

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
Department of Energy and Environment

**2017 Vulnerability Assessment and Resilience Audit/Solar Tool for Affordable Housing  
Request for Applications (RFA)  
Informational Call  
August 16, 2017**

***Participants:** The following call participants requested that their names, organizations and contact information be listed by emailing [greenbuildingrfa.grants@dc.gov](mailto:greenbuildingrfa.grants@dc.gov)*

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- 1. Question:** For subcontractors to the project lead, should fees be reported at cost or with an overhead markup?

**Answer:** It is up to the applicant to determine how to structure payments to subgrantees, but the budget and budget narrative should specify how costs will be allocated across the partners. Should an applicant be selected, backup documentation for work completed by subgrantees will need to be submitted with invoices.

- 2. Question:** What is the nature of the assessment tool? Will it be a protocol with individual components in different platforms (PDF forms, Excel spreadsheets, etc.), web-based, or some combination? What is the format of the product to be delivered?

**Answer:** Applicant can propose any format for the assessment tool; however, it needs to be user-friendly and not to be proprietary.

It is open to applicants to propose the format of the assessment tool itself, but the applicants should consider the requirements that the tool be user-friendly, and that the District and its partners would be able to continue to use the tool after the duration of this grant. So, the tool should not be based on a proprietary system that would then not be available in the future.

3. **Question:** For the energy and water efficiency scope, what is the appropriate level of assessment? If the tool is to be utilized by housing developers and operators, should the assessment be simplified? If an ASHRAE Level II or equivalent audit is intended, at least the energy and water portion of the assessment should be completed by a qualified and experienced multifamily building energy auditor.

**Answer:** The applicant may propose what they believe should be the recommended level of assessment. But, keep in mind that tool should be applicable and usable by a wide range of residential building owners and types.

4. **Question:** For the solar PV and battery storage analysis, the stated goal is tied to reduced resident electric bills, but the best economic case for solar PV and battery storage tends to be at large, development-level, scale. Will DOEE be considering a range of benefits, such as reduced owner operating costs supporting long-term economic viability of affordable housing, in addition to direct resident benefits in evaluating solar PV and battery storage?

**Answer:** The applicant can propose what value streams or benefits they believe should be included in the tool and specify them in your application. Be specific about what value streams you would include, how they would be attributed, and any necessary assumptions.

5. **Question:** What level of financial resource recommendation is intended, general, program-level, specific implementation measure funding sources? This question is particularly relevant to future adaptation of the tool for other regions.

**Answer:** It is up to the applicant to propose what they feel is the best strategy. The tool could include a mix of those various financial resources, but be user-friendly enough so that property owners or we at the District government could interpret its outputs.

6. **Question:** If they have already been identified, what are the 20 pilot developments?

**Answer:** Properties have not been identified. The selected grantee will identify the pilot properties in partnership with the Department of Energy and the Environment and our sister housing agencies.

7. **Question:** If the applicant partners are also housing owners or operators, can partners participate in a portion of the 20 pilot assessments?

**Answer:** Yes, the properties have not yet been identified and will be selected in partnership with the grantee. If an applicant has ideas about what properties to assess, they should indicate that in their application.

8. **Question:** Are financial certifications required from subcontractors/partners or just the lead- tax exemption, audited financial statements, e.g.?

**Answer:** Just the lead applicant needs to submit the required financial certifications.

9. **Question:** Are there any required qualifications you are looking for in the team or the assessors?

**Answer:** There are no required qualifications that are not stated in the RFA. Applicants should demonstrate the experience of their team and partners following the scoring criteria and in line with the strategy proposed.

- 10. Question:** What documentation needs to be included in the 10 page project description as opposed to what could be included as an appendix.

**Answer:** In general, the project description should include at least a high level summary address all of the points that are asked for and in the scoring criteria. Documents such as resumes, budget, budget narrative, work plans, etc, can be added as attachments. For example, the project description should include a summary of the work plan, but a more detailed work plan can be included as an attachment. As a good rule of thumb, the 10 page summary should be a holistic description of your project and your experience, and all attachments should be referenced.

- 11. Question:** The work plan, that's a deliverable. So, if someone wants to put that together beforehand? It is not expected as a deliverable later?

**Answer:** There is a proposed work plan and budget that you should include within your proposal. Before you can start work, there will be a back in forth with DOEE to finalize the workplan and budget. But, the initial plan should be set forth in the proposal. The second to last item on the scoring rubric talks about proposing a comprehensive and feasible work plan.

- 12. Question:** Project Deliverables includes providing resilience assessments of targeted affordable multifamily properties. Please describe the size of the average property. Is a property one building? Multiple buildings per property?

**Answer:** DOEE has not yet identified the 20 pilot properties. The properties will be selected in partnership with the grantee and will vary in terms of size or whether there are multiple buildings per property. So, budgets can propose a range, and then explain if that is based on number of units or number of buildings, etc. DOEE will then work with the grantee to identify properties based on the budget available. Ideally the properties assessed will be a representative sample of the affordable housing stock in the city. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to consider the local housing market and to consider the typical building typologies for affordable housing in the District to inform their budget and workplan.

- 13. Question:** In Section 7.3 Project Deliverables, is the audit report of 4b. the same report described in #5?

**Answer:** Yes. Deliverable #5 further describes the audit reports listed in item 4b.

- 14. Question:** Can we assume energy utility data for each property will be provided and that the grantee will not be responsible for collecting data from each of the pertinent properties?

**Answer:** No. Past experience with the District's energy benchmarking program and a resident engagement competition, Power Down DC, indicates that the grantee should

anticipate some challenges in collecting comprehensive energy utility data. DOEE will work with the grantee to identify properties that have a history of strong benchmarking practices, however applicants should budget some time and resources to baseline utility data.

- 15. Question:** We are assuming there is no resource match requirement, as this is not included in the scoring rubric; however, there is a line item in the budget template provided, so we are double checking that there is no match requirement.

**Answer:** Correct, there is no requirement in the RFA for you to match resources. While it is not required, it is allowed which is why it is provided for it in the budget template. If applicants are intending to match with their own resources or outside resources, since this is a competitive grant, applicants have the opportunity to indicate that in their budget and provide an explanation in the budget narrative.

- 16. Question:** To what extent does DOEE wish to focus primarily on energy resilience versus a more comprehensive look at climate stressors on facilities and residents?

**Answer:** Applicants should focus on both. Applicants should specifically consider solar plus battery storage as a way to improve energy resilience, but also look more broadly at the climate risks indicated by Climate Ready DC. So the tool may include, for example, flood proofing, or improving the passive survivability of residential buildings in the event of a utility failure or a heat wave, etc.

- 17. Question:** This is a follow-up question. Regarding water efficiency, healthy housing improvements, and physical needs assessments, how much of that should we focus on?

**Answer:** DOEE intends for the tool to be market ready so that the affordable housing market in the District can integrate it as a useful tool for planning purposes. So, ideally it would incorporate all of those things. An example of the holistic approach envisioned for the project is the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (NYC HPD) Integrated Physical Needs Assessment tool. For more information on the NYC Integrated Physical Needs Assessment tool see: <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/developers/development-programs/integrated-physical-needs-assessment.page>.

- 18. Question:** This is a follow up from the previous question. Also those assessments would need to be done by the building operators themselves, not by any kind of professional auditor?

**Answer:** This is NOT intended to be a self-assessment tool. Applicants should assume that a professional, such as a senior asset manager, sustainability specialist, or energy consultant would be executing the tool. While a professional with expertise in building science and energy efficiency should administer the assessment, the resulting report should be able to be used and interpreted by an affordable housing owner/operator.

- 19. Question:** What level of post-grant usability does DOEE want out of this tool? Tailored to what type of user? For example, should the tool be used by property managers or leasing specialists? By energy managers? Or perhaps technical users, such as expert engineering and architectural practitioners?

**Answer:** The outputs of the tool should be accessible to people like property managers, but the tool itself would likely be used by a sustainability expert on a property development team, an energy consultant, or somebody similar with a deep understanding and experience in building science and resilience.

**20. Question:** Is there implementation funding available for the deployment of energy storage paired with solar in the assessed properties?

**Answer:** Implementation funding is not included in the grant. There are many financial vehicles in the District of Columbia that could be used for implementation of the recommendations identified by the audits, and the tool should identify what those potential vehicles could be such as the DC PACE program, the proposed Green Bank, or future grants available through the Renewable Energy Development Fund.

**21. Question:** This is a follow-up question to question 20. Given that, will it have any relationship, or does this grant have any relationship to, the grant solicitation that was proposed in February for Solar for All? What is the connection?

**Answer:** There is not a direct connection between this RFA and the previous Solar for All RFA, though they have the same funding source, the Renewable Energy Development Fund.

**22. Question:** This is a follow up question to question 21. Did the funding for that grant, that \$8 million, go to several different organizations, or just one?

**Answer:** DOEE recently announced the intent to award grants to several organizations and that information is available on DOEE's website.

**23. Question:** Is the goal to identify economic opportunities to deploy energy storage? If so, can the economic benefits of storage go to building owners/managers instead of residents? (The reason I ask is because there is typically no economic case for storage for residential customers. Commercial customers, such as those applied to multifamily housing common areas, facing high demand charges may have an economic case for storage.)

**Answer:** Applicants can propose what benefits and to whom they would accrue, and specify that in their application.

**24. Question:** Are there other value streams identified for storage in DC, such as providing demand response or grid reliability services through utility contracts?

**Answer:** There could be additional value streams. The grantee's work would be to identify what those additional value streams are or if they don't exist provide recommendations for future consideration.

**25. Question:** What entity will be owning the energy storage assets?

**Answer:** That would vary based on who is using the tool and the properties that we are looking at.

**26. Question:** Around the question of identifying, and possibly recruiting, affordable housing participants in the 20 assessments, could you talk a bit more about what portion the grantee would be doing in terms of the work of identifying them and what kind of criteria by which we would identify them? For example would be looking at the Energy Use Intensity, if they have really low EUI or low Energy Star Score, is this something that we would be looking for to focus on? And, I understand what you said about a variety of different housing stock that represents DC, but would there be specific criteria around energy data that we would have to be gathering in order to make those determinations. And, also how much would we be involved in needing to recruit these housing participants?

**Answer:** The approach will be determined by the grantee in consultation with DOEE. If have a specific strategy in mind, they should outline it in their proposal. There will likely be a variety of things that will be factored into the ultimate selection of the 20 properties. First are properties located in areas identified through Climate Ready DC that are vulnerable to climate change risks such as flooding or extreme weather events. Other criteria could include energy use intensity or deferred capital maintenance, where there is a need to do some assessment..

Applicants should budget some time for working with DOEE to identify the pilot properties. DOEE and its sister agencies will be able to provide recommendations.

**27. Question:** Have you already started talking to some property owners or people to get them interested, or is this something that they are going to be learning about once the grant is actually given?

**Answer:** DOEE has not done any outreach yet to property owners. However, assessing the vulnerability of affordable housing to climate impacts was a short-term action identified in Climate Ready DC, so there is an understanding among District partners that the city was interested in doing this work. DOEE has engaged with the DC Housing Authority, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the DC Housing Financing Agency on this project because it was a short-term goal of Climate Ready DC.

**28. Question:** This is regarding the tool itself, is it meant to be a web tool or like a software that does simulation where you plug in certain data sets and it will spit out a vulnerability quotient of a certain property?

**Answer:** It is up to the applicant to propose what they think the best tool would be. Applicants should keep in mind the DOEE wants the tool to be user-friendly enough that once this grant is over the tool could be picked up and used by professionals to continue to do the assessments. Therefore, the tool cannot be based on a proprietary software platform that DOEE would not have access to in the future.

**29. Question:** So, like a web tool that's readily available?

**Answer:** It could be a web tool, it could be a spreadsheet tool. Applicants are asked to submit what they think are the best tools.

**30. Question:** It is up to us to figure out what kinds of data sources we will be looking at like envelope, efficiency, water, so it is up to us to a) identify what the tool will do and b) identify what data sources we will be focusing on?

**Answer:** Within the parameters provided by DOEE, applicants will be determining the inputs into and the scope of the tool.

**31. Question:** And we will be working with you for the purposes of data collection from properties?

**Answer:** So, for the 20 assessments the grantee will be doing the data collection, as part of the assessment process. DOEE will assist with energy and water data where it is publicly available through the benchmarking program. Applicants should assume that they will need to spend some time baselining utility data.

**32. Question:** Along those lines again, in one of the sections it says to outline a timeline by which the tool will be implemented, that's kind of an easy thing to identify. What about upgrades that will be made- are you anticipating that the grantee will do an evaluation and provide the recommendations about what could be repaired, and offer a range of prices? But, when you say implementation and upgrade, you're not expecting any grantee to actually do the upgrades for the building?

**Answer:** This is an assessment tool so like any capital improvement plan or physical needs assessment, some of these improvements might be sequenced or staggered over time. But, the tool should identify potential funding sources for future implementation.

**33. Question:** So, you mentioned a physical needs assessment tool in New York. Is that an open-sourced tool? Is there a specific one?

**Answer:** The tool previously referenced was NYC HPD's tool, the Integrated Physical Needs Assessment. NYC HPD previously used a green physical needs assessment and had developed a resilience assessment and they merged the two tools. More information on the tool can be found here: <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/developers/development-programs/integrated-physical-needs-assessment.page>

**34. Question:** Does this have anything to do with the Mapdwell tool that looks at rooftop solar potential?

**Answer:** This tool could certainly reference the Mapdwell tool in terms of solar potential, but this would be separate. Mapdwell is a tool that provides basic rooftop solar assessment for every rooftop in the District. More information about Mapdwell can be found here: <https://www.mapdwell.com/en/solar/dc>.

**35. Question:** Could you talk a little bit more about the long term reuse of the tool, or using with other District programs.

**Answer:** DOEE is developing this tool in order for it to be available for the affordable housing sector. There might be an opportunity to absorb this as a tool that housing agencies use in the future, but for now it would be on a voluntary basis. This project furthers a recommendation in Climate Ready DC which identified the need to do a more

in-depth assessment of the vulnerability of affordable housing to the impacts of climate change. And so, the ultimate goal is to reach every property in DC. That is obviously outside the scope of this grant, but that is why DOEE is creating a tool that will ideally be able to be used by both the agency and the public and the private sector. DOEE also wants a functional tool that could be integrated into existing processes, such as a physical needs assessment which is a statutory requirement that needs to be done.

**36. Question:** To what degree, or is there any interest in focusing on participatory approaches or capacity building in the process for housing providers? Participatory approaches in terms of training them, educating them, or building capacity for say benchmarking or working with physical needs assessment tool. To what degree would the grantee be working with the participants in capacity building?

**Answer:** This project includes the development of the tool and the pilot assessments. If applicants believe capacity building and participatory approaches are important to supporting the longevity of this tool, then they should propose that as part of their strategy and budget.

**37. Question:** Can the five hard copies be hand delivered?

**Answer:** They can be hand delivered to DOEE by the deadline. The deadline is August 28th at 4:30 PM.

**38. Question:** This is a quick question about the layout. For section 3.2(c) where there is an exposition of items 1-6, that is supposed to be very brief, and then the bulk of those ten pages should focus on the scoring rubric elements? The items in 3.2(c) six, which has various items like the budget, should simply refer to the work plan later down?

**Answer:** Yes, that is all part of the project description. Make sure that all of the elements described are in the proposal.

**39. Question:** In order to be eligible for the Points for Local Entities does the lead applicant need to be a qualifying local District business or non-profit entity? Can a partner on the project qualify the project team for the Points for Local Entities? My firm, which is based in Colorado, was planning on applying to be the lead on the project but we are partnering with local non-profits.

**Answer:** In order to be eligible for Points for Local Entities, the lead applicant must be a qualifying local District business or nonprofit entity and submit Appendix 5, which outlines the qualifying criteria.

**40. Question:** Does the project description need to be 10 pages double-spaced?

**Answer:** See Section 3.1 of the RFA.

**41. Question:** a. Having looked at the Climate Ready DC plan, are you able to provide the following report-specific DOEE GIS data layers should we be awarded the grant.  
Flooding areas 2020, 2050, 2080, Heat Vulnerability Areas 2020, 2050  
Vulnerable Populations 2020, 2050, 2080, Storm Surge 2020, 2050, 2080, Electrical Substations, Priority Planning Areas.

b. Additionally, would we able to use some of the data from the Mapdwell tool for our proposed tool?



**Answer:** a. Yes, all of the data from Climate Ready DC would be made available to the selected grantee. b. DOEE is a subscriber to Mapdwell; however, not all of the data from Mapdwell may be available to the grantee.