eligible project is complete and in operation and after the Department has approved the performance agreement final report. A description of the grant and payment processes is in Section 4 of the opportunity announcement.

1.4 Eligibility

An applicant must be one of Oregon's federally recognized Indian Tribes, a public body, or a consumer-owned utility. See ORS 174.109 for a definition of "public body" and HB 2021 Section 29 (2021) for definitions of "public body" and "consumer-owned utility". An applicant may partner with another entity, or entities, including another entity that would qualify as an applicant, a federal agency, nonprofit entity, private business located in Oregon, or owner of rental property in Oregon.

Eligible community renewable energy projects must utilize one or more of the following renewable energy system technologies:

- Energy generation:
  - Biomass
  - Solar
  - Geothermal
  - Hydroelectric
  - Wind
  - Landfill gas
  - Biogas
  - Wave
  - Tidal
  - Ocean thermal energy technology
- Energy storage
- Microgrid technologies
- Electric vehicle charging

A new energy storage system, microgrid technology, or electric vehicle charging station must be paired with an existing or newly constructed renewable energy system for producing energy, as listed above.

Other eligibility requirements for a planning grant include:

- The proposed project must be located in Oregon but not in a city with a population of 500,000 or more.
- The project must provide a direct benefit to an Oregon community in the form of increased community energy resilience, local jobs, economic development, or direct energy costs savings to families and small businesses.
- The project must not exceed 20 MW of nameplate capacity, if the project is for generating renewable energy.
- The applicant must meet all the application requirements detailed in Sections 1 and 2 of this opportunity announcement.

Costs eligible to be covered by a Community Renewable Energy Grant planning grant are detailed in OAR 330-250-0050.

Section 2: Application Requirements & Process

2.1 Submission of Applications

Applications must be submitted through the Department's online application portal with all the requested information. Access to the application portal and associated materials are available on the Oregon Department of Energy website.

Applications that are submitted improperly or are incomplete may be rejected. The Department must receive applications no later than the due date provided on the program's webpage.

In the application the applicant must list a person as the point of contact for the application. The Department will contact this designated responsible party with technical questions; it is the job of the designated point of contact to coordinate and submit responses to the Department.

A complete planning grant application includes, at a minimum:

(1) A submitted online application with all required information completed.

(2) Applicant eligibility information and contact details.

(3) Information about any partner organizations and their roles, including:

  (a) For any partner that is a private business, documentation that the partner has a business site in Oregon.

  (b) For any partner that is an owner of rental property, documentation that the partner owns rental property in Oregon.

(4) A description of consultation with stakeholders including:

(a) Evidence the application has been drafted in consultation with regional stakeholders for the purpose of ensuring feasibility. This must include a description of the applicant's consultation with regional stakeholders and community groups, and any additional community engagement process as part of developing the planning grant application.

(b) Evidence the application has been drafted in consultation with electric utilities that have customers in the communities covered by the proposed community renewable energy project, for the purpose of ensuring feasibility. This may include a letter from the electric utility serving the communities covered by a proposed community renewable energy project or other evidence that the applicant has consulted the electric utility.

(5) A description of the proposed project including:

(a) A description of the project location including details of its location in Oregon and not in a city with a population of 500,000 or more.

(b) If applicable, a detailed description or other documentation of the extent to which the community renewable energy project would be located in and/or will serve one or more qualifying communities.

(c) A description that shows the system meets the definition of a community renewable energy system. This should include:

(A) Information regarding major system components, to the extent known, such as renewable energy generation, energy storage, electric vehicle charging systems, and microgrid enabling technologies.

(B) A description of the renewable energy resource, that the resource is in adequate supply, and how the system will access the resource.

(C) A description of the market for the energy produced by the system.

(D) A description of how the system will connect or transmit energy to the community identified in the application.

(d) If the project is for generating renewable energy, the anticipated nameplate capacity if known.

(e) If the project is for energy storage, the anticipated nameplate capacity in kW of the proposed energy storage system if known.

(f) If the community renewable energy project will add capacity to or be paired with an existing renewable energy system, for example pairing energy storage and/or microgrid enabling technologies with an existing solar photovoltaic array, the applicant must include a description of the existing renewable energy system.

(6) A project plan that contains:

(a) A list of planning team members, their roles and lines of authority, and experience with similar projects.

(b) A detailed schedule for planning completion, which demonstrates the planning will be completed within six months of execution of the performance agreement.

(c) Evidence that demonstrates the planning will result in a proposal for developing a community renewable energy project.

(d) A description of how consultation with the following groups will be incorporated into the planning:

(A) Members of qualifying communities served by the proposed community renewable energy project;

(B) Businesses located in the communities served by the proposed community renewable energy project;

(C) Electric utilities that have customers in the communities served by the proposed community renewable energy project; and

(D) Other regional stakeholders.

(7) If applicable, a description of how the community renewable energy project would integrate with broader community energy and environmental goals.

(8) The grant amount requested and estimated budget for planning costs, including:

(a) Costs associated with:

(A) Consulting fees, including design and engineering;

(B) Load analysis;

(C) Siting, excluding property acquisition;

(D) Ensuring code compliance;

(E) Interconnection studies;

(F) Transmission studies; and

(G) Other expenditures, summarized by purpose.

(b) A description of any other grants that the applicant has been or may be awarded for the planning in the application, including the amount and source of the grant funds.

(9) The following required supplemental documents:

(a) Written authorization from the applicant’s governing body allowing submission of the application.

(b) For any partner that is a public body, written authorization from the partner's governing body allowing submission of the application.

The department will not accept amendments to applications during the opportunity period. An applicant may withdraw an application and submit a replacement application during the opportunity period.

2.2 Other Incentives or Grants

In the application, an applicant must indicate other incentives that have been or may be awarded that are directly related to the planning in the application. The amount of any potential CREP grant will be reduced if in combination with other incentives the amount exceeds 100 percent of the planning costs.

2.3 Questions

The program has Frequently Asked Questions available online and encourages additional questions from potential applicants through ODOE's customer service portal. New questions and answers submitted will be updated in the Frequently Asked Questions and posted online for access by all applicants.

Section 3: Review Process

3.1 Overview of Review Process

The Department will conduct a review of the applications received in response to this opportunity announcement. The Department will evaluate all applications for completeness. The Department will conduct a competitiveness review of all complete applications and based on the competitive review results; certain applications may be offered a performance agreement.

The only information the Department will consider in the review process is that which is submitted by the applicant through the application process. Attempts to improperly influence the review process by submitting additional information or contacting the agency review team with additional information will result in application denial. All comments and questions should be submitted via email to community.grants@energy.oregon.gov.

3.2 Eligibility and Completeness Review

The Department staff will first review all applications on a pass/fail basis to determine if each application is complete, meaning it includes all the minimum required elements described in section 2.1 of this opportunity announcement. This review may begin upon submission of an application. The applicant's failure to comply with the instructions or failure to submit a complete application may result in the application being found incomplete and rejected. Only those applications that meet the minimum requirements will be considered for further review. If the applicant is relying on information in attachments, the information in the attachments should be readily identifiable with explicit references noted on the application form.

If the Department finds that the application is complete, the Department will notify the applicant that the application will move into the competitive review process. The Department will not process incomplete applications, though the Department may request additional information from an applicant if necessary to support the competitive review process. The Department will provide written notification to applicants that submit incomplete applications that their application is not moving to the competitive review. If an application is found to be incomplete, the applicant may apply in a future opportunity announcement.

3.3 Competitive Review

The requested information detailed in Section 2.1 is the minimum required information for an application to be considered complete. Some of the scoring criteria in Section 3.3 are optional and are related to program priorities directed under Oregon Laws 2021, chapter 508, section 30(10):

(a) Include community energy resilience projects.
(b) Demonstrate significant prior investments in energy efficiency measures at the project location or will result in aggregate improvements to demand response capabilities.
(c) Are for projects located in qualifying communities across the state.
(d) When applicable, are for projects constructed in part or in whole by disadvantaged business enterprises, emerging small businesses or businesses that are owned by minorities, women or disabled veterans.
(e) Include inclusive hiring and promotion policies for workers working on the projects.
(f) Incorporate equity metrics for evaluating the involvement of and leadership by people of low income, Black, Indigenous or People of Color, members of tribal communities, people with disabilities, youth, people from rural communities and people from otherwise disadvantaged communities in the siting, planning, designing or evaluating of the proposed community renewable energy projects.
(g) Help the applicants achieve goals included in the applicants' natural hazard mitigation plans as approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Applicants that demonstrate they meet these criteria may score higher during the competitive review process. The online application portal will provide details on how to submit this information.

Community Renewable Energy Project Planning Competitive Review Criteria	Points
Project Strength	
TEAM & PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Quality of the project team based on clearly defined roles that show a sufficient number of team members (including partners) with the required experience in relation to the renewable energy project's need and complexity; and a complete project description summary that adequately describes the project being planned.	10
PLAN & SCHEDULE: Strength of the renewable energy project plan. Applicant adequately describes the project to be planned. Applicant demonstrates the planning will be completed within 6 months and will include a complete development plan for a renewable energy system.	15
BUDGET & FINANCES: The demonstration of the applicant's ability to fund or finance the renewable energy project to completion in order to qualify for grant disbursement (grant is reimbursable).	10
RESILIENCE: The level the renewable energy project's ability to maintain the availability of energy needed to support energy-dependent critical public services to the community following nonroutine disruptions of severe impact or duration of utility provided energy.	10
Equity Priorities	
PROJECT LOCATION & EJ COMMUNITY IMPACT: The renewable energy project is located in an Environmental Justice community and the degree to which the project will primarily serve and provide direct benefits to Environmental Justice community members.	5
EJ COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN: The quality of the community outreach plan to include EJ community members and regional stakeholders in the siting, planning, designing, or evaluating of the proposed project. This could include, but is not limited to, descriptions of surveys of the local community, attendance or participation at public meetings, community ideas and recommendations incorporated in the project plan.	5
EJ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP: The level of community engagement in developing the grant application for a renewable energy project, including the degree to which EJ community members are involved in the project leadership.	5
EQUITY FRAMEWORK: The degree to which an equity framework(s) is used to guide development, implementation and/or evaluation of the renewable energy project.	5
PROCUREMENT POLICIES: The degree to which disadvantaged business enterprises, emerging small businesses, or businesses that are owned by minorities, women, or disabled veterans are incorporated in the renewable energy project.	5

HIRING POLICIES: The degree to which inclusive hiring and promotion polices are incorporated in the renewable energy project.	2.5
Other Program Priorities	
PRIOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENTS: The level of significant prior investments in energy efficiency measures and/or the number of aggregate improvements to demand response capabilities at the project location.	2.5
NHMP: The extent to which the renewable energy project assists the applicant in achieving goals included in a related natural hazard mitigation plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.	5
BUSINESS AND FAMILY DIRECT ENERGY COST SAVINGS: The level of the renewable energy project's anticipated direct energy cost savings to families and small businesses (amount of savings predicted relative to the grant request amount, number of families and businesses that see direct savings, diversity and types of families and businesses that see the direct benefits).	2.5
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Not including job creation, the types and level of economic development the renewable energy project will provide. (Consider increases to average incomes, ensure sustainable economic growth, innovation, workforce development, business retention and expansion, and promotion of an environment that supports entrepreneurship and small business development).	2.5
JOB CREATION: Level of estimated local jobs created by the construction, installation, and operations of the renewable energy project's lifetime, in relation to the estimated size/cost of the renewable energy project.	5
Project Diversity	
DIVERSITY: Geographic diversity including locations of prior grantees and the diversity of technology, resource types and renewable energy project/system size.	10

Applications will be ranked based on the competitive review scores and recommendations from competitive review committee. Final recommendations will be determined by the department. Applicants that are recommended for awards may be offered a Performance Agreement.

The Department will notify applicants of the competitive review outcome in writing. Planning projects not selected may be eligible to apply again during a future opportunity announcement.

3.4 Offer of Performance Agreement

Following the competitive review, successful applications may be offered a performance agreement that contains the terms associated with the grant and the requirements for disbursement of grant funds. The grant amount offered in the performance agreement may be less than requested. The Department will communicate to the applicant the conditions surrounding the offer of a performance agreement. Applicants will have 30 calendar days to respond in writing to the offer, after which the Department may revoke the offer.

The performance agreement will include the terms provided in OAR 330-250-0080, and may include additional terms, such as reporting frequency. In accordance with OAR 330-250-0080 (3), failure to agree to the terms of a performance agreement may result in the Department rejecting the grant application.

Section 4: Grant Process and Payment

4.1 Reporting

Once a Performance Agreement is executed, successful applicants will be required to submit planning progress reports as specified in the performance agreement.

When the planning project is complete, the grantee must submit a copy of the plan completed under the performance agreement and an itemized list of equipment and the incurred costs for items associated with the planning and detailed in the performance agreement.

Reasonable planning costs itemized may include, but are not limited to, costs associated with:

(1) Consulting fees, including design and engineering;
(2) Load analysis;
(3) Siting, excluding property acquisition;
(4) Ensuring code compliance;
(5) Interconnection studies;
(6) Transmission studies; and
(7) Other expenditures, summarized by purpose.

The grant may not be used to cover any fixed costs the applicant would incur in the applicant's normal course of business such as existing staff salaries or overhead costs.

4.2 Amendments

Performance agreements may be amended only as provided under OAR 330-250-0140. The grantee must submit a written amendment request to the director to amend a performance agreement. Prior to approval of an amendment, the grantee must demonstrate that the planning project with the proposed change will continue to meet the requirements in statute, rule, and the opportunity announcement, as well as continuing to be technically feasible. The grantee has the responsibility to provide complete technical documentation that will support a case for the proposed amendment. Department may accept or deny amendments in its sole discretion without justification or documentation.

The Department will evaluate amendments to determine if the change would have affected the outcome of the competitive review, which may result in pro-rating the award amount or denial of the amendment request. Amendment request will not result in an increased award amount, even if the project costs increase.

4.3 Disbursing Grant Award

Once a performance agreement is executed, up to 30 percent of the grant funds may be released on request to be spent on eligible planning costs. The remaining grant funds will be released upon completion of the planning and receipt of the reporting requirements.

If the requested grant is for planning a community renewable energy project and the grant amount is up to 100 percent of the planning costs associated with the project, the final distribution amount may be reduced based on the CPA verification letter that may be required in the final report as specified in the Performance Agreement.

4.4 Inspection & Audit

The Department reserves the right to audit all documentation relating to the planning project in a performance agreement.

Section 5: Additional Information

5.1 Public Information, Confidentiality

The State of Oregon's Public Records Law (ORS 192.311 through 192.478) applies to filings and applications submitted to the Department. The law states every person has a right to inspect any public record of a public body, subject to certain exceptions. Applications are public records, and the Department may be required by law to disclose information in the application to the public on request. An applicant may request confidentiality of certain information in its application by marking the information confidential. Marking information does not guarantee that it will be kept confidential, however, and the Department will make any decisions regarding public disclosure of information contained in this application in accordance with Oregon Public Records Law.

Grant funding from the state of Oregon may be reported on Oregon Transparency, a state agency tool available for Oregonians to learn about how state government works, taxes are used, and more. The data and information on this website are provided to users for general knowledge and information. It excludes data and information that is confidential, protected, or private under state and federal laws, and is unaudited.

The Department may publicly announce awarded grantees under this program. The public announcement may include but is not limited to: the system owner’s name, partner’s names, type of project and/or description, location of project, size of the project, total cost of the project, and the awarded grant amount.

5.2 Reservation of Department Rights

The Department reserves all rights regarding this opportunity announcement, including, without limitation, the right to:

1. Amend, delay, or cancel the opportunity announcement without liability if the Department finds it is in the best interest of the State of Oregon to do so;

2. Not consider any or all applications received upon finding that it is in the best interest of the State of Oregon to do so;
3. Deem incomplete any application that fails to comply with all prescribed opportunity announcement procedures and requirements; and
4. Allocate a grant amount less than the amount requested by applicant, at its discretion.

5.3 No Obligation

The Department is not obligated as a result of the submission or acceptance of an application to award a grant to an applicant.

5.4 Sunset Information

If awarded, a grant applicant's performance agreement will outline the timeframe required to receive the grant award. In general, CREP planning grant performance agreements provide six months from the date of the agreement for the applicant to complete the project. Extensions to the final completion period may be granted for a reasonable time frame at the sole discretion of the Department, but in any event only if good cause to extend the deadline is demonstrated.