

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

Q1: After the grant is over, are there any longer term monitoring or reporting requirements?

A1: The reporting requirements after the grant period has ended are specified in RFA # 2017-1714-EA and RFA # 2017-1715-EA, Section 7.2, under the heading “Documentation” and sub-heading No.4 “Reporting Plan for System Performance.” Reporting requirements after the grant has concluded may also be found in Paragraph 23, “Accounting and audits,” of Appendix 1 – General Terms and Conditions. DOEE will also perform a program assessment, including DOEE’s Quality Assurance Quality Control inspection, after the project period has concluded. Details of what is required will be included in the grant award (please refer to Section 7.2 / Documentation of the RFAs :5. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) Plan).

Q2: What activities or justifications are acceptable for advance funding? Would DOEE ever consider placing a portion of the grant dollars in escrow?

A2: Guidance regarding advance funding may be found in Appendix 1 – General Terms and Conditions, Paragraph 10 (g). DOEE does not contemplate placing funds in escrow for this funding opportunity.

Q3: Do solar installations funded by these grants need to offset bills 50%? Can funds be used to install arrays that would offset more than 50%?

A3: No, funds do not need to offset bills by 50%, but they must show a substantial benefit to low income DC residents. While DOEE is not defining what constitutes a “substantial benefit,” DOEE encourages proposals that demonstrate the provision of 100% of the energy from the solar project, or the amount of money equivalent to 100% of the energy, to low income residents. Yes, funds can be used to install arrays that would offset more than 50%.

Q4: Are there any particular teaming or partnership requirements associated with the RFA, beyond what is stipulated in the RFA itself?

A4: No additional teaming or partnership requirements are required outside those identified in the RFA.

Q5: Should financial benefits and LMI be direct benefits to households, or could there be benefits leveraged through dedicated LMI programs? Eg: Should financial benefits of energy used by a nonprofit community site host be paid to LMI households or direct financial benefit? Or could those benefits be invested in a CDC to support transitional housing?

A5: DOEE encourages applicants to pursue creative methods that provide the maximum possible benefit to low-income District residents. Accordingly, DOEE will consider proposals to maximize the benefits to the target group and encourages applicants to identify ways to best serve this community. However, the benefit to the low-income community must be clearly accountable, on a per-dollar basis.

Q6: The requirement that 100% of the energy produced by a funded project go to LMI residents is confusing.

- Does energy mean electricity?
- If the project provides benefits like free EV charging stations, is that considered part of the 100% energy requirement?
- Will projects that transfer non-electricity revenues from stuff like SREC sales or tax equity be favored over projects that just transfer 100% of the electricity generated?

A6:

- Yes, “energy” in the grant means electricity. It is a pre-requisite that, for at least 15 years, 100% of the energy from the solar project, or the amount of money equivalent to 100% of the energy, must benefit low-income District residents.
- While DOEE cannot comment on specific project proposals through this forum, all benefits from the project must be clearly articulated and quantified to demonstrate how they will provide an equivalent of 100% of electricity produced from the grant-funded solar project, or the financial equivalent thereof, to low-income District residents for at least 15 years.
- DOEE has not specified or prioritized a preferred revenue stream to provide the required benefits to low-income residents.

Q7: Can a company who is based out of town apply for grant?

A7: Please refer to the Eligibility criteria specified in Section 1.6 of RFA # 2017-1714-EA and RFA # 2017-1715-EA. Companies from outside the District are eligible to apply. However, a Certificate of Good Standing from the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) is still a required document.

Q8: How does an out-of-town company receive a certificate of good standing?

A8: Please contact the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs for related guidance and information (<https://dcra.dc.gov/>)

Q9: Is construction cost a barrier to receiving the solar grant? Especially since low income communities often have failing infrastructure.

A9: In each of the funding opportunities, DOEE has identified core barriers and other factors that should be addressed. Please refer to Section 7 of the respective RFA.

Q10: Are you looking for projects that are riskier but still doable or projects that are almost complete and just need a little push?

A10: Generally, please refer to the scoring matrix of the respective RFA. DOEE is seeking projects with clear solutions that can best address as many core barriers and other factors referenced in Section 7 of the RFA. In addition, DOEE is seeking projects that will provide greater benefits to low-income residents. DOEE cautions that it may not be sufficient to summarily conclude in a grant application that, for example, it has a roof lease agreement and that therefore the barrier to accessing project site has been addressed. Instead, the application should describe in detail how and why accessing the project site was difficult, and what specific solutions the applicant used to address that difficulty. For another example, it may not be sufficient for the applicant to summarily conclude that the applicant acquired low-income customers and that therefore the barrier of customer acquisition has been addressed. Instead, the application should describe in detail how and why obtaining customers was difficult, and what specific solutions the applicant used to address that difficulty.

Q11: Is it better to combine a “sure thing” project component with a more innovative, less certain profit component into one proposal, or submit them as separate proposals? (Assume both components would lead to direct PV deployment.)

A11: Whether two projects should be submitted as a single proposal or two proposals is at the discretion of the applicant. Generally, please refer to the scoring matrix of the respective RFA. One of the purposes of the grant is to learn, from the applicants, actual solutions that were or will be developed to address actual difficulties that were encountered or are expected to occur in developing the project.

Q12: Do proposals which address multiple barriers receive higher scores?

A12: Eligible proposals will be scored based on the scoring criteria listed in the RFA. Proposal(s) can receive points for addressing multiple core barriers based on how well the proposal presents a detailed, comprehensive, and realistic solution to overcoming those barriers. For each barrier, the applicant should specify in detail the nature of the difficulty (i.e. how and why) that the applicant encountered or expect to encounter.

Q13: How is a “project” defined?

A13: The term “project” means the work to be performed pursuant to this grant, including the total amount of kW capacity that is being proposed to be built in the application.

Q14: What is the target size of total deployment for the grants, and is there a rationale you can share?

A14: DOEE expects awards to create roughly between 6.5 and 13 megawatts of new solar capacity in the District. However, this estimate is highly speculative, and is derived from estimating that, for the high case of 13 MW, each dollar provided under this grant will result in an additional Watt of capacity. For the low case of 6.5 MW, it is estimated that every two dollars provided under this grant will result in an additional Watt of capacity. Because DOEE intended this grant to be exploratory rather than prescriptive, DOEE has no means of reasonably estimating how many megawatts could result from the grant awards until it reviews all of the proposals.

Q15: Are projects that don't have all sites identified eligible? Will this result in a lower score?

A15: Yes, these projects are eligible. Scoring is contingent upon the overall impact of the project, whether it addresses one or more barriers. A project is assumed to be viable and deliverable during the grant period, and other factors that will be assessed during the evaluation process.

Q16: Will proposals that address multiple or all 4 Core Barrier(s), be scored higher/awarded more points?

A16: Eligible proposals will be scored based on the scoring criteria listed in the RFA. Proposal(s) can receive points for addressing multiple core barriers based on how well the proposal presents a detailed, comprehensive, and realistic solution to overcoming those barriers. For each barrier, the applicant should specify in detail the nature of the difficulty (i.e. how and why) that the applicant encountered or expect to encounter.

Q17: Please confirm that investments in non-technology or engineering cost are allowable expenses provided that these investments advanced Solar Deployment concretely, overcome structural market barriers, and result in confirming energy benefits for low income DC residents? (i.e. legal, financial structuring, marketing & customer acquisition, etc.)

A17: The examples provided can be considered allowable costs and classified as professional services if these investments result in solar energy systems being built.

Q18: “Should RFA#2017-1714 page 6, #2 criteria be interpreted to mean “Net of Costs”?  
(example: master metered residential property has a resident that may wish to reimburse his/her owner cost by taking electrons from solar to reduce his electricity bill).

A18: RFA#2017-1714, criteria #2 means that for at least 15 years, 100% of the energy from the solar project, or the amount of money equivalent to 100% of the energy, must benefit low-income District residents. DOEE encourages applicants to pursue creative methods that provide the maximum possible benefit to low-income District residents. Applicant proposals for solar installation(s) on master-metered buildings must clearly explain how the solar system will provide benefits to eligible households.

Q19: Under Solar Works DC RFA#2017-1712, can the trainees under that grant work on projects under the grants awarded from RFA#2017-1714 and RFA#2017-1715 to allow for more construction experience? (Example: work on residential and multifamily installs)

A19: Proposals should describe partnerships, resources, etc., and how the applicant will leverage other funding sources to accomplish the proposed activities. Refer to RFA#2017-1714 and RFA#2017-1715, Sections 3. Application Content, sub section (4) Methods, (6) Project Budget, and sub section (4) Partners.

Q20: Can we submit a single proposal that address multiple core barriers?

A20: Yes. Please refer to Section 7.2 (Core Barriers) which states that “[E]ach proposal must offer a comprehensive and innovative strategy to address at least one of the Core Barriers...”

Q21: What is the installed solar capacity expected for per proposal?

A21: While there are no maximum installed capacity caps, there are minimum solar capacity thresholds for the respective grants - refer to the “Project Description” in section 7.2 of the RFA. Additionally, each RFA has a “maximum amount of funds that can be awarded to any one project.” Refer to “Available Funding” under section 7.2 of the respective grants.

Q22: Does a “joint venture certification” from the Department of Small & Local Business Development qualify for the CBE certification required in this grant?

A22: Yes, a joint venture certification from DSLBD qualifies for the CBE certification required in this grant. More information may be found here: <https://dslbd.dc.gov/service/certify-joint-venture>.

Q23a: We are considering applying for a Solar for All grant. We have reviewed the RFA and appendix items, and have questions about Section 28 (Insurance) of the General Terms and Conditions. My understanding is you will publish a response to the questions within 24 hours.

Section 28 (Insurance) e.1 states that each insurance policy shall "Name the District as an additional insured with respect to work or services performed under the grant or sub-grant." But then later in g.1, it states that the requirements of this section shall not apply to a government agency that provides the following: "For an agency of the District Columbia, a written statement that the agency complies with the intent of the paragraph by requiring insurance for all activities not carried out by District employees" Does DOEE fall into this category? If so, does that mean we do not need to list the District as an additional insured on our policies? Does this only apply if we are planning to do work on District of Columbia property versus private property?

A23a: The letter and the intent of the provision are to protect the District from any covered incident, whether the grantee experiences the incident on private or public property. Paragraph g. applies to a grantee that is itself a government agency. If you are not a government entity, your policy must name the District as an additional insured, making your questions about part 28.g. not relevant to your application.

Q23b: If we do need to list the District of Columbia, is there a specific entity or agency, or more specificity you can provide? Our insurance broker has indicated that insurance agencies need a more specific entity than the 'District of Columbia'.

A23b: The party to name in your insurance policy is the Government of the District of Columbia. It is a legal entity. Please note that you are not required to submit the policy until and unless selected to be a grantee – the insurance requirements “are conditions to receipt of funds”, not to submitting your grant application.

Q23c: Additionally, b.2 states that for each project conducted on federal property, “The United States of America must be named as an additional insured on each such policy.”

Will you confirm that if we do not plan to work on federal property, we do not need this provision. We have discussed this with our insurance broker and she does not know of an insurance company that would feel comfortable listing broadly the US as an additional insured on a policy.

A23c: If you do not propose to conduct your grant work on federal property DOEE does not expect you to comply with section 28.b. If you DO propose to conduct the work on federal property you may wish to determine the cost, if any, of adding the USA as an additional insured.