

Rural Energy Startup Program Application Instructions

The Rural Energy Startup Program is funded by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)



Docket 9714-FG-2023

Proposals Due:

Initial due date: January 31, 2024, by 1:30 pm CT

Applications filed after the initial due date will continue to be accepted until funds are expended or no later than March 29, 2024 by 1:30 pm CT

Date of Issue: November 30, 2023

Update 1: December 19, 2023

Update 2: January 30, 2024

(Updates are highlighted in yellow)

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1. RURAL ENERGY STARTUP PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Introduction and Background

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin's (PSC or Commission's) Office of Energy Innovation (OEI) is seeking applications for the Rural Energy Startup Program (RESP or Program), a single-round grant program funded through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG). The EECBG is funded by Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), federal funds that were awarded as a grant through the U.S. Department of Energy (U.S. DOE). The Commission has authorized that the entire State of Wisconsin EECBG allocation be used to fund the RESP, establishing an overall program budget of \$2,330,720. (See Table 1.)

Projects approved for RESP grants will have approximately one year for completion, to begin in calendar year (CY) 2024 and conclude in CY 2025. (See Section 4.1.)

Applicants will use the online [PSC Grants System](#) to submit applications. The [PSC Grants System User's Guide](#) provides step by step instructions to create a system account, navigate the online grant application, validate the application, and submit the complete application. The User's Guide is the primary resource an applicant should consult to enter and use the online grant system.

The purpose of this document is to provide eligible applicants with information to enable them to prepare and submit an application for a RESP grant. This document does not replace the Commission's Order dated November 29, 2023, establishing the program design of the RESP, or any other Commission Order, or the terms of any grant agreements executed under the Program.

The initial application due date is January 31, 2024, at 1:30 pm CT. However, applications filed after the initial due date will continue to be accepted until funds are expended, no later than March 29, 2024.

1.2 Scope of the Program

1.2.1 Program Purpose: The purpose of the RESP is to advance energy innovation by expanding access to clean energy, efficiency, and preparedness to Wisconsin communities that are otherwise unable to adopt these and for whom these are innovative approaches.

Specifically, the RESP will:

- Focus on planning and basic upgrade projects, critical initial steps laid out in U.S. DOE Blueprints¹, that serve as a foundation for energy efficiency and renewable energy work and locally-led efforts in an energy transition.
- Support rural communities that did not meet the population threshold to receive direct federal support under the Federal EECBG program.
- Prioritize Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), consistent with the Justice40 Initiative.

1.2.2 Anticipated Funds Available

All \$2,330,720 of Wisconsin's EECBG allocation has been allocated for RESP grants. A final determination of the funds awarded will be made by the Commission in a written order, after discussion in an open meeting. The maximum grant request for any given application is \$75,000.

1.3 Eligibility

¹ See EECBG Program Blueprints, U.S. DOE: <https://www.energy.gov/scep/energy-efficiency-and-conservation-block-grant-program-blueprints>.

The eligibility criteria are listed below. Applicants will demonstrate compliance with program eligibility criteria as part of their responses to the application.

1.3.1 Eligible Applicant Types and Activity Categories

Please see the Commission's Order dated November 29, 2023, in Docket 9714-FG-2023 for the Commission's full decision establishing elements of the RESP. ([PSC REF#: 485930.](#))

1.3.1.1 Eligible Applicant Types

An applicant may be a city, village, town, or county that has not received direct allocations of federal formula funding under the IJA EECBG Program, and that qualifies as rural, as defined within the Commission's Order, with priority given to those also located within a DAC, as defined within the Commission's Order. The OEI Map has been created to assist prospective applicants in identifying whether they meet these qualifiers. (See Section 2).

While it is not necessary for an applicant to be located within a DAC or have a DAC located within the planned project area, priority will be given to applicants meeting those qualifiers. Those applicants may use the tools discussed below, such as the OEI Map and the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) map to identify the extent to which grant benefits fall within a DAC.

1.3.1.2 Eligible Activity Categories

An application must be limited to one eligible activity, up to the maximum grant request. Applicants may submit one application per activity if seeking to undertake multiple separate projects.

All projects are required to comply with the applicable Federal provisions of the IJA, including Buy American provisions, Davis-Bacon and Related Acts (DBRA), Historic Preservation, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). (See Section 8.)

- **Activity 1: Comprehensive Energy Planning.** This activity would fund technical consultant services to assist the eligible applicant in the development of Comprehensive Energy planning to include the following: evaluation of current energy use and sources, determination of the entity's potential for generating energy locally, and creation of goals for energy savings and generation. These efforts would include community-wide and stakeholder engagement and formal plan adoption. Applicants must follow U.S. DOE [Blueprint 1: Energy Planning](#).
- **Activity 2: Renewable Resource Planning.** This activity would fund technical consultant services to assist the eligible applicant in the development of Renewable Resource planning to include the following: assessing renewable resource potential with a focus on the greatest value and job opportunities for the area, setting a collective vision with stakeholders for optimal renewable energy deployment, and creating an action plan for formal adoption and implementation. Applicants must follow U.S. DOE [Blueprint 3D: Renewable Resource Planning for Rural and Tribal Communities](#).
- **Activity 3: Energy Audits and Building Upgrades.** This activity would fund technical consultant services to assist the eligible applicant to identify potential energy saving opportunities in buildings and provide the technical and financial information (such as upfront costs, ongoing costs, projected energy savings, return on investment)

that the community would need to evaluate and approve energy efficiency, electrification, and grid interactivity retrofits. This activity also allows the opportunity to explore the evaluation found in an energy audit to allow for retrofitting existing buildings, presenting an opportunity to improve the energy performance and operational costs of building assets including heating, cooling and ventilation (HVAC) systems and equipment, lighting and control systems, and the building envelope, while improving occupant control (such as with grid-interactive technologies). Retrofits also offer a chance to invest in energy burdened and underinvested areas. Applicants must follow U.S. DOE [Blueprint 2A: Energy Efficiency - Energy Audits and Building Upgrades](#).

1.3.1.3 Maximum Grant Requests

The maximum grant request per application is \$75,000.

1.4 Procuring and Contacting Agency

This request for applications is issued by the OEI, which is the sole point of contact for the State of Wisconsin during the selection process. For information concerning the RESP, contact OEI@wisconsin.gov. (See 3.3 for instructions on submitting Application Instructions inquiries.) The grant awards resulting from this application process will be administered by the OEI.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Definitions

The following definitions are used throughout this document and the online application.

Agency or Commission means the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.

Applicant means an individual representing or organization submitting an application in response to this request for grant applications.

Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) means the tool available to identify DACs, using an interactive map and datasets indicating burdens in eight categories: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.

Cooperative means an entity incorporated under Chapter 185 of Wisconsin Statutes.

Disadvantaged Community (DAC) means those areas that have one or more of the following burden indicators: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.²

Grantee or Sub-recipient means an Applicant awarded a RESP grant by the Commission and has entered into a Grant Agreement.

Justice40 Initiative means the goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to DACs that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened to include one or more of the following: (1) a decrease in energy burden; (2) a decrease in environmental exposure and burdens; (3) an increase in access to low-cost capital; (4) an increase in job creation, the clean energy job pipeline, and job training for individuals; (5) increases in clean energy enterprise creation and contracting (e.g., minority-owned or disadvantaged

² While municipalities and Tribal Communities alike may meet the CEJST definition of DACs, for purposes of this Order, the term does not include Tribal Communities, which received formula funding under EECBG and therefore are not eligible for subrecipient grants per IJA Section 40552.

business enterprises); (6) increases in energy democracy, including community ownership; (7) increased parity in clean energy technology access and adoption; and (8) an increase in energy resiliency. Impact may be demonstrated through response to a particular need, direct engagement, jobs created, emissions avoided, or other metrics.

Laborers and Mechanics defined as workers whose duties are manual or physical in nature as distinguished from mental or managerial work. Mechanics include workers who use tools or who are performing the work of a particular trade (e.g., carpentry, plumbing, sheet metal work). (Reference 29 CFR § 5.2(m))

Location means evidence of the location through latitude and longitude data and site of work

Rural

- Rural municipal zip codes: are identified as those within “any area of a State not in a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants, not in the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants, and excluding certain populations pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(H) and (I).” OEI has aligned its definition of rural with that use in USDA’s Rural Energy for America Program and the [Focus on Energy program’s rural bonus incentives](#).
- Rural counties: U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) uses census data to establish a range of rural and urban classifications known as Rural-Urban Continuum (RUC) codes, with RUC of 4 to 9 considered rural. [USDA’s Economic Research Service](#) presents this information visually for Wisconsin by county.

Site of Work means the physical place or places where the building or work called for the grant agreement will remain.

State means the State of Wisconsin and includes the Public Service Commission.

3. COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING THE APPLICATION AND THESE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

3.1 Communications.

The official means by which the Commission will provide information related to the application is in docket 9714-FG-2023. Interested parties must proactively subscribe to the docket on the Commission’s ERF system to ensure they receive timely information related to the process.

3.2 Reasonable accommodations

The PSC does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provision of programs, services, or employment. Any person with a disability who needs accommodations to participate in this docket or who needs to obtain this document in a different format should contact the OEI at the email listed below.

The PSC is located in the Hill Farms State Office Building that is also physically accessible to individuals with disabilities through the entrances on the first floor of the building. Parking for people with disabilities is available on the ground floor of the parking garage. There is also limited, free handicap visitor parking at the front of the Hill Farms State Office Building.

Please direct questions about this docket or requests for additional accommodations for the disabled to the PSC at (608) 266-5481 or OEI@wisconsin.gov.

3.3 Clarification and/or revisions to these Application Instructions

Any questions concerning these application instructions must be submitted in writing via email on or before:

Friday, March 15, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., to:

Email address:

OEI@wisconsin.gov

Subject line: Rural Energy Startup Program Application Question

If an applicant discovers any significant ambiguity, error, conflict, discrepancy, omission, or other deficiency in this application, the applicant should notify the OEI immediately by emailing OEI@wisconsin.gov. The applicant should describe the error and request modification or clarification of the application instructions.

If it becomes necessary to provide additional clarifying data or information or to revise any part of the application instructions, revisions, amendments, and/or supplements will be posted in docket 9714-FG-2023. Interested parties must subscribe to the docket to receive notifications. Click the “Subscribe” icon on the [PSC homepage](#).

Any contact with state employees concerning this application is prohibited, except as authorized by the grant administrator through OEI@wisconsin.gov, from date of release of the application until the date on which the grant award is released.

4. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

4.1 Schedule of Events

Below are the dates and times of actions related to this application. If the Commission finds it necessary to change any of the dates and times in the schedule of events listed below, it will do so by issuing a supplement to these instructions in docket 9714-FG-2023.

Applications must be submitted using the [PSC Grants System](#). Applications posted to ERF separately from the Grant System application process will not be accepted. The PSC Grants System will automatically close the application process promptly on the day and time applications are due. The PSC Grants System will not accept late-filed applications. Start well before the deadline and allow sufficient time to address the administrative and programmatic requirements related to submitting a grant application.

DATE	EVENT
November 30, 2023	Date of issue of the RESP Application Instructions
January 15, 2024	(Initial deadline) Questions due by 4:00 pm CT on Monday, January 15, 2024
January 31, 2024	Initial application due date at 1:30 pm CT
February 2024*	For applications submitted by January 31, 2024: Review Panel evaluation
March 15, 2024	(Extended Deadline) Questions due by 4:00 pm CT on Friday, March 15, 2024
February 1 – Funds Expended or March 29, 2024, whichever comes first	Extended Application period. Applications filed after the initial application due date will continue to be accepted until funds are expended and no later than by 1:30 pm CT on Friday, March 29, 2024.
Spring 2024*	PSC determination of Rural Energy Startup Program Awards, Onboarding, grant agreement negotiations
Spring 2024 – June 2025*	Project performance period

*Applications submitted after January 31, 2024, are subject to further Commission decision on the timing of these process steps.

4.2 Grant Performance Period and Funding

Unless provided otherwise in writing, any RESP award will have a grant performance period beginning on the date the grant agreement is counter-signed by the PSC and expiring automatically and without notice on the grant performance period end date identified in the grant agreement. All costs must be incurred during the grant performance period. Grant funds are issued as frequently as quarterly, as a reimbursement payment upon receipt of a complete and satisfactory performance report and request for reimbursement, which must include detailed supporting documentation for all costs. Final performance reports and reimbursement payments are due 90 days after the grant performance period end date. Projects that are completed early may submit final performance reports and requests for reimbursement early.

Except as otherwise provided in writing in accordance with the procedures provided in a grant agreement, upon expiration, any unused balance in a grant award account or purchase order will be reallocated to an appropriate reserve fund.

5. APPLICATION FORMAT AND PROCEDURES – PREPARING AND SUBMITTING A GRANT APPLICATION

5.1 Application Content, Format, Procedures and Submitting a Grant Application

The Commission has developed an online PSC Grants System to submit grant applications. The instructions for completing a RESP Grant application are in two parts, this document and the [PSC Grants System User's Guide](#). Both parts are available on the RESP [webpage](#).

5.2 RESP Grant Application Instructions.

The first part of the instructions is this document. An applicant should use these instructions to understand the information that is requested for each page and each question in the grant application. Step-by-step instructions are available in Section 5.

Applications MUST be date and time stamped by the PSC Grants System on or before 1:30 pm CT on January 31, 2024 to be considered in the initial review panel evaluation and PSC determination. Applications submitted during the extended application period (February 1 – March 29, 2024) will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis until funds are expended, or March 29, 2024, whichever comes first. Late filings will be automatically rejected by the grants system. Applications dated and time stamped in another office or submitted in another format will be rejected.

5.3 Subscriptions and Resources for Program Participation (NOTE: There are no costs associated with using these services)

- [PSC Grants System User's Guide for Grant Applicants and Recipients](#). The User's Guide provides step-by-step instructions to create a system account, navigate the online grant application, validate the application, and submit the complete application. If awarded, reimbursement requests are also submitted and managed via the PSC Grants System. The User's Guide is the primary resource an applicant should consult to enter and use the online grants system.
- The PSC Grants System is connected to the ERF system, therefore an account is required for both.
 - If you have an ERF account, from the PSC Grants System Login page, follow the link to validate your ERF Account.
 - If you do not have an ERF account, from the [PSC Grants System Login](#) page, follow the link to create an ERF Account, then return to the login page and follow the link to validate your ERF Account.
- [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\) Registration](#). Applicants must register with SAM.gov and obtain a Universal Entity Identifier (UEID) prior to receiving a grant award and are encouraged to do so as soon as possible, to provide the UEID number with the application. SAM is a web-based, government-wide application that collects, validates, stores, and disseminates business information about intended federal grant recipients and other partners.
- A UEID number is a unique twelve-character alphanumeric ID, generated by SAM, used to identify your organization.
- [9714-FG-2023 Applicant Metrics Excel document](#) (Updated Hyperlink). Applicants are required to upload a completed version of this document as part of the application. Use the Instructions sheet within the Excel workbook to support completing the workbook. The document must be submitted as an Excel .xlsx file through the PSC Grants System Upload tab.
- [CEJST map](#). It is recommended that applicants provide a visual, mapped representation of the project location, such as a screen image from the CEJST and /or OEI maps (see 5.4.3), highlighting the areas that will benefit from the project. Applicants may also use the CEJST map as a resource for identifying census tracts benefitting from project implementation. Submit the mapped PDF image(s) through the PSC Grants System Upload tab.
- [OEI Map](#). OEI has developed a map to support applicants' analysis of project location and benefits, including DAC or rural designation and other beneficial items. Please refer to CEJST map for specific indicators for each community designation. It is recommended that applicants provide a visual, mapped representation of the project location, such as a screen image from the CEJST and /or OEI

maps, highlighting the areas that will benefit from the project. Submit the mapped PDF image(s) through the PSC Grants System Upload tab.

5.4 Application Content

An applicant must include the following information in its application to be eligible for a grant and the application must demonstrate satisfaction of indicated requirements. Reference materials such as letters of support, quotes, maps, are allowable. (See [User's Guide](#)).

The review of an application and selection of an applicant for an award will include evaluation of the information submitted in the application, including references. Failure to respond to each of the requirements in the application may be the basis for rejecting a response.

Unless at the request of the PSC, applicants may not submit supplemental information after the deadline.

Elaborate applications (e.g., expensive artwork), beyond that sufficient to present a complete and effective application, are not necessary or desired.

Incurring Costs: Neither the PSC nor the state of Wisconsin is liable for any cost incurred by an applicant in preparing this application.

5.5 Application organization and format

An applicant should use this section to understand what information is requested for each tab and each question or prompt in the online grant application.

Step 1: To begin the application, from the OEI webpage, select Rural Energy Startup Program (RESP). From this page, select 'PSC Grants System Login' or visit this link: [Online Grant System Login PSC Grants \(wi.gov\)](#). This will lead applicants to the login page of the PSC Grants System. For new applicants (those who have not logged into ERF), an applicant will first need to create an ERF system account and can do so from the Grant System login page. (See Section 5.3 of this document, and the [User's Guide](#).) Remember your username and password for future access to the system. For all subsequent instances, you should be able to log-in to the system with that User Name and Password.

Step 2: Upon completing the login, the homepage for the PSC Grants System will display the page titled Available Grants. Find the line for the Rural Energy Startup Program (EECBG) and click on 'Apply.' (See [User's Guide](#).) The application is arranged in a series of tabs along the top of the form. Each tab brings a page to the top so you can fill it in. It is important that you save your work (using the save icon at the bottom of the page) before you leave a page. Unsaved entries will be lost once you leave the page. Please note: Hover over the tooltip icon and use the hyperlinks for more information about each question.

Step 3: The steps below follow the tabs in order from left to right. Select the Details tab and fill in the required information summarized below. (See [User's Guide](#).) Please note that this tab has a validation step. You cannot save your entries or move to the next tab until you enter the required information (denoted with an asterisk) and correct any arithmetic errors in your entries.

Grant Application Details

- Project Name *
- Project Description *: Provide a brief (500 characters) description of the proposed project activities and outcomes.
- Activity Type *: Choose from the eligible activities in the dropdown.
- Grant Amount Requested
- Recipient & Partner Contributions (Match)

Grant Applicant Details

- Applicant Type *
 - Applicant Entity Legal Name *
 - Applicant DBA Name
 - Applicant Address *
 - Applicant City *
 - Applicant State *
 - Applicant Zip Code *
 - Applicant Phone # *
 - Applicant Phone # Ext.
 - Applicant Email Address *
 - Applicant FEIN # *
-
- UEID Code *
 - NAICS³ code *

Remember to save your work (using the save icon at the bottom of the page) before you leave the page. Any unsaved entries will be lost once you leave the tab. Project Description field: Provide a brief (500 characters) description of the proposed project activities and outcomes.

Step 4: Contacts. Select the Contacts tab and fill in the required information. ([See User's Guide.](#)) You must fill in one Primary Contact. Use the Add New Contact button to add additional contacts. Please also fill in the Authorized Representative, the person who will sign the grant agreement. ([See User's Guide](#)) A grant recipient can use this page to add additional names or change the Primary Contact for the grant if the recipient has turnover or other change in staff assignment while the grant project is underway. A grant recipient may wish to specify an individual to serve as a point of contact for any contract concerns. If so, select 'secondary contact' and indicate their expertise as part of the contact title field.

Step 5: Budget. Select the Budget tab and fill in the required information for each Budget Item (i.e., contractual, equipment, etc.). ([See User's Guide](#)). Please note that this tab has a validation step. You cannot save your entries on the Budget tab unless the entries agree with the data entered on the Details tab. Divide the total cost of each Budget item into the portion that will be paid by grant and the portion paid by contributions (matching funds if matching funds are being used). You must enter zero if no costs are associated with a budget field.

Step 6: Communities. Select the Communities tab and fill in the required information to indicate communities served by the project. This tab is not reviewed for merit scoring. It is part of the project description and used for project mapping and reporting purposes. ([See User's Guide](#)).

Step 7: Narrative. Select the Narrative tab and fill in the required information. ([See User's Guide](#)). The Narrative consists of multiple questions and prompts related to an Executive Summary discussed in Section 5.5.1, and the Review Criteria discussed in Section 6.1 of this document. Each question is important and requires a response. Each question is important and requires a response. Unanswered questions affect application merit and may make an application ineligible for funding. Responses are limited to 3000 characters, or approximately 1 page. This tab will consist of multiple pages of content, remember to save your work before advancing to the next page of the Narrative.

Step 8: Uploads. Select the Upload tab and use the Upload Public Document button to add required and optional documents to the application. ([See User's Guide](#)).

- Upload 1: (REQUIRED) Applicants must add a PDF map from the CEJST or OEI Map showing census tract/DAC area.
- Upload 2: (REQUIRED) Applicants must upload a completed version of the *9714-FG-2023 Applicant Metrics.xlsx* document as part of the application. Use the Instructions sheet within

³ North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) U.S. Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

the Excel workbook to support completing the workbook. The document must be submitted as an Excel .xlsx file through the PSC Grants System Upload tab.

- Upload 3: If applicable, applicants may add any documentation of partnerships.
- Upload 4: Applicants may compile and add any additional letters of support, survey data or additional materials that best support the application.

Step 9: Select the Submit tab to validate and submit the application. (See [User's Guide](#)).

5.5.1 Application Executive Summary. Use the executive summary to provide additional overview of the proposed project. These appear as Grant Narrative Questions 1-3 of the Narrative Tab in the grants system.

- Key Partners and Stakeholders. Identify and provide the roles and responsibilities of any project partners or key stakeholder groups.
- Project Objectives and Metrics. Provide specific, measurable objectives that describe the desired results of the project. For each objective, identify metrics to measure its progress and success.
- Reference Materials List. Provide a list of any reference materials included.

5.5.2 Responses to Review Criteria. Use the review questions to provide specific responses to each of the criteria established by the Commission. These responses provide the basis for the review evaluation (See Section 6.1). These appear as Grant Narrative Questions 4-23 of the Narrative Tab in the grants system. As shown below in the underlined prompts, applicants should respond to the appropriate portion of Review Criteria 5.5.7-5.5.9 depending on whether they are proposing Planning Projects or Audit, Assessment, and Implementation Projects. In the Grants System, provide “n/a” for system-required fields that are not applicable to the applicant’s project. Applications will only be evaluated on the portion of the question that aligns with the proposed project, as shown in Section 6.1.

5.5.3 Rural.

Using one of the designated tools (Rural County Code, Rural Zip Code as shown on OEI Map) identify whether your municipality or county is considered rural.

5.5.4 Equity, Energy Justice – Justice40 Screening.

Using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) or the OEI Map that includes DAC identification and rural designations determine if there is a census tract(s) in which the project is located or associated with that is disadvantaged. If yes, please describe how the project benefits will flow down to the DAC.

5.5.4.1 If an applicant uses the CEJST map to demonstrate DAC benefits, provide the proportion of project-benefitting census tracts that are considered by CEJST as disadvantaged.

5.5.4.2 The 9714-FG-2023 Applicant Metrics.xlsx document, which is a required document that is submitted through PSC Grants System Upload tab, requests a complete list of all census tracts that would be benefitting from the project, regardless of whether the tract is identified as a DAC.

5.5.4.3 Using the PSC Grants System Upload tab, it is recommended that applicants also provide a visual, mapped representation, such as a screen image from the CEJST or OEI map, of the project location and the areas that will benefit from the project.

5.5.5 New or Existing Plans and Opportunities.

Please identify whether the proposed project will result in a new, or an update to an existing, Comprehensive Energy or Renewable Resource Plan, or audit. If updating an existing plan, please describe how it is different from the original plan, including previous endeavors (e.g. ISO 50001 Audit, Energy Independent Communities), and identify the reason(s) for the update. Upload reference documents or provide excerpts as needed.

5.5.6 Ability and Preparedness to Achieve Objectives.

Applicant understands and affirms they will use and implement a DOE blueprint (Blueprint 1: Energy Planning, Blueprint 2A: Energy Efficiency: Energy Audits and Building Upgrades, Blueprint 3D: Renewable Resource Planning for Rural and Tribal Communities). Demonstrate how the Applicant's organization, staff, stakeholders, and any known subcontractors' experience will assist them to achieve the objectives.

5.5.7 Budget Justification and Contributions

Provide detail on who will be implementing the project. Describe the project team or lead, such as in-house individual or team, third party consultant, or undecided, that will create the plan, audit, and/or upgrade. If undecided, describe what methods have you considered and whether there are outstanding questions or needs for technical assistance.

Describe the engagement level with internal stakeholders and the applicant's understanding of possible costs associated with the project.

Provide a cost basis for each line item on which costs were entered on the Budget Tab. Applicants should describe the extent to which a cost share may be required if the total project cost exceeds the maximum grant request of \$75,000. If a building upgrade is proposed under Activity 3, provide a distinct cost basis between an audit or assessment and the upgrade.

5.5.8 Cost Savings and Payback, Economic Impacts

Describe the project's potential for cost savings to the community based on affected community population, building stock, and energy type usage and costs. Identify the immediate or future potential for stimulating local and/or state economy and workforce as a result of this project.

If you are conducting an audit or assessment under Activity 3, or have one previously completed and are proposing a building upgrade under Activity 3, please acknowledge that it will/has met the minimum requirements.

These requirements are:

- the work to be performed
- a clear statement of what is being assessed and why
- a summary of findings (including a statement of project feasibility)
- energy saving estimates and supporting calculations
- project cost estimates
- any data collected and used in the assessment
- detailed report containing the deliverables defined in the assessment proposal

If an audit or assessment is already completed and applicant proposes a building upgrade under Activity 3, describe any expected payback from the project activities, the methodology used to calculate it, and the likelihood of the project to move forward with or without funding. Include any expected savings associated with operations and maintenance and its impact on financial outcomes, labor, or other resources.

5.5.9 Energy savings and Environmental Impact (kilowatt, kilowatt hour, therms, gallons of gasoline, emissions)

Describe the effectiveness or desired results of the plan, audit, or assessment project in setting baseline information and preparation for, or the effectiveness of the upgrade project in, saving or producing clean energy in terms of kilowatts, kilowatt hours, therms, gallons of gasoline, etc. Applicants may access the EPA Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Equivalencies Calculator here: <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator> to quantify emissions reductions (carbon, other GHGs, etc.) associated with estimated project energy savings. At minimum, applicants should provide the type of energy currently used in the community (electric, natural gas, propane, other) that the project could affect.

5.6 Submitting Information

- The evaluation of an application and selection of an applicant for an award will be based upon the information submitted in the application. Failure to respond to each of the requirements in the application may adversely affect the evaluation of the grant application.
- Do not use hyperlinks in your answers or attachments in excess of the requested documents in the grant system. Hyperlinks to additional information are not evaluated, nor are they considered to be part of the application.
- Neither the Commission nor the State is liable for any cost incurred by the applicant in preparing this application. Costs of preparing the application are not reimbursable if a grant is awarded.
- Applications are public unless otherwise specified. All applications will be posted on ERF, displaying the content provided in the PSC Grants System, under the docket number 9714-FG-2023 and will be available for public inspection shortly after filing.
- Multiple applications from an applicant are permitted. Including as provided in Section 1.3.1.2, multiple applications from a single applicant are permissible. An applicant may submit one application per Activity Category. Each application must be submitted separately and be a unique application in the Grants System.

5.7 Supplemental Information

An applicant may request that the Commission accept supplemental information related to an application that was otherwise timely filed. A request to supplement an application must be emailed to OEI@wisconsin.gov. The grant manager will work with the applicant to supplement the record if allowed. The Commission may request that an applicant submit supplemental or clarifying information, consistent with the application requirements. If received and accepted, supplemental information will be incorporated into the application and evaluated by the Commission using the established criteria to determine which applications should receive a grant award.

5.8 Designation of Confidential and Proprietary Information and Notary Officer Requirement

Applications are public unless otherwise specified. All applications will be posted on ERF, displaying the content provided in the PSC Grants System, under the docket number 9714-FG-2023 and will be available for public inspection shortly after filing.

Applicants should refrain from requesting confidential status unless necessary, or from requesting confidentiality of the entire application or appendix thereto. Do not provide personally identifiable information. Avoid providing proprietary information unless necessary to describe the project activities. Where only a portion of the information is confidential, confidential status shall only be requested for that portion and not the entire document.

Applicants may request confidential handling of confidential information by following the prompts in the PSC Grants System. The filing must comply with the PSC’s confidential handling requirements specified in Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 2.12. This includes requirements related to an affidavit and notary officer.

In addition, the applicant is hereby notified that confidential handling of information in portions of its application is not a determination of confidential treatment by the PSC for purposes of Wisconsin’s Open Records Law, Wis. Stat. §§ 19.31 to 19.39.

5.9 Withdrawal of Application

An applicant may withdraw an application in writing at any time up to the application closing date and time. To accomplish this, the applicant must submit a written request to withdraw the application via the ERF system and comply with any additional instruction provided by PSC. If a previously submitted application is withdrawn before the due date and time, the applicant may submit another application at any time up to the application closing date and time.

5.10 Right to Reject Applications and Negotiate Grant Terms

The PSC reserves the right to reject any application as filed, and negotiate the terms of the grant award, including the award amount, with any selected applicant. If negotiations cannot be concluded successfully with an applicant, as determined solely by the PSC, the PSC may withdraw its award offer.

6. EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

The following eligibility and evaluation criteria will be used to guide Commission staff and review panel in evaluating grant projects’ eligibility, scoring grant applications if necessary due to application volume or other factor, and preparing a list of recommended awardees for Commission consideration. A review panel will conduct an initial screening on eligibility and review criteria. The Commission will consider all available information, including the applications and review panel’s initial screening and recommendation, when making final award determinations at one of its regularly scheduled open meetings. The Commission’s decision of whether to select a project for a grant award involves intertwined legal, factual, and public policy and interest determinations. Depending on the array of applications submitted, project features that meet those intersecting priorities will vary and the Commission may need to consider additional factors to reach a well-reasoned decision. Commissioners are not bound by the below scoring criteria or resulting merit list, which are staff analysis intended for advisory purposes only. In reviewing and awarding grants, the Commissioners use their experience, technical competence, and specialized knowledge. The Commissioners, as the finder of fact and decision makers, are charged with evaluating all available information and applying any relevant statutory and federal criteria to reach well-reasoned decisions.

For applications submitted by January 31, 2024, PSC staff expects the review panel process to conclude in February 2024 for award determinations by the Commission in Spring 2024 (See section 4.1). Applications submitted after January 31, 2024, are subject to further Commission decision on the timing of these process steps.

6.1. Review

The basis for an application’s review is the Applicant’s responses to the narrative questions in the grant system. The completeness and accuracy with which Applicants have responded to this review criteria in the application will allow the review panel to use the rubric below to issue a determination and point value, if necessary, for each.

<u>Screening Criteria</u>	<u>Determination</u>	<u>Possible</u>	<u>Possible</u>
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		Points, If Needed (Activities 1 & 2)	Points, If Needed (Activity 3)
Rural Refer to Section 5.5.3 for question detail.	Location is rural.	N/A. Required	N/A. Required
Equity, Energy Justice – Justice40 Refer to Section 5.5.4 for question detail.	Project is in a DAC or its' benefits will flow down to a DAC.	20	20
New or Existing Plans and Opportunities Refer to Section 5.5.5 for question detail.	Proposal type is selected. If updating an existing plan, an explanation is provided.	10	10
Ability and Preparedness to Achieve Objectives Refer to Section 5.5.6 for question detail.	Acknowledgement of following a blueprint for their proposal.	10	10
Budget Justification and Contributions Refer to Section 5.5.7 for question detail.	Questions are answered, and costs are provided in the budget tab.	10	10
Cost Savings and Payback, Economic Impacts Refer to Section 5.5.8 for question detail.	Audit/assessment guidelines acknowledged. Savings of the cost are described.	10	10
Energy savings and Environmental Impact (kilowatt, kilowatt hour, therms, gallons of gasoline, emissions) Refer to Section 5.5.9 for question detail.	Energy saved by the indicated measures are provided.	10	10
<u>TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE</u>		70	70

7. AWARDS PROCESS

7.1 Order Awarding Grants

The Commission will discuss which applicants will receive RESP grants at an open meeting. Applicants may subscribe to docket 9714-FG-2023 to receive a notification when the agenda for that meeting has been posted, and may watch the meeting on the Commission's YouTube channel. Minutes for the open meeting will also be posted to the docket. The Commissioners are not bound by the merit criteria and evaluation in making final determinations. After its discussion, the Commission will issue a Final Decision awarding grants in docket 9714-FG-2023.

7.2 Grant Agreement

The Commission requires that each awarded grant applicant enter into a grant agreement with the Commission. The grant agreement will confirm the grant award, including the amount of the grant award and match or contributions, the scope of the project and the terms and conditions ordered by the

Commission. The grant award is not final until the applicant signs and returns the grant agreement and the Commission executes the document. A signed grant agreement is due to the Commission no later than 60 days following the date of issuance of the grant agreement to the applicant. Failure to complete and return the grant agreement by the due date may result in cancellation of the award.

1. The order awarding grants and the grant agreement, including any amendments, will together constitute the entire agreement of the state and the applicant, and will supersede any representations, commitments, conditions, or agreements made orally or in writing prior to the issuance of the order.
2. Failure of an applicant to comply with the Commission's order or grant agreement, as amended, may result in cancellation of the award.
3. Recommended or suggested contract language or terms submitted as part of a grant application will not be incorporated or assumed incorporated into the grant agreement. The final terms and conditions of the grant agreement will constitute the entire agreement, including attachments and any amendments.

7.3 Right to Deny the Application and Negotiate Grant Terms

The Commission may reject any application as filed, and negotiate the terms of a grant award, including the award amount, with the selected applicant prior to offering the grant and executing a grant agreement. If negotiations cannot be concluded successfully with an applicant, as determined solely by the Commission, the Commission may withdraw its award offer.

7.4 No Appeal Process

An applicant may have general remedies under other provisions of Wis. Stat. chs. 196 and 227 if the applicant believes it is aggrieved by any final award determination. This provision is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice and is not a determination by the Commission that the applicant has any right to protest or appeal with respect to the Commission's Final Decision.

8. NOTICE OF APPLICABLE REQUIREMENTS, GENERAL EXPECTATIONS and OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS

The following terms and conditions are the anticipated, minimum grant agreement terms and conditions. Additional terms and conditions may apply.

8.1 Applicable Federal Requirements

As this program is federally funded by the IIJA, all projects are required to comply with federal requirements including the Buy American provisions of the IIJA, Davis-Bacon and Related Acts (DBRA) provisions, historic preservation requirements, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as far as those requirements already apply and subject to any different or additional requirements specified in the final grant agreement. Applicants should familiarize themselves with the requirements prior to applying and be prepared to address the applicability of the various requirements in the application. A brief summary of these provisions and available resources are below. Please note, the following summaries are meant to provide general guidance and a starting point for applicants to understand project requirements under the IIJA. However, different or additional requirements may be included in the final grant agreements. The following summaries are not legal advice.

8.1.1. Buy American Provisions [APPLICABLE TO PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE]

8.1.1.1 The Buy American provisions of the IIJA provide, but are not limited to:

- None of the funds provided under this award (federal share or recipient cost-share) may be used for a project for infrastructure unless:
 - All iron and steel used in the project is produced in the United States—this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States;
 - All manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and
 - All construction materials are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States.

The Buy America Requirement does not apply to non-public infrastructure. For purposes of this guidance, infrastructure should be considered “public” if it is: 1) publicly owned or (2) privately owned but utilized primarily for a public purpose. Infrastructure should be considered to be “utilized primarily for a public purpose” if it is privately operated on behalf of the public or is a place of public accommodation.

The Buy America Requirement only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought into the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America Preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

Additional information is maintained by the U.S. DOE Office of Management:

- [Build America, Buy America website](#)
- See [DOE's Implementation of the Buy America Requirement for Infrastructure Projects](#) to learn more

8.1.2 Davis-Bacon Requirements:

8.1.2.1 The Davis-Bacon provisions of IJA provide, but are not limited to:

- All laborers and mechanics employed by the recipient, subrecipients, contractors or subcontractors in the performance of construction, alteration, or repair work in excess of \$2,000 on an award funded directly by or assisted in whole or in part by funds made available under this award shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on similar projects in the locality, as determined by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with subchapter IV of

chapter 31 of title 40, United States Code commonly referred to as the “Davis-Bacon Act” (DBA).

- The Federal government determines and sets the prevailing wage rates on SAM.gov. See the [Wage Determinations](#) page for specific wage rates by county and construction type.

For additional guidance on how to comply with the Davis-Bacon provisions and clauses, see:

- U.S. Department of Labor [Davis-Bacon and Related Acts](#)
- U.S. Department of Labor [Protections for Workers in Construction under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)

8.1.3 Historic preservation requirements

For project activities that involve historical, archeological or cultural resources (includes listed and eligible resources over 50 years old or of cultural significance), a review of the undertaking may be required. However, a number of energy related activities have been previously identified that do not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, even when historic properties may be present. They are covered by an existing programmatic agreement between the U.S. Department of Energy, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office and certain State agencies.

- Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Programmatic Agreement: https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f7/state_historic_preservation_programmatic_agreement_wi.pdf

8.1.4 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Certain Grantees may be directed to complete and submit as part of the contract negotiation process an Environmental Questionnaire (EQ) for NEPA review and approval by the U.S. Department of Energy. An EQ will be required if the project is beyond the scope of the NEPA determination in Appendix B, whether because of size, technology, placement, or other factor. Applicants are encouraged to review the list of bounded categories early to determine whether this requirement will apply.

The National Environmental Policy Act and Historic Preservation Training Website for the Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs Office | Department of Energy: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/articles/national-environmental-policy-act-and-historic-preservation-training-website>

8.2 Reporting

8.2.1 State and Federal reporting requirements. Applicants will be expected to submit quarterly, final, and on-request, reports to the PSC on the activities, progress of the project, and grant costs to satisfy state and federal reporting requirements. Certain reporting requirements shall continue to be required post-disbursement.

8.2.2 IJJA. Applicants will be expected to comply with the reporting requirements of the IJJA that impact wage rates, equipment sourcing, environmental impact reporting, historic preservation, etc.

8.3 Grant Award Agreement Compliance

The PSC reserves the right to incorporate State and Federal contract provisions into any grant award agreement negotiated with any organization submitting a response to this application. Failure of the

successful applicant to accept the obligations in a grant award agreement will result in cancellation of the award.

8.4 Termination of Grant Award

The PSC may terminate a grant award for any reason at any time at its sole discretion by delivering ten (10) days written notice to the applicant/grantee. Upon termination, the PSC's liability will in no event exceed the pro rata cost of the services performed as of the date of termination, plus expenses incurred with the prior written approval of the PSC. In no event will the PSC's liability exceed the total amount of the grant awarded to the applicant/grantee. In the event that the applicant terminates the grant award, for any reason whatsoever, such termination will require written notice to that effect and shall be filed by the applicant on the PSC's ERF system not less than ten (10) days prior to said termination. If termination is delivered by applicant, no grant proceeds will be dispersed, and all costs and expenses incurred by the applicant will not be reimbursed.

**APPENDIX A -
BUDGET CATEGORIES**

Contractual	All project expenses for work performed by a third-party contractor. A third-party contractor is any entity that is not a signatory to the grant agreement. Examples: consultant, legal services, cement contractors, solar installers, laborers/mechanics, tree trimmers, electrician, engineering services, etc. Any materials supplied by a third-party contractor should be included here.
Equipment	Equipment means tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000.
Supplies	Supplies means all tangible personal property other than those described by the Equipment category. All items with per-unit acquisition costs of less than \$5,000, regardless of the length of useful life, are considered supplies.
Labor Salary	Actual labor expenses of the grant recipient. This category is limited to direct personnel expenses only. Do not include costs of contractors, etc.
Labor Fringe	Actual fringe benefit expenses of the grant recipient. This category is limited to direct personnel expenses only. Do not include costs of contractors, etc.
Travel	Grantee's travel expenses related to the project.
Other	Other expenses not specified above. Please provide details in the notes.

NOTE: "Eligible Costs" means those costs which are: (1) not covered by any other federal funding; (2) subject to audit by the Commission; (3) directly attributable to activities identified in the Project Scope of a recipient's grant agreement; (4) identified in the Project Budget of a recipient's grant agreement, subject to any amendments to the grant agreement; and (5) incurred between the date of the executed grant agreement and the end of the Performance Period defined in the grant agreement, as may be amended.

APPENDIX B - NEPA REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS

The U.S. DOE has made a NEPA determination by issuing a categorical exclusion (CX) for all activities listed in the OEI Application for the EECBG funds, including the activities of the RESP, subject to certain conditions including being absent extraordinary circumstances, cumulative impacts, or connected actions that may lead to significant impacts on the environment, or any inconsistency with “integral elements” (as contained in 10 C.F.R. Part 1021) as they relate to a particular project.

RESP applicants are expected to propose activities and equipment, if applicable, that conform with U.S. DOE’s EECBG Program Blueprints #1, #2A, and #3D, as listed below. RESP applicants proposing activities and equipment not listed below must submit an Environmental Questionnaire 1 form (EQ1). The list below does not replace the Commission’s Order dated November 29, 2023, establishing the program design of the RESP, or any other Commission Order, or the terms of any grant agreements executed under the RESP.

Categories by Blueprint, from [*Non-Tribal Statement of Work WITH Preservation Agreement and NO Ground Disturbance \(energy.gov\)*](#):

Blueprint #1: Energy Planning, activities limited to:

- a. Stakeholder engagement, education, and outreach.
- b. Energy data collection to assist in reducing fossil fuel emissions, reducing total energy use, or improving energy efficiency, including to establish a baseline.
- c. Development of an energy vision, goals, and strategies.
- d. Writing, adopting, and/or publicizing an energy plan.
- e. Development of energy efficiency and conservation strategies, project-specific plans that may require feasibility studies, preparation of preliminary project design, outreach, and technical support to state agencies, local governments, and affected stakeholders.
- f. Development and implementation of programs and strategies to encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy such as policy development and stakeholder engagement.

Blueprint #2A: Funding commercially available, energy efficient, grid-interactivity, electrification and renewable energy upgrades; provided that projects adhere to the requirements of the respective applicant’s DOE executed Historic Preservation Programmatic Agreement (PA), are installed in or on existing buildings, do not require ground disturbance, tree removal or tree trimming, do not require structural reinforcement, and are limited to:

- a. Building energy assessments.
- b. Energy audits.
- c. Installation of insulation.
- d. Installation of energy efficient lighting and light poles (may be installed within a maintained utility easement if no trees are removed and no ground disturbed).
- e. HVAC upgrades to existing systems.
- f. Weather sealing and duct sealing.
- g. Purchase and installation of energy/water-efficient residential and commercial appliances and equipment (including, but not limited to, grid-interactive building technologies, energy or water monitoring and control systems, thermostats, heat pumps, air conditioners, and related software).
- h. Retrofit of energy efficient pumps and motors (for such uses as, but not limited to, wastewater treatment plants) where it would not alter the capacity, use, mission, or operation of an existing facility.
- i. Retrofit and replacement of windows and doors.
- j. Installation of electric appliances (including replacement of appliances that utilize fossil fuels with electric appliances) such as heat pumps for water heating, air heating/cooling, electric dryers, and stoves.

k. Retrofit and installation of energy-efficient commercial kitchen equipment, such as efficient refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers.

l. Electrical system upgrades limited to electric panel upgrades, updated wiring and conduit, grounding, and arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) and ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) breakers.

Blueprint #3D: Renewable Resource Planning, activities limited to:

a. Market assessment.

b. Stakeholder engagement.

c. Action Plan development and implementation, which may include resource planning and preliminary siting assessments, identification of financial options, and streamlining of permitting processes.

d. Development, implementation, and installation of solar electricity/photovoltaic (PV) systems, provided that projects adhere to the requirements of the respective applicant's DOE executed Historic Preservation Programmatic Agreement (PA), are installed in or on existing buildings, do not require ground disturbance, tree removal or tree trimming, do not require structural reinforcement, and are not to exceed 60 kW DC.

e. Development and installation of energy storage systems, including electrochemical and thermal storage systems, provided that projects adhere to the requirements of the respective applicant's DOE executed Historic Preservation Programmatic Agreement (PA), are installed in or on existing buildings, do not require ground disturbance, tree removal or tree trimming, do not require structural reinforcement, and are appropriately sized not to exceed 1,000 kWh.

f. Implementation of financial incentive programs including rebates; energy savings performance contracts, renewable energy sharing, or energy savings agreements for existing facilities; community solar credit sharing arrangements; grants and loans to support energy efficiency, renewable energy and energy saving projects. All project activities funded under a financial incentive program must be listed within this statement of work.