

Energy Innovation Grant Program  
2022  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



**Proposals Due: January 30, 2023, by 4:00 pm CT**

Please refer to the following FAQ and the Energy Innovation Grant Program 2022 Application Instructions (Application Instructions) located here: <https://apps.psc.wi.gov/pages/viewdoc.htm?docid=450820> .

#### **A) Eligible Applicants:**

**Question A.1:** Can a single eligible entity submit multiple applications?

**Answer A.1:** Yes. Per Application Instructions section 2.3, an eligible applicant may submit **one application per Activity Category** (Activity 1: Renewable Energy and Energy Storage, Activity 2: Energy Efficiency and Demand Response, Activity 3: Comprehensive Energy Planning & Feasibility Studies for Microgrids), for a **total of three applications**.

**Question A.2:** Are there restrictions on the size of manufacturers that are eligible for the grant program?

**Answer A.2:** No. The eligibility criteria set forth in Application section 1.2.2.1. do not contain size restrictions.

**Question A.3:** What is the definition of Manufacturers for the purpose of this program?

**Answer A.3:** Manufacturers as defined by Wis. Stat. § 77.51(h).

Wis. Stat. § 77.51(7h), which pertains to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, provides: (a) "Manufacturing" means the production by machinery of a new article of tangible personal property or item or property under s. 77.52 (1) (b) or (c) with a different form, use, and name from existing materials, by a process popularly regarded as manufacturing, and that begins with conveying raw materials and supplies from plant inventory to the place where work is performed in the same plant and ends with conveying finished units of tangible personal property or item or property under s. 77.52 (1) (b) or (c) to the point of first storage in the same plant. "Manufacturing" includes: 1. Crushing, washing, grading and blending sand, rock, gravel and other minerals. 2. Ore dressing, including the mechanical preparation, by crushing and other processes, and the concentration, by flotation and other processes, of ore, and beneficiation, including the preparation of ore for smelting. 3. Conveying work in progress directly from one manufacturing process to another in the same plant; testing or inspecting, throughout the manufacturing process, the new article of tangible personal property or item or property under s. 77.52 (1) (b) or (c) that is being manufactured; storing work in progress in the same plant where the manufacturing occurs; assembling finished units of tangible personal property or item or property under s. 77.52 (1) (b) or (c); and packaging a new article of tangible personal property or items or property under s. 77.52 (1) (b) or (c), if the manufacturer, or another person on the manufacturer's behalf, performs the packaging and if the packaging becomes part of the new article as it is customarily offered for sale by the manufacturer. (b) "Manufacturing" does not include storing raw materials or finished units of tangible personal property or items or property under s. 77.52 (1) (b) or (c), research or development, delivery to or from the plant, or repairing or maintaining plant facilities.

**Question A.4:** Can multiple eligible entities partner together to apply for a grant?

**Answer A.4:** Yes, however an application should designate a lead entity for project management and fiscal responsibility, and all partners must be eligible entities. The eligibility criteria is set forth in Application Instructions section 1.2.2.1.

**Question A.5:** Can an ineligible applicant apply, as a pass-through entity or lead applicant, on behalf of an eligible applicant?

**Answer A.5:** No. An ineligible applicant cannot act as a pass-through entity for an eligible applicant described in Application Instructions section 1.2.2.1.

**Question A.6:** What role can consultants play in assisting eligible applicants with the application process?

**Answer A.6:** A third party consultant may assist an eligible applicant in their application preparation and submission. While a consultant may, as a service to their client, submit the application to the PSC Grants Management System, the application contacts must include at least one of the eligible applicant's own representatives and include the required information for the applicant organization itself. Additionally, eligible applicants and their consultants should note that pre-award costs are not allowed, meaning any expense incurred for the consultant's services prior to the project performance period would not be reimbursable by the grant. Consultants and eligible applicants should refer to Application Instructions section 3.1 for instructions on submitting the application to the PSC Grants System.

**Question A.7.:** Can eligible applicants that are a part of the same umbrella organization submit separate grant applications as individual entities?

**Answer A.7.:** Yes, separate eligible entities under the same umbrella organization, such as an individual UW-System Campus, may apply as individual applicants. Applicants should share relevant information to differentiate from other applicants associated with the umbrella organization, such as separate Federal Employer Identifier Number (FEIN), address, Unique Entity ID (generated by SAM.gov). See section 1.5 of the Application Instructions.

## **B) Eligible Activities:**

**Question B.1:** Are multiple eligible Activity Categories ((Activity 1: Renewable Energy and Energy Storage, Activity 2: Energy Efficiency and Demand Response, Activity 3: Comprehensive Energy Planning & Feasibility Studies for Microgrids) allowed in a single application?

**Answer B.1:** No. Applicants must select a single activity category per application. Applicants may submit one application per activity category.

**Question B.2:** Is my project activity eligible if it is not expressly listed in the examples and descriptions provided for the Eligible Activities in section 1.2.2.2?

**Answer B.2:** The examples and parameters described in section 1.2.2.2 of the Application Instructions are from the Commission order establishing the scope of the 2022 round. Where there is ambiguity, it is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate the eligibility of its project under a specific activity category for the Commission to consider. The Commission ultimately determines what is eligible in this program, these decisions are not made at the staff level.

**Question B.3:** Can energy utilities be reimbursed if they are working as subcontractors in local government plans or projects?

**Answer B.3:** If the utility is providing a service for a fee to the grant project, they can be treated and reimbursed as a subcontractor.

**Question B.4:** Are eligible manufacturers able to apply for projects that do not affect their manufacturing processes, such as efficiency or renewable energy systems installation projects?

**Answer B.4:** Yes, eligible manufacturers are able to apply for all eligible activities under 1.2.2.2, including efficiency or renewable projects that occur at their facilities.

**Question B.5:** Can a single project take place on multiple sites or buildings? For example, could a school district apply to conduct an implementation project that takes place at multiple school buildings in the district?

**Answer B.5:** Yes. An applicant may apply to undertake a project that impacts multiple sites. The maximum grant request applies to the overall project, regardless of the number of project sites (multiple project sites do not increase the maximum grant request).

## **C) Funding Requests and Payments:**

**Question C.1:** Will up-front payments be allowed?

**Answer C.1:** No. Per Application Instructions section 5.1., 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.

**Question C.2:** Will incremental requests for reimbursement be allowed?

**Answer C.2:** Yes. Per Application Instructions section 5.1., 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.

**Question C.3:** Will partial awards be made?

**Answer C.3:** The Commission reserves the right to make partial awards.

**D) Merit Review Criteria and Evaluation:**

**Question D.1:** How do incentives and grants count towards cost share?

**Answer D.1:** All expected project funding should be described in responses to section 3.3.2 of the Application Instructions and referenced as applicable in other sections of the application narrative. The cost share recorded in the application Budget Tab (Grants Management System) and discussed in the application narrative should be non-federal, and limited to secured or prescriptive sources of funding. For example, prescriptive Focus on Energy incentives may be counted, but competitive grant funding that has yet to be awarded may not be counted as match.

**Question D.2:** Is a cost share (“match”) required for grant application?

**Answer D.2:** No. Cost share (“match”) is not required, but highly recommended. A project’s cost share (“match”) is calculated as a percentage of the total project cost from submitted applications and is provided to the Commission as information they may consider in making final decision on awards.

**Question D.3:** Are there different weights assigned to individual merit review criteria during the evaluation phase?

**Answer D.3:** No. All merit review criteria are weighted equally by the evaluation committee; therefore applicants should respond to each. Note that the recommendations of the evaluation committee are one factor that the Commission may consider in making the final decision on awards.

**E) Application Materials and Processes:**

**Question E.1:** Will OEI review or provide feedback on draft application packages?

**Answer E.1:** No. Only complete and final application packages submitted to the PSC Grants Management System will be reviewed by the evaluation committee.

**Question E.2:** What subscriptions or accounts are required to submit an application?

**Answer E.2:** See section 1.5 of the Application Instructions. Applicants are advised to create subscriptions and accounts as early as possible to prevent delay in submission or processing of the application.

**Question E.3:** What American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Requirements should be considered or performed prior to submitting the application?

**Answer E.3:** Applicants should research and incorporate the Buy American and Davis Bacon Related Act provisions of ARRA to the extent possible in their application, these may have cost implications for the project. Applicants should study the activities discussed in Attachment A related to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the agreement linked in Section 1.3.4 of the Application Instructions related to State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) review to anticipate what additional federal processing may be required of their project if it is selected for funding. For those projects requiring NEPA and SHPO review, Commission staff will provide additional guidance for grantees after the Commission award process. Applicants should await further direction from the Commission on obtaining official NEPA and SHPO review and approval.

**F) Eligible Costs:**

**Question F.1:** Can ineligible activity costs, such as those activities listed in section 1.2.3 of the Application Instructions, or costs of items that are non-compliant with ARRA, be used as match or as part of the applicant’s cost share in the budget?

**Answer F.1:** No, all project costs, whether grant-funded or applicant-funded (or contributed to the applicant from a third party source) need to be reasonably associated with the eligible project activity, an eligible cost type (see the Budget Tab in the Grants System), and compliant with all state and federal provisions including ARRA.

**Question F.2:** Are pre-award costs allowed? Such as preparation of the application or materials required for the federal review steps?

**Answer F.2:** No, pre-award costs are not allowed. All costs must be incurred during the project performance period, which begins on the date the grant agreement is countersigned by the Commission and ends approximately one year from that date.

**Question F.3:** Is there a list of all of the types of eligible costs for this program?

**Answer F.3:** No, there is not a single list of eligible costs. Some items are expressly defined as ineligible, such as those activities listed in Section 1.2.3 of the Application Instructions. Please see the Budget Tab in the Grants System for allowable cost types. Any costs that the Commission deems ineligible during the application review may be removed from a project that is otherwise meritorious and selected for funding if the Commission so chooses.

**Question F.4:** Do federal loans count as “federal funding” when considering eligible project cost share “match”?

**Answer: F.4:** Yes, any federally-provided funding, would be ineligible to be included as an applicant’s cost share (or “match”). Examples of eligible sources of cost share are provided in section 3.3.3.2 of the Application Instructions.