

Community Renewable Energy Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This Question-and-Answer document is divided into the following sections. You may click on a section title to jump to that section.

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Customer Service Portal/Online Application

Question: Can other portal account holders access my application?

ODOE Response: No, only the account that created the application can access it.

Account/application owners can request that an application is reassigned (moved) to different user account.

Question: I used the **Forgot your password?** button on the portal website and entered my email address, but never received a password reset email, what do I do now?

ODOE Response: Please send an explanation email to Community.Grants@energy.oregon.gov with the account email and account username. For security verification, the email should come from the email address that was used to create the portal account in question.

Question: I'm not sure the files I choose uploaded; how can I check?

ODOE Response: A complete list of successfully uploaded files is Section 11 of the application. Move forward and back through sections by clicking the **Next** and **Previous** buttons. Editing is possible at any time prior to clicking the **Submit** button in section 11, so "placeholder" answers can be entered to quickly complete a section and move on. Return to any section and edit as desired before submission.

Complete file upload instructions with examples are in the [Application User Guides](#), starting on page 6.

In section 11, you may add, delete and download the listed files. Please delete any duplicate files before submitting your application.

Question: How do we update application contact information after the application deadline since the application will be locked?

ODOE Response: Send an email with complete details, from one of the email addresses associated with the application, to Community.Grants@energy.oregon.gov.

Application/Eligibility Requirements

Question: What are examples of acceptable written authorization from the applicant's governing body?

ODOE Response: Regarding the requirement in OAR 330-250-0040(3)(b)(A) and OAR 330-250-0090(3)(b)(A), "Written authorization from the applicant's governing body allowing submission of the application", the following are four examples of documentation that would be acceptable and meet this requirement:

1. A signed letter by an organization's governing body (Board of Directors/Commissioners) specifically authorizing the submission of an application for the specific opportunity period, and authorizing, by name and title, the authorized representative/signatory for the grant application.
2. Official minutes from an organization's governing body meeting whereby approval is granted to submit an application, and a specific authorized representative is stated by name and title.
3. A letter or document from the organization that specifically cites the local rule, code or bylaw granting authority of an organizational role to pursue and submit grant opportunities on behalf of the organization and includes the name and title of the current individual with that authority to serve as the authorized representative. A statement from the authorized representative authorizing submission of the grant application should be included, or the individual should be listed as either the applicant contact and/or the authorized representative in the application.

4. A signed statement from the authorized representative that states their position has a prior-established and standing authority within the organization's local rule, code or bylaw to pursue and submit grant opportunities on behalf of the organization. The statement should state that submission of the grant application is authorized.

Question: Can an applicant group multiple projects into a single application?

ODOE Response: It would depend on the details, but a group of projects under one application has to fit within the rules as a one project and if awarded, fit within one Performance Agreement. We have received eligible applications for projects that contained renewable energy systems installed at different sites.

Question: Is their guidance on the length of responses and/or application length?

ODOE Response: Carefully read and respond to each application question, covering all listed details without extraneous information. Pay particular attention to multi-part questions. Supporting documents may be uploaded as part of the application and application instructions ask applicants to enter the full name of supporting files in the related online application text boxes. [Application user guides](#) are our website.

Question: Are Oregon charter schools eligible applicants?

ODOE Response: Eligible applicants include public bodies as defined by [ORS 174.109](#). For a charter school to be considered an eligible applicant, it would need to be a public charter school established under ORS chapter 338.

Question: Can an applicant apply for both a planning and construction grant in the same round?

ODOE Response: Yes. During any opportunity period (time frame or round) eligible applicants can apply under any or all the open Opportunity Announcements (current period is open until 2/15/2023). For the same project, an applicant may also consider applying for a planning grant in one period and a construction grant in another period. Applications must demonstrate that the project(s) would meet the specific timelines listed in the opportunity announcements. Each application must stand on its own. Applications in each period are competitively reviewed against other applications in the same opportunity announcement based on the competitive review criteria. Final grant selections include considerations across the opportunity announcements based on program priority rules. If an application is not selected for a grant, there are no restrictions on submitting applications for the same or similar projects in later opportunity periods.

Question: Can a project be split between the renewable energy generation system and the storage system and qualify as two projects?

ODOE Response: It would depend on the details, especially the construction schedule, but it is likely that ODOE would determine that it is one project under the definition of a community energy resilience project.

Question: Is any part of the rate structure of Oregon Community Solar projects considered an incentive under C-REP rules?

ODOE Response: ODOE staff, in collaboration with the Public Utility Commission staff, have assessed the rate structure of a community solar project and do not believe it qualifies as a utility incentive. Any grant awarded through the Community Renewable Energy Grant Program to an applicant that is partnered with of a community solar project would not be reduced based upon the rate structure of the community solar project.

Question: Can an eligible applicant with multiple project sites apply for the grant as one project?

ODOE Response: Yes, an eligible applicant may submit an application with multiple sites or multiple applications with one site per applications, whatever best fits their ability to plan and execute projects and fit within the grant application rules. We advise you to become very familiar with all the program documentation posted on our website to assist you in creating the strongest, most competitive project(s) by addressing as many aspects of the competitive review criteria (listed in the opportunity announcements) as possible.

Question: Would a renewable natural gas (RNG) project that does not generate electricity be eligible?

ODOE Response: Eligible renewable energy technologies include biogas systems. The system could be for generating electrical or thermal energy. The project would need to fit into one of two definitions, either as [a community renewable energy project](#) or as [a community energy resilience project](#).

Question: Could a city apply for a grant for a solar farm to be located on an airport?

ODOE Response: A city would be an eligible applicant for the program. The project would need to meet the definition of either [a community renewable energy project](#) or [a community energy resilience project](#), as well as other eligibility requirements listed in the opportunity announcement.

Question: Does the Community Renewable Energy Grant funding cover higher efficiency building construction?

ODOE Response: No, this program is for planning or constructing community renewable energy projects.

Question: Is a biomass project that generates thermal energy only (no electricity) eligible?

ODOE Response: Yes, a renewable energy system that produces thermal energy could be eligible for the program.

Question: Would repairs and upgrades to an existing renewable energy system be eligible?

ODOE Response: No, the cost of repairs and upgrades to an existing system would not be eligible, but new installation costs would be eligible. The project would have to meet the definition of a community renewable energy project or energy resilience project.

Question: Would new construction net zero energy affordable housing projects be eligible?

ODOE Response: Building construction costs are not eligible. A renewable energy system installed on new construction could be eligible.

Question: Can renewable energy procured by an electric utility, such as hydropower from the Bonneville Power Administration count as the existing renewable energy generation requirement for adding battery storage to an existing substation?

ODOE Response: No, the renewable energy generation system would need to be owned/operated by the utility and have the storage located with and connected to that system.

Question: Is a public library eligible to apply?

ODOE Response: A library district organized under ORS 357.216 to 357.286 is considered a local government body under ORS 174.109 to 174.118 and would be eligible to apply.

Question: Would an energy audit qualify for the grant?

ODOE Response: An Energy Audit would not qualify, however, evidence of the audit and energy efficiency measures taken at a project location could score points in the competitive review for an eligible application. Eligible costs are those that are either necessary for planning, or associated with the construction of, a renewable energy system.

Question: Does solar thermal also qualify for this grant?

ODOE Response: Yes, solar thermal is an eligible renewable energy system technology for the program.

Question: Would a community/city owned renewable energy storage location be eligible?

ODOE Response: Yes, if the storage is paired with an existing or newly constructed renewable energy generation system and it meets one of the two project definitions as a community renewable energy project or a community energy resilience project.

Question: Would a group of solar plus storage systems installed on residential homes as a single development project be eligible?

ODOE Response: The project could be eligible if it meets the definition of either a community renewable energy project or community energy resilience project, as well as other

requirements as outlined in rules, including a description of the project location including details of its location (street address(es), an assessment of the suitability of the site, and the degree to which the eligible applicant has secured site control.

Question: Are state agencies permitted to apply?

ODOE Response: Yes, as a Public Body, defined and described in Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) [174.109-174.118](#).

Question: Are community colleges and public universities eligible.

ODOE Response: Yes, community colleges and public universities are eligible public bodies under ORS 174.109 - 174.118. Below is a list of the public universities listed in ORS 352.002 that would be eligible for the program.

- University of Oregon.
- Oregon State University.
- Portland State University.
- Oregon Institute of Technology.
- Western Oregon University.
- Southern Oregon University.
- Eastern Oregon University.

Applicant and/or Partner Details

Question: Can a city partner with a nonprofit for a solar project on a community service building? Would the city be able to apply for a separate project on a Public Safety Building?

ODOE Response: The city would need to be the applicant, if awarded a grant the performance agreement would be between ODOE and the city, and the grant would be paid to the city for eligible costs incurred by the city in accordance with the performance agreement. Yes, the city would be able to submit multiple applications.

Question: Is there a difference between a "partner" versus an organization just providing a letter of support?

ODOE Response: Yes. Partner is referring to specific organizations listed as a project partner by the applicant in the Partner section of the application. A letter of support from an organization that is not a listed partner would be considered a stakeholder, and refers to utilities, community groups and anyone else involved with ensuring feasibility and/or as part of community engagement as described in the opportunity announcements. Community outreach and participation are components in the scoring criteria and can help strengthen an application in the competitive review.

Question: Do partners have additional commitments in carrying out the project?

ODOE Response: Commitments of partners are between the grantee (applicant) and the partner. The performance agreement will be between the Oregon Department of Energy and the successful eligible applicant (grantee).

Question: Should local utility providers be listed as partners?

ODOE Response: Not unless they are involved in the project beyond the normal relationship between a utility customer/ratepayer and the utility provider (interconnection, net-metering, etc.)

Consultants/Contractors

Question: When should consultants and contractors be listed in this section vs. listed as partners?

ODOE Response: Contractors that are hired/contracted for a specific service(s) in exchange for money and don't otherwise have a stake in the project should not be listed as partners.

Stakeholder Consultations

Question: What is the difference between stakeholder consultations listed in application section five vs community involvement listed in application section eight?

ODOE Response: Stakeholder consultations refer to broader consultations with those involved with the project related to its feasibility, planning and completion. Community involvement is more closely related to the outreach and discussions around the project's ability to provide community benefits, particularly related to environmental justice communities.

Project Details (Description, Planning, Management)

Question: Is there any leniency to the requirement of construction projects to start within 12 months?

ODOE Response: No. Construction projects are required to begin within 12 months of execution of the performance agreement and be completed within 36 months or a reasonable time frame if good cause to extend the deadline is demonstrated. If the timing of your project is known, an extension request probably would not qualify as "good cause" if you apply knowing that you likely will need an extension, so our recommendation is to apply when the timelines will align.

[Oregon Administrative Rules 330-250](#) say, “Good cause” for extending a timeline agreed upon in a performance agreement means that the grantee failed, or expects to fail, to meet the original deadline due to circumstances beyond the applicant's control, including a significant unforeseeable or uncontrollable circumstance such as supply chain disruptions or delays associated with utility interconnection. Good cause does not include changes to project scope.

Question: What documentation validates that the system will last over five years?

ODOE Response: The rules state that the applicant must demonstrate that the system will operate as represented and will remain in operation for at least five years. Reviewers will look for this in the description of the project including technical specifications, manufacturer’s information, warranty information and the project management plan.

Question: Are examples of equipment information and warranties that would meet planned technical specifications sufficient for a complete application where final procurement decisions have not been made?

ODOE Response: For planning grants, we do not require the detailed equipment selections. For construction grants, we ask for detailed technical specifications and actual or sample manufacturer’s warranties but understand final purchases may not match exactly. It is required that the project remain substantially as described in the application. The detail of the information provided can affect the competitive review score, based on the competitive review criteria listed in the opportunity announcements.

Question: For storage, is there a preferred battery size to solar system size ratio?

ODOE Response: No, for projects with dedicated battery storage, there is not a preferred battery size to solar system size ratio. The strength of the resilience aspects of the project will be assessed through the competitive review scoring. Please review the Competitive Review Criteria in the opportunity announcements.

Question: Does an applicant have to have completed energy efficiency improvements to qualify under the related scoring criteria or can they be happening concurrent with the proposed project?

ODOE Response: The scoring criteria is related to prior investments in energy efficiency.

Question: Does a diesel generator as part of a project make it ineligible?

ODOE Response: No, costs for fossil fuel-powered generator systems are not eligible, but connection to a fossil-fuel powered generator system does not exclude a project from being eligible.

Question: Is there a minimum size of renewable energy generation for a grant request?

ODOE Response: There is no minimum size of renewable energy generation, but a maximum limit of 20MW.

Question: How far along does a project need to be to pursue a construction grant?

ODOE Response: The y project needs starting construction within 12 months of execution of the performance agreement and be completed within 36 months of execution of the performance agreement. Cost incurred prior to the application deadline are ineligible. The strength of the project description and construction plan are factors in the competitive review.

Question: Are there any additional requirements for development projects on sites that could be considered historic like the FEMA Environmental Planning & Historic Preservation requirements?

ODOE Response: There may be. Applicants are require to submit a statement of how the applicant will comply with applicable state and local laws and regulations, and that the applicant will notify the appropriate agencies and obtain the required licenses and permits.

Resource/Resilience Level Assessment

Question: Is a “renewable resource assessment” the same as a “site evaluation”?

ODOE Response: No. A renewable resource assessment seeks identifies the project’s use of an available renewable energy resource and includes a description of the type of resource, how the resource availability was evaluated and estimated, and how the system will ensure access to the resource. The project description must include an assessment of the suitability of the site, and the degree to which the applicant has secured site control.

Question: Would low-income housing for seniors located in a qualifying community be classified as “structures or facilities that are essential to the public welfare”?

ODOE Response: Not without a resilience component to the renewable energy project. The quote above, “structures or facilities that are essential to the public welfare “, is from the definition of “Community energy resilience project” in ORS 330-250-0010. Benefits to the public welfare will be evaluated on a competitive basis in the competitive review. Applications must demonstrate whether a structure or facility is essential to the public welfare. This could be, but is not limited to, utilities, hospitals, emergency responders, emergency shelters, communications, community shelters, as well as structures or facilities outlined in an emergency response plan.

EV Charging

Question: Would electric vehicle (EV) charging stations that include vehicle to grid (bidirectional) transmission with the EV batteries be a resilience project? Would an electric vehicle be an eligible cost?

ODOE Response: EV charging stations must be paired with an existing or newly constructed renewable energy system. An activated vehicle to grid capability could qualify as microgrid technology as part of a resilience system, but the project must support the energy resilience of structures or facilities that are essential to the public welfare, as well as meet other required application criteria. Under this grant, electric vehicles and their batteries are not considered a component of a renewable energy system and are not an eligible cost. The inclusion of an EV in the project as part of the benefits to the community could strengthen the application for the competitive review.

Question: Would a renewable energy system connected to vehicle charging stations be considered a Community Energy Resilience Project?

ODOE Response: Pairing electric vehicle charging with a renewable energy system will not automatically qualify as a resilience project. To be eligible as a resilience project the project must include one or more renewable energy systems to support the energy resilience of structures or facilities that are essential to the public welfare. This generally includes energy storage and/or microgrid technology that would allow vehicle charging and/or other energy services during a grid outage.

Question: What is the definition of “paired” for vehicle charging stations paired with a new or existing renewable energy generation system.

ODOE Response: ODOE has determined “paired” is a shared meter or located at the same address of a location/organization with multiple meters, such as a campus with multiple buildings.

Question: Are electric vehicle charging station operating costs eligible for this grant?

ODOE Response: No, costs associated with maintaining, operating, or repairing an electric vehicle charging station are not eligible.

Finances/Eligible Costs/Funding

Question: How firm does the project cost need to be when the application is submitted?

ODOE Response: For the construction grants, we request anticipated costs in the application and recognize that costs may change. The grant funding cannot increase after a performance agreement is signed, however the applicant may submit an amendment to describe changes in

costs or equipment. Final disbursement of grant funds will be based on eligible costs incurred by the applicant.

Question: Are there any type of matching fund sources not permitted?

ODOE Response: Matching funds should be legal and permitted under the applicant's governing rules and regulations. The project cost is the actual cost of the acquisition, construction and installation of a renewable energy system incurred by an applicant, before considering utility incentives. ODOE shall reduce the grant amount, if the grant combined with other incentives and grants received by the applicant exceeds 100 percent of the project costs. ODOE may also reduce the final disbursement based on the eligible costs incurred by the applicant. A list of [eligible and ineligible costs](#) are outlined in the program administrative rules.

Question: Are there competitive procurement requirements for costs to be paid with grant funds?

ODOE Response: No, there are not specific requirements relating to competitive procurement. An eligible applicant should follow its governing procurement regulations and comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws. Eligible and ineligible costs are listed in the program rules. Please review competitive criteria around contracting and hiring.

Question: Please clarify project cost.

ODOE Response: The project cost means the actual cost of the acquisition, construction and installation of a renewable energy system incurred by an applicant, before considering utility incentives. If the renewable energy system is part of a larger construction project, the application should be completed with information specific to the renewable energy system (schedule, finances, etc.)

Question: Does the applicant need to wait to execute the performance agreement before beginning work on their project?

ODOE Response: No, but project costs incurred prior to the application deadline are not grant eligible.

Question: What is the timeline to release grant money after a performance agreement is signed?

ODOE Response: For planning grants, ODOE may release up to 30 percent of the grant moneys upon entering into a performance agreement with an applicant, to be spent on eligible planning costs. The remaining grant moneys would be available upon completion of the planning project under the terms of the performance agreement. For construction grants, ODOE may release up to 30 percent of the grant moneys upon entering into a performance agreement with an applicant, if the applicant demonstrates having:

- Taken meaningful steps to seek site control, including but not limited to an option to lease or purchase the site or an executed letter of intent or exclusivity agreement to negotiate an option to lease or purchase the site.
- Filed a request for interconnection with a host utility or appropriate transmission provider.
- Met any other requirements provided by the department in the performance agreement.

The remaining grant moneys would be released upon project completion under the terms of the performance agreement.

Question: Can the Community Renewable Energy Grant Program funding can be mixed with federal sources of funding?

ODOE Response: Yes, the Community Renewable Energy Grant Program funds can be used in conjunction with federal funding, however, the total amount of incentive and grant funds combined cannot exceed 100 percent of the costs. If the combined amounts would exceed 100 percent of the project cost, the grant would be reduced so that the total incentives/grants would not exceed 100 percent of the project costs.

Question: Are a new roof, structural upgrades, and/or electrical upgrades eligible costs if required to support a renewable energy system plus energy storage?

ODOE Response: As described above, the roof and structural upgrades would not be eligible costs. Some of the electrical work and materials, if directly related to and required for the renewable energy system may be eligible, but not costs to bring the building up the code in order to install the system. Please review the rules for a detailed list of [eligible and ineligible costs](#).

These are some of the ineligible costs: Costs to bring a host building up to building code standards or otherwise repair the building in order to install the system, including design or engineering expenses and costs associated with structures or structural components not directly related to installation of the renewable energy system.

Question: Are interconnection and permitting fees included in eligible project costs?

ODOE Response: Yes, eligible planning costs include costs associated with ensuring code compliance and interconnection studies. Projects with very high interconnection costs compared to the project cost may not compete as well under the competitive review criteria listed in the opportunity announcements.

Environmental Justice/Qualifying Communities

Question: Please define 'environmental justice communities,' 'low income' and 'rural?'

ODOE Response: Environmental justice communities are C-REP qualifying communities from the definition included in HB2021:



“Environmental justice communities” includes 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.

The C-REP rules do not have specific definitions for the types of environmental justice communities contained in the HB2021 definition, including “rural communities” and “communities experience lower incomes”. ODOE understands that definitions vary across government entities, so applicants may decide what definitions to use and must detail and demonstrate how their projects are in environmental justice communities and separately, how and to what extent their projects serve the members of environmental justice communities.

Applications will be competitively reviewed using the related criteria from the equity section of the Competitive Review Criteria from the [Opportunity Announcements](#):

A [list of resources](#) is on the C-REP program webpage to assist applicants in this process.

Community Consultations/Project Benefits

Question: If a community has a Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP) that has expired and is not currently FEMA approved would they be eligible to receive the points under that scoring criteria?

ODOE Response: If the project assists an applicant achieving goals set out in their natural hazard mitigation plan as approved by FEMA it would receive points. An expired approval may still meet this requirement though it may not receive all five of the points in the category. This will be evaluated within the overall competitive review process. Non-FEMA approved plans would not receive points under the criteria.

Equity Metrics/Considerations

Question: What is meant by “equity framework”

ODOE Response: One component of the competitive scoring criteria is if an equity framework is used by the applicant to guide development or evaluation of the project. The rules and opportunity announcements link equity framework to the competitive scoring as directed by the legislation that created this grant program (HB 2021) and includes, “...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.” Having an equity framework and describing how it will be applied to the project is one way an applicant can demonstrate it has developed a process for equitable engagement.

Below are links to equity framework information found through online searching. ODOE does not have specific guidance or requirements for equity frameworks.

https://www.oregon.gov/pharmacy/Documents/EquityFrameworkCovid19_2020.pdf

[Oregon Department of Education : Welcome Page : Equity Initiatives : State of Oregon](#)

[Marion County’s Equity Workplan for Reducing Vaccine Inequities \(example of a project specific plan\)](#)

[Tigard’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Page](#)

[West Linn DEI Plan Status Tracker](#)

[Lane Community College Toolkit](#)

Competitive Review Criteria and Process

Question: Can an applicant file two applications in the same grant and same round without affecting scoring of the other?

ODOE Response: Applications are competitively reviewed so two applications from the same applicant would compete against each other. Note that one criterion in the scoring criteria is geographic diversity.

Question: If separate applications by one applicant are submitted can a preference for one over the other be stated as to ensure no lost points based on the other?

ODOE Response: No, applications are competitively reviewed using the criteria listed in the opportunity announcements, so reviewers would not take into consideration any stated preference by an applicant with more than one application.

Question: Is sole-source procurement (rather than using a competitive process) disadvantageous in the competitive review regarding inclusive hiring and equity?

ODOE Response: The competitive review does include criteria around anticipated hiring/contracting for the project. See the Competitive Review Criteria in the opportunity announcement.

Question: What are the criteria around geographic diversity?

ODOE Response: The geographic diversity scoring in the competitive review is aimed at promoting spreading the benefits of the program around the state. However, there is not a limit on the number of projects from an individual jurisdiction and multiple projects in one area or by one applicant may still be offered grants.

Question: Is there a competitive scoring benefit for projects that are cost sharing, or for projects that are requesting less than 100% of project costs?

ODOE Response: There are not specific review criteria to the factors mentioned, however, they may be considered when comparing the strength of the financial plans across applications.

Question: Is competitive review scoring "all or nothing" for the points in each criterion?

ODOE Response: No, partial points are available and are awarded on a scale.

Question: Are applications scored and ranked against others within each opportunity announcement or across all four opportunity announcements?

ODOE Response: Both are possible. Applications in each opportunity period are competitively reviewed against other applications in the same opportunity announcement based on the competitive review criteria. Final grant selections include considerations and comparisons across the opportunity announcements based on program priority rules and funding allocation rules.

Other

Question: Is there a standard for the CPA Verification Letter mentioned in the opportunity announcement?

ODOE Response: Details are specified in the performance agreement, and include an independent CPA to review the grantee's paid receipts and invoices for eligible costs under the program rules.