**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**RFP SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RFP NUMBER AND TITLE:** | [RFA 202312239](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/sites/maine.gov.dafs.bbm.procurementservices/files/inline-files/RFA%20202312239%20-%20Grid%20Resilience%20FINAL.docx) – Maine Grid Resilience Grant Program |
| **RFP ISSUED BY:** | Governor’s Energy Office |
| **SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE DATE:** | March 7, 2024 |
| **QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ISSUED:** | March 20, 2024 |
| **PROPOSAL DUE DATE:** | March 28, 2024 |
| **PROPOSALS DUE TO:** | [Proposals@maine.gov](mailto:Proposals@maine.gov) |

**Provided below are submitted written questions received and the Department’s answer.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section C, pg 7 | The city is in need of adding 10 new street lights along Central Drive here in town. This road gives access to our International Airport, the National Guard headquarters, our Industrial Park, and the federally recognized Native American tribe the Aroostook Band of Mic Macs.  It has been determined by our Police Department that there is insufficient lighting along this roadway making it unsafe. When we install the new poles, the electrical lines would be run underground for resilience against wind, snow, and other extreme weather conditions experienced here often in northern Maine. In reading the FAQ for the grant, it does not immediately look as if the city would be eligible. Would you kindly confirm that one way or the other for us? |
| **Answer** | |
| Eligible entities as defined by the federal program are as follows:  A. an electric grid operator  B. an electricity storage operator  C. an electricity generator  D. a transmission owner or operator  E. a distribution provider  F. a fuel supplier, and  G. any other relevant entity as determined by the Secretary of Energy.  Proposed projects must provide a description of how the project will fulfil at a minimum one of the core program objectives, while also at a minimum not undermining the other core program objectives. Entities not included on this list with an allowable resilience project can partner with an eligible entity, or request an eligibility determination through the US Secretary of the Department of Energy in it’s application. Final determinations of eligibility and approvals will be made by the US Department of Energy. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| n/a | I know the RFA is meant for utilities and grid operators, but I'm curious how your team is prioritizing certain investments in this round of applications. |
| **Answer** | |
| Awards through this program will be directed to projects in alignment with the program objectives. The program will prioritize projects that benefit areas federally identified as disadvantaged communities, indicate partnership with a community, and demonstrate increased community and economic resilience. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **3** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, pg 10 | How is GEO defining “electricity storage operator” in terms of eligibility for applying for the Grid Resilience Grant Program? We are a solar energy service company, where we install and manage battery systems for customers, but we are also interested in the potential for microgrid management. |
| **Answer** | |
| Eligible entities as defined by the federal program are as follows:  A. an electric grid operator  B. an electricity storage operator  C. an electricity generator  D. a transmission owner or operator  E. a distribution provider  F. a fuel supplier, and  G. any other relevant entity as determined by the Secretary of Energy.  The RFA application form (embedded on page 18 of the RFA) includes a field for the applicant to indicate which category of eligible entity best describes the applicant, as well as a field to provide rationale if the applicant has selected eligible entity category “G. any other relevant entity as determined by the Secretary of Energy.” Project selections will be made according to the RFA criteria and through the selection process described in Part M of the RFA, and the GEO will provide project selections to US Department of Energy.  Entities not included on the eligible entity list within the RFA with an allowable resilience project can partner with an eligible entity, or request an eligibility determination through the US Secretary of the Department of Energy in its application. Final eligibility determinations and approvals will be made by the US Department of Energy. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **4** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section C, pg 7 | Are non profit or municipal entities allowed to apply for these funds? |
| **Answer** | |
| 1. See response to Question 1 above. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **5** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section C, pg 7 | Is a private distribution line contractor an eligible entity? |
| **Answer** | |
| 1. See response to Question 1 above. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **6** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section C, pg 7 | Section C of the RFA states applicants must explain and provide relevant documentation supporting a determination by the GEO and DOE that the applicant is an eligible entity.   * Please confirm that an end user that owns and operates a behind-the-meter, non-exporting battery storage system is considered an electricity storage operator under the RFA. * What documentation should such an end user provide in the application submission? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes, an end user as described above would qualify as an electricity storage operator. Documentation should demonstrate that the entity does or would indeed own and operate a behind-the-meter battery storage system (BTM BESS) as well as operational status of the BTM BESS. Note that per federal program rules regarding eligible activities, a BESS must enhance system adaptive capacity during disruptive events. Construction of a new large scale battery storage facility that is not used for enhancing system adaptive capacity during disruptive events is not an allowable use of funds. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **7** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, pg 9 | Section G of the RFA states that an eligible use of funds is the use or construction of distributed energy resources for enhancing system adaptive capacity during disruptive events, including microgrids and battery storage subcomponents.   * Are there any limitations on which battery system components grant funding can be used for or can an applicant use grant funding to purchase any battery system component including battery modules, inverters, transformers, switchgear, and/or metering? |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to the US Department of Energy Microgrid Overview guide, available at <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/46060_DOE_GDO_Microgrid_Overview_Fact_Sheet_RELEASE_508.pdf>, specifically the blue box on page 3 entitled “Eligible Uses of 40101(d) Grid Resilience Formula Grants for Microgrid Components.” | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **8** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| n/a | If an applicant believes a Build America Buy America (BABA) waiver is necessary for its project’s manufactured components, please confirm the actions the applicant needs to complete prior to the submission of this application to the GEO.   * Is it sufficient for the applicant to include an explanation of why it believes a BABA waiver is necessary or does the applicant need to include a draft waiver request as part of its application submission? |
| **Answer** | |
| GEO strongly recommends applicants who anticipate seeking a BABA waiver to submit a draft BABA waiver along with their application. If the proposed project is awarded, GEO anticipates working with the subrecipient to facilitate the submission of the BABA request to the US Department of Energy. Please refer to the recent Guidance on Submission of a DOE Project-Specific Buy America Requirement Waiver Request available at <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/Guidance%20on%20Submission%20of%20a%20DOE%20Project-Specific%20Buy%20America%20Requirement%20Waiver%20Request%202-26_.pdf>. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **9** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section O, pg 17 | Section O of the RFA states applicants must provide a certificate of insurance on a standard ACORD form or the equivalent. If the applicant is a public entity that is self insured, is a statement from the applicant confirming this sufficient to meet the RFA’s requirements for insurance evidence? |
| **Answer** | |
| If the Applicant does not have a certificate of insurance on a standard ACORD form or the equivalent, the Applicant must provide other documentation demonstrating evidence of insurance coverage. Confirmation from a Third-Party Administrator (TPA) is an example of evidence of self-insurance that would suffice in place of an ACORD form. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **10** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| n/a | Can a utility submit and be considered for more than one application? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes. Any eligible entity, including but not limited to an eligible utility, may submit multiple applications if each application has a distinct project scope. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **11** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| n/a | If there are similar projects, does the state have a preference on having one larger application, versus two separate but similar project applications? |
| **Answer** | |
| Applicants must submit projects with different scopes as distinct applications. If awarded, applicants will report on metrics on a project-level basis (i.e. one report per award). | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **12** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Appendix A | For the documents required for the application, within the state provided Appendix A document, there is an imbedded excel metric file (called “Worksheet in 20Maine Resilience Grant Application EME”), but it doesn’t look like it’s required in the initial application submission, and the inference is that it would be needed during the award phase. Is that correct? It states: “Performance metric requirements will be specified in the contract negotiation phase.” Given the above, can you confirm that the 20Maine Resilience Grant Application EME file is NOT required for the applications that are due March 28, 2024? |
| **Answer** | |
| Confirmed. The embedded excel metrics file “20Maine Resilience Grant Application EME.xlsx” is the US Department of Energy annual reporting template and is provided as a resource to support the application development. Selected applicants will be required to complete the “20Maine Resilience Grant Application EME.xlsx” reporting template annually as a component of reporting award conditions.  A complete application submission has four parts: 1) a completed application form, 2) NEPA Environmental Questionnaire, 3) Budget Justification Form and 4) Appendix A: Performance Metrics Checklist. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **13** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, pg 11 | Would you have a short list that would be easier to follow than the documentation that is online? What do I need to have submitted by the 28th? |
| **Answer** | |
| A complete application submission has four parts: 1) a completed application form, 2) NEPA Environmental Questionnaire, 3) Budget Justification Form and 4) Appendix A: Performance Metrics Checklist. Applicants may reference the technical assistance links on the GEO’s Grid Resilience Program webpage found at: <https://www.maine.gov/energy/initiatives/infrastructure/gridresilience> as well as resources linked in the February 28th information session slide deck for helpful information to support application development: <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Grid%20Resilience%20RFA%20Info%20Session%20Slides_final.pdf> | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **14** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| n/a | This grant is a Grant for 4 million dollars. Are we applying for the entire Grant and it would be divided out yearly or do we apply for the yearly allotment vs the entire amount? |
| **Answer** | |
| Prospective applicants should request the funding amount necessary to complete their proposed project. Note that individual project awards for this round will be capped at $2 million (i.e. no application will be awarded more than $2 million). The application selection will be competitive based on the criteria described in the RFA. At this time, the GEO anticipates future rounds of the program, pending further awards by the US Department of Energy to the GEO. Slide 4 in the informational slide deck indicates the allocations expected to become available to Maine, available here: <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Grid%20Resilience%20RFA%20Info%20Session%20Slides_final.pdf> The GEO as the prime recipient of DOE funds for this program receives the full award and facilitates the process for awarding to sub-applicants. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **15** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| n/a | If a recipient is awarded grant money this time can we apply for further? If an applicant is not funded in the current round, can they try again in future rounds? |
| **Answer** | |
| At this time, GEO anticipates that entities receiving awards under the current round will not be excluded from future rounds, although the same project scope is not expected to be eligible for a second award if awarded in a previous round. If an applicant is not funded through this current RFA, they are not excluded from applying in future rounds. All future rounds are contingent upon continued funding from the US Department of Energy, and may not necessarily be in the same format as the current Request for Applications. | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **16** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, pg 10 | Section G of the RFA states the applicable cost match requirement that will be used for project award selection is provided in Table 2. Table 2 specifies the total cost match required for Small Utilities is between 33.33% and 48.33% and the total cost match required for Large Utilities in between 100% and 115%.   * If an applicant is not a Small Utility or Large Utility, please confirm there is no minimum cost match requirement. * Please confirm the calculation formula the GEO uses to determine an applicant’s cost match percentage: 1) Cost Match Percentage = Requested Funding / Total Project Cost or 2) Cost Match Percentage = Requested Funding / Other Project Funding. |
| **Answer** | |
| While not all eligible applicants (see the list in responses to Question 1 and 3) may describe themselves as utilities, all eligible applicants are required to provide cost match as defined in either the Small Utility or Large Utility categories established by U.S. Department of Energy. That definition, found on page 4 of the RFA, defines eligible entities as a Large Utility if they sell more than 4,000,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year, or a Small Utility if they sell not more than 4,000,000 megawatt hours. The GEO reserves the right to alter cost match within the range of 33.33 percent to 48.33 percent for Small Utilities and 100 percent to 115 percent for Large Utilities. Final cost match percentages will be determined during award negotiations.  The US Department of Energy will require a Cost Match Commitment Letter from the eligible entity prior to the start of any resilience project. Cost match should be provided/disbursed as federal funds are expended during the course of project execution and drawdown of federal funds occurs. | |