

Solar for All DC - Innovation and Expansion Grants
DOEE Responses to RFA Questions

Q1: Are developers from outside the DC area eligible to apply? We are a solar developer based outside the District, but most of our work is in the District, and we would like to submit an application. My confusion stems from pages 17 and 18 of the RFA, which state that a DCRA Certificate of Good Standing and Tax Exemption Affirmation Letter are required documents, which I interpreted to mean that only DC non-profits and businesses can apply. However, I am hoping that those documents are only required if either of those situations apply to the applicant, and that we are in fact eligible to apply.

A1: Developers from outside the District are eligible to apply. If they are already doing business in the District, they should have determined whether they were required to file with the DCRA Superintendent of Corporations, and whether taxes, fees or reports were required.

In order to apply for consideration, an applicant must be “current on all obligations outstanding to the District” and provide a certificate of good standing to prove it (RFA 3.4; RFA App. 2 - PCA sec. II.D (p 3)).

In order to receive a grant from the District, grantees must be registered to do business in the District. Please click here for more information on how a foreign filing entity may do business in the District (<https://dcra.dc.gov/service/corporate-registration-foreign-filing-entity>).

The Tax Exemption Affirmation Letter is applicable only if the entity is a non-profit. The confirmation of non-profit status is required regardless of the jurisdiction of origin, and should be reflected in the documentation required for the registration of foreign filing entities.

Q2: How is the kWh (or financial equivalent) transferred to low income residents?

A2: Respondents are encouraged to provide well-justified proposals that provide innovative yet viable approaches for allocating energy or other financial benefits to low income residents. (Please see Section 7.2 Project Description, Core Barriers 4.)

Q3: What rate (\$/kWh) should we use to calculate the financial equivalent when completing our financial models?

A3: Determining the cost per kWh assumed in a financial model is at the discretion of the respondent. Because electricity rates, financing structures, and other factors are highly variable and project-specific, proposals should include all relevant assumptions used to calculate project costs and benefits.

Q4: How are low income recipients selected to receive the kWh (or financial equivalent)? If we have affordable housing in our portfolio, can we prioritize these tenants in our application or does the city determine who receives the benefit?

A4: Determining methods and approaching for selecting project beneficiaries is at the discretion of the respondent, and should be clearly detailed in the grant proposal. Tenants receiving benefits must meet the criterion of 80% Area Median Income (AMI) as identified in section 1.2 Purpose of the Grants.

Q5: On pages 14-15 of the RFA, one of the typical allowable costs is listed as “typically below \$5,000 in value” and also lists a non-allowable costs as “most major equipment, like vehicles.” Due to the size of our project, we would be requesting grant monies with the majority of it going towards the purchase of solar PV panels, and would far exceed the \$5,000 amount listed in the RFA. Can you confirm the grant monies in this NOFA can be used solely for solar panel equipment costs?

A5: The purchase of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels is an allowable cost, however, the applicant will have to address other requirements as well, that carry a cost. As such, using 100% of the grant funds solely for purchasing solar photovoltaic (PV) panels may not be responsive to other requirements of the RFA.

Q6: Are the use of these funds limited by any other Federal program?

A6: No.

Q7: For residents not living in either master-metered or non-master metered multifamily buildings: can the grant monies be used for solar projects that do not have a direct financial impact on residents utility costs but would lower the overall building utility costs?

A7: Pursuant to Section 1.6, no.2 of RFA 2017-1715-EA, the application must demonstrate how it will “*Provide 100% of the total energy generated by the newly installed solar energy systems, or the financial equivalent, to low-income District residents for at least 15 years.*” This applies whether the multifamily building is master-metered or not.

Q8: Can the grant request be for an amount based on the amount of solar panels installed? For example, could the request be for an installation of at least 500 kW and up to 1,000 kW with a per kW cost of \$X?

A8: Yes, provided the proposal includes ample discussion regarding the methods and approaches for calculating the per kW cost being requested as a reimbursement.

Q9: If a variable grant, or adjustable grant, is permitted, will DOEE require the applicant to specify some date by which the full system size would be set? If so, for example, the award of the Grant could provide that “The applicant is required to identify rooftops with specified system size and capacity (or specified economic benefit to low income residents) by a date no later than 6 months after the Grant date. Based on this identified system size and capacity, DOEE will adjust the Grant amount within 30 days so as to maintain the same Dollars per kilowatt installed (or Dollars per dollar of economic benefit) as provided in the original award of the Grant.”

A9: DOEE is not planning to award any variable or adjustable grants.

Q10: Other Factor #7 is “Provides a solar energy system to help reduce the distribution system’s peak demand.” Doesn’t every solar system do this already? Or would this require other measures, like storage capacity?

A10: The intermittent nature of PV does not ensure that every array contributes equally to a reduction in peak demand. Solar panels can be optimally sited to maximize generation at the same time and location as peak energy demand on the system – also identified as “peak coincident” solar – which may result in a more desirable impact on the energy system. While energy storage is a key technology to shift load, siting and azimuth are other passive options to develop peak coincident solar arrays.

Q11: May a grant request under the multifamily RFA use primarily commercial, multifamily, and institutional buildings, but also use single family rooftops for up to 10% of its solar production?

A11: Yes, this combination would be eligible for review.

Q12: “Our low-income apartment building is owned by a for-profit tax credit partnership, but controlled by a non-profit managing member devoted to the creation and preservation of affordable housing. In this and other projects, the non-profit would act as developer. We would like to apply as the non-profit, which has an impressive development track record that we’d like to highlight, but this entity does not have a fiscal year budget or financial statements relevant to the project. We would need to highlight the books of the for-profit entity relevant to the project, which operates the property. Which entity should apply for the grant, and is there a benefit to applying as a non-profit vs. a for-profit?”

A12: The fiduciary entity will be the primary applicant. See Section 1.6 Eligibility and Section 4.2 Scoring Criteria to determine the approach that makes the most sense for your organization and project partners. Note that a budget and financial statements are required for all activities performed by an applicant, not just those relevant to this project or similar projects.

Q13: “For the grant application, is there any requirement or added benefit to partner with a District Certified Business Entity (CBE)? Is there any requirement or added benefit to contract with a District CBE? We plan to work with a CBE as a contractor, and are wondering whether this should be highlighted, or if labeling them a partner is preferable.”

A13: There is no requirement to partner with a CBE. Additional points may be received if the applicant is a CBE, pursuant to Appendix 5.

Q14a: Would you please clarify whether the following scenario is a permissible use of grant funds for a particular CREF solar project: In order to provide 100% of the energy output to low income residents, Subscriptions for the financial equivalent of 100% of the energy output from the CREF will be provided at no cost to low income residents by the Subscriber Organization, which is also the Applicant. The annual kWh output of the solar system multiplied by the CREF credit rate yields the annual value of solar subscriptions, which could be multiplied by 15 years to obtain the total “Subscription Value”. We envision developing and executing a contractual agreement between DOEE and the Solar Owner and/or the Subscriber Organization which commits the CREF to provide 100% of this Subscription Value to qualifying residents over 15 years. Upon execution of such agreement, the contractual obligation exists and therefore reimbursement from DOEE would be required. May grant funds be used to compensate the Subscriber Organization and/or Solar Owner for the total Subscription Value of CREF Subscriptions as described above?

A14a: Grant funds may be used in the manner described, to the extent the chosen approach meets the goals of the RFA and any relevant qualifying conditions. Please include a comprehensive budget that reflects total costs required to fulfill the objectives of the proposal. See page 15 for a description of nonallowable costs.

Q14b: Assuming the scenario above is permissible, would payment of grant funds related to such Subscription Value be made upon satisfactory documentation of 1) the solar facility becoming operational, and 2) fully executed agreement binding the Subscriber Organization and/or Facility Owner to provide 100% of Subscriptions to low income residents for 15 years.

A14b: DOEE reimburses grantees after receipt of evidence that services have been rendered.

Q15: In Section 3.2 of the Proposal Content, there is a bulleted item labeled as (a) Applicant. In reviewing the document, we believe that this should have been labeled (d) Applicant in that it is in line with the other major categories of Cover Sheet, Project Summary, and Project Description. Is this a correct reading? Related to the above item, we understand that the Applicant section is not included in the Project Description and therefore is not part of the 20 page limit. Is that correct?

A15: The Applicant section is within the 20-page limit.

Q16: The RFA requires that a Work Plan be submitted that describes the timeline for project implementation. It also requires an Installation plan detailing when the solar systems will be installed, with a budget, schedule, and milestones. Are the Work Plan and Installation Plan viewed as separate documents, or are they meant to be the same document, or is one a component of the other?

A16: The Work Plan and the Installation plan are different.

Q17: In submitting our full current fiscal year budget, should we incorporate the income and expenses related to the grant for which we are applying and adjust our budget accordingly?

A17: Please submit your current fiscal year budget, without any income or expenses related to this grant.

Q18: Any chance we can get an extension on the deadline for this Solar for All \$8 million grant?

A18: DOEE will not be granting any extensions for this solicitation, and will abide by the original timeframe specified in the RFA. The deadline for submission is 3/31/2017 at 4:30pm.

Q19: For the outcomes and outputs would you prefer a narrative or a matrix, or perhaps a hybrid of the two?

A19: Method of presentation is at the discretion of the applicant. Note that outcomes and outputs are different; see page 13 of the RFA.

Q20: While we intend to apply for both grants under our JV, the submission seeks to include Clean Hands Certificates and W-9s. The joint venture has yet to be approved and we would like to know if compliance documents from the majority shareholder and CBE, will suffice.

A20: The application with associated compliance documents must come from a valid legal entity. Requirements for partnerships may be found in section 3 of the RFA. If a grant is awarded, the award will be made to the main applicant (legal entity) and all the responsibilities will be upon this entity.