



**Energy Efficiency & Solar
Energy Efficiency Grant
Questions and Answers**

Updated: 11/23/2020

Send Questions to: EEandS@commerce.wa.gov

The following are questions asked during the webinar or emailed to eeands@commerce.wa.gov. Some edits may have been made to avoid project-specific details in the original question or correct errors, otherwise, questions are presented as submitted.

Questions received through 11/20/2020

- 1. Q: A previous slide deck on this program indicates the facility must be 13 years or older to qualify for the EE grant... is that still the case?**

A: No, there is no minimum building age. It must be existing, not new construction.

- 2. Q: Can you please clarify what the intent of this is? “Applicants interested in funding projects for the 2021 – 2023 biennium are strongly encouraged to apply at this time to ensure consideration for future funding.”**

A: The next biennium of funding is expected to be known at the time of awards, so the intent is to expedite awarding funding from the next biennium by allowing current applicants to qualify. This will allow such projects to move forward quickly, rather than having to go through a new competitive grant solicitation process.

Q: Is this a request for a full application now even though the work would be funded and implemented in future years?

A: Yes, grant funds from this round will be awarded and implemented no earlier than 2021 which aligns with the next funding cycle.

Q: The longer the period of time between an investment grade audit and the work being implemented, the more likely that investment grade audit work will need to be re-done and adapted to current physical, market, and funding conditions. Would it be better to collect applications for that work in the next biennium?

A: By allowing current applicants to qualify for future funding, projects can move forward more quickly. The specific process for awarding any future biennium funds will be determined once the next state budget is adopted.



Q: Is there a way to assess demand for future projects in the next biennium at a more budgetary level?

A: The intent is not to assess demand but to award funds as quickly as possible.

3. Q: Can you please clarify how much federal funding will be allocated and will there be an opt out for that portion of the funding at the time of application?

A: Approximately \$800,000 is available from federal sources. Applicants have the option to “opt in” to receiving federal funding. See question 27 of the application.

4. Q: I work for a school district that is interested in finding a grant to install solar power at our schools. I see that the Energy Efficiency grant has a focus on energy savings through lighting. Would it still be worthwhile to apply for grant funding for solar power installation, or would this unlikely be supported with the current grant?

A: Solar installations are not eligible under the Energy Efficiency Grant. The Solar Grant will open in 2021

5. Q: I am writing to inquire about the Energy Efficiency (EE) Grant (posted online [here](#)). The Program Information Sheet posted on the referenced page has a due date of 5:00 p.m. on January 29, 2020; however, the RFP states that applications are due at 4:00 p.m. on January 29, 2021. What is the correct due date and time for this program?

A: Thank you for catching that! The information sheet has been corrected. The date listed in the RFP is correct: 4:00 p.m. on January 29, 2021

6. Q: The Program Information Sheet has a questions due date of January 15, 2020, and I just wanted to confirm that this is a typo and should be for 2021.

A: Thank you for catching that! The information sheet has been corrected. The date listed in the RFP is correct: January 15, 2021

7. Q: When looking at the most recent grant awardees in 2018, it seems as though higher education was awarded only one award out of a possible 28 awards given. Is there something in the scoring tool that is keeping higher education institutions at a disadvantage?

A: Only 1 higher education institution applied in the 2018 round. Additionally, the State Project Improvement Grant which is only for state agencies recently awarded 14 out of 17 grants to higher education institutions for similar projects. Under this grant, State agencies and higher education institutions have the challenge of needing non-state funds to receive the Non-State Funding Leverage Ratio Points. This is a requirement in the authorizing language.



8. Q: Would this grant consider a non-state match equal to 50% of the total grant ask for state funded agencies and higher education?

A: The minimum match requirement is 50% of the project cost, or 100% of the grant ask. This can come from any source. Please see Section 3.4 of the RFP for more information.

9. Q: Am I safe in assuming that the Jan. 15th, 2020, deadline date for Efficiency Grant questions shown in the Grant Overview is actually January 15th, 2021?

A: See Question 6

10. Q: It appears private, for-profit businesses (small or big) do not qualify to apply for this grant. Confirm?

A: Correct, private and for-profit business do not qualify to apply for this grant. Applicants must be a State public higher education institution, local government, state agency, kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) public school district, or federally recognized tribal government to be eligible.

11. Q: I am told that conversion of streetlights to LED is no longer eligible for this grant program. Is that true?

A: Street lighting remains eligible as lighting, which cannot exceed 50% of the total energy savings of the project.

12. Q: Having issues finding an actual application on any page for an energy grant.

*A: The application link can be found on page 12 of the [Request for Proposal \(RFP\)](#). It is important to read the RFP before reviewing the grant application. If you have reviewed the RFP, click on this link for the application on the ZoomGrants platform:
<https://zoomgrants.com/gprop.asp?donorid=2337&limited=3152>*

13. Q: What's the definition of a qualified inspector?

A: Qualified energy auditor: A person acting as the auditor of record having training, expertise and three years professional experience in building energy auditing and any one of the following: (a) A licensed professional architect or engineer. (b) An energy auditor/assessor/analyst certified by ASHRAE or the Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) for all building types.



14. Q: Hi, I have a quick question about Harborview and whether they are eligible to apply on their own for an Energy Efficiency grant in January. Many years ago (jobs Act grants,) they were told that they weren't considered a separate entity since they have ties to King County and UW. However looking at the Commerce Energy Grant Website and RCW 39.34.020 <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=39.34.020> it seems that Harborview is an entity, and we'd like Commerce to provide feedback on whether Harborview is eligible to apply for Energy Efficiency grants in January of 2021.

A: *Harborview is an eligible entity, since they are listed as a "Municipality" with the Department of Revenue.*

15. Q: Has the requirement for an energy audit been changed?

A: *The audit template is a new requirement. DES Energy Audit still accepted through ESCO. Otherwise, An ASHRAE Level 3 audit is required if not going through the DES process.. We're looking for quality audits, a standardized approach is the best way we know how to do it.*

16. Q: Since these grants are released in April, are they biennium dependent?

A: *Yes and no – Projects do not need to be completed within the biennium. We expect the funding will be reauthorized.*

17. Q: For applicants with facilities in small cities and non-small cities, how do they break out the scopes in their application? E.g.: If a school district is doing district-wide water fixture retrofits, is there a way to break out the scope for the small city schools in one application? Or does it need to be a separate application for the small city schools?

A: *There are two ways. You can break it into two separate applications, but you'll need to consider how to move forward if only one phase gets awarded. If you apply as one project, answer questions as if a small town or city. Will need budget broken out to reflect difference, and explain this in the Narrative field of application.*

18. Q: When considering energy cost, is there an inflation rate assumed for the 35 year payback?

A: *No, we are using current figures, not considering inflation.*

19. Q: Should utility rebates and the proposed Commerce grant dollar amount be factored into the 35 year payback calculation?

A: *No. the Simple Pay Back calculations is The total project cost divided by the annual energy and operational cost savings.*



20. Q: For the 35 year payback, should the actual site utility rate be used, or should the state averages be used?

A: For purposes of your organization you can use whatever you like. In the energy audit template – you will report energy savings by specific units, eg: kwh. We'll apply state average cost ourselves using the state averages outlined in the RFP unless we don't have a state average, eg: for water. In that case, submit a utility bill and we will use the actual rate.

21. Q: Are Federal Investment Tax Credits for solar included in the project savings?

A: This grant isn't open to solar, so not relevant to this program. When it's time for solar grants, answer is also no.

22. Q: When evaluating the economics of a project, is it permissible to use the social cost of carbon as defined by Commerce at

<https://www.utc.wa.gov/regulatedIndustries/utilities/Pages/SocialCostofCarbon.aspx>

A: No, we will be specifically looking at cost of project and energy savings. An important consideration to use, but won't be used in determining grant awards.

23. Q: What exactly are you looking for in regards to the baseline energy consumption? Will a year of utility bills suffice or are you referring to the actual piece of equipment or systems the ESCO is proposing to change?

A: Preferred method is to have metered utility measurements at building level. An investment grade Audit requires you to estimate energy use breakdown - eg: HVAC lighting, controls. The audit tool has a list of options. We want a good understanding of, eg: if proposing HVAC upgrade, you're providing realistic estimate compared to base HVAC use. If you don't have building level metering, you'll have to make an engineering estimate of energy consumption and complete form according to this. Please include how you arrived at estimate in your Narrative section of the form.

24. Q: Can you clarify what you are looking for in the baseline end use profile? Per Building?

A: ASHRAE audit protocol asks engineering firms to breakdown energy use by major systems. We want a general breakdown: lighting, HVAC, process loads.

25. Q: Can you provide more specifics about the "state-compliant procurement process" -- maybe a web link?

*A: Everything needs to comply with WA state public works laws - eg: complying with prevailing wage. Please see the applicable RCW for more information;
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=39.04>*



26. Q: For the calculation of the non-state funding leverage ratio can you clarify how utility incentives and rebates are treated? On page 25 of the RFP it indicates Incentives and Rebates will not be considered match funds?

A: Correct. Rebates and incentives are not considered match funds because they're not available up front at start of project and in most cases they are not guaranteed. Match funds are based on any up front costs of the project. Any utility rebates on top of this will be paying back the applicant for funds spent up front.

27. Q: Is applicant deadline firm?

A: This round's deadline is based on feedback from last grant round. We hope that our timeline has been structured to meet the applicants needs and that it will not be moved.

28. Q: If you apply for future funds and current funds, how do you note which is which?

A: Highest scores will be awarded first, for the current funds. The future funds will be awarded as they are available. If applying for multiple projects, you need one project funded before another - put a note in your Narrative section and we will take this into consideration.

29. Q: On slide 36 regarding submitting qualifications: is this for energy auditor or contractor doing the work (if they are different)?

A: Yes, it is for energy auditor or contractors doing the work. We have set it up so that you are able to provide a unique link an external user that can upload a document without signing in. You can share the links provided in the ZoomGrants application form with anyone to help upload documents, eg: if contractor has better access to necessary documents.

30. Q: Is there a workforce development component to this grant, eg: staff training for implementation of EE projects?

A: No, when it comes to training many contractors include training as part of their contract. Grant isn't intended to pay for staffing the public entity - it's primarily for costs included in contract - focusing on Capital improvement to building.

31. Q: How are you handling industrial projects - such as aeration upgrade at wastewater treatment plant - where there is no building?

A: We have had applications from similar projects before. Will still need to complete energy audit. First look at audit form and see if you can fit your project into that format. If there's no way to assess energy usage under ASHRAE forms, submit something through Q&A process and we will try to address this.



32. Q: For costs, can required power quality solutions be included in the energy efficiency measures?

A: Yes, you can include things that are necessary to perform work or thing that make sense to do while already working on the building. However, bear in mind that by including costs that do not also include energy savings you are harming your simple payback score.

33. Q: Can energy audits be performed by qualified employees/in-house staff? Can any of the implementation be performed by in-house staff?

A: Yes. We want to know that they are qualified, licensed. If you are hoping for the grant to cover staff costs be aware this can get tricky, best advice is to separate out staffing costs and focus only on materials, etc.

34. Q: If the project proposal is for a central heating plant serving multiple buildings, is it OK to focus the audit and proposal details on the system improvements to the central system, and not address specific details about the facilities served, if no proposed measures are directly impacting the individual building systems?

A: Have a look at the audit template. In this case would be useful to provide total square footage of buildings. We won't need every audit detail on all the buildings. If it doesn't fit into the form, email us and propose alternate method.

35. Q: What is best way to be listed as energy auditor for facilities?

A: We do not prequalify auditors. If you do not align with definition below, but can demonstrate relevant experience, that should suffice - not set in stone. The definition of a qualified energy auditor we'll use as a guideline:

Qualified energy auditor: A person acting as the auditor of record having training, expertise and three years professional experience in building energy auditing and any one of the following: (a) A licensed professional architect or engineer. (b) An energy auditor/assessor/analyst certified by ASHRAE or the Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) for all building types.

To work with public entities on such projects, follow the procurement processes or register as a state vendor through: <https://des.wa.gov/services/contracting-purchasing/doing-business-state/webs-registration-search-tips>

36. Q: Will a grant score higher if the requested grant amount is 25% of the total project cost?

A: The higher the non-state funds to grant ratio, the higher a grant will score. So yes, application requesting 25% will score higher than a project asking for 50% to be covered. Ideal ratio is 3:1.



37. Q: Is there enough time to complete DES energy audit through ESCO services?

A: We hope we allotted enough time. You can reach out to them directly to find out more. We suggest you get the process started and reach out to DES as soon as possible.

38. Q: Below are two examples of for grant leverage. Example A does not take the utility incentive into account when calculating the leverage. Example B subtracts the utility incentive then calculates the leverage. Which is the correct way to be calculating leverage?

	Example A		Example B
Total Project Price	\$ 2,000,000		\$ 2,000,000
Utility Incentive	\$ 200,000		\$ 200,000
Grant Request	\$ 500,000		\$ 500,000
Amount to be financed	\$ 1,300,000		\$ 1,300,000
Non-state Funds	\$ 1,500,000		\$ 1,300,000
Grant Amount	\$ 500,000		\$ 500,000
Leverage	3.00		2.60

A: For the non-state leverage score calculation, Example B is correct. In both budgets, we would have a concern about a funding gap. The \$200,000 utility incentive is not available for the upfront capital costs, so it appears that only \$1,800,000 is committed to the project. How is that initial \$200,000 being paid towards the project?

39. Q: Dear WA Department of Commerce Grant Administrators,

I am writing on behalf of Byrd Barr Place, a Seattle 501 c 3 non-profit organization, that administers both a food bank and is contracted with the WA Department of Commerce to administer low income energy assistance for residents within Seattle City Limits.

The organization currently is housed in an historic Fire house owned by the City of Seattle. The organization is planning a retrofit in order to upgrade seismic and ADA compliance attributes of the building and in the process would like to significantly improve the energy efficiency and renewable energy aspects of the building. We are interested in potentially applying for the EE/RE grants; however, are not sure if our status as a community action agency qualifies us as a local agency.



A: This grant is only open to public entities, such as the City of Seattle. Since the City owns the building, they could apply for the grant. However private organizations, including non-profits, are not eligible applicants.

40. Q: Having issues finding an actual application on any page for an energy grant. Is there anyone available for call?

A: The link to the application is listed in section 2.5 of the RFP. Please be sure to read the entire RFP before applying. Also, we are not able to discuss the grant or answer any questions via phone. All questions must be submitted in writing to EEandS@commerce.wa.gov and we will respond within this Questions and Answers document.

41. Q: I tried to log into ZoomGrants today to look at the Energy Grant App. It wouldn't let me pull it up. It kept giving me this message:

Response object error 'ASP 0156 : 80004005'

Header Error

/gprop2.asp, line 642

The HTTP headers are already written to the client browser. Any HTTP header modifications must be made before writing page content.

A: The link to the [EE2020 Grant Application](#) is valid. We have asked others to test the link and they were able to successfully reach the page. We apologize for the error you received. We reached out to the ZoomGrants Tech Support Team and the following is their response "Please accept our sincere apologies for the speed issues that you're experiencing with ZoomGrants. We are truly sorry for the frustration that it has caused. An email will be coming soon from the ZoomGrants CEO to discuss the issue and the steps that are being taken to mitigate the problem." We suggest to try the link again using a different browser. If the error persists, please submit a ZoomGrants help ticket to Questions@ZoomGrants.com.

42. Q: My understanding is that Commerce has sunset a program that helped underwrite the capital cost of LED conversion for the large cities. In 2015, the working concept was that TIB would assist cities under 5,000 or with an assessed value of less than \$2 billion, and Commerce would support cities above this threshold.

Can you share with me:

- when the sunset occurred; and**
- why it occurred (I'm assuming it was a combination of goals being reached and available funding).**

A: Street lighting remains eligible as lighting, which cannot exceed 50% of the total energy savings of the project.

43. Q: My question is if 4MSigma is eligible for this program? We are a private NGO defense manufacturing company. But our facility is owned by the Port of Seattle. However we are responsible for our own maintenance within rented spaces. So this seems to be a gray area. For the reasons and energy savings enumerated it does seem that we should be eligible. The work is basically done (as of



this week) using our own private funds. Can we apply to be reimbursed? We are also sharing what we have learned so that other organizations can take advantage and do the same.

***A:** Private organizations and non-profits are not eligible for the grant. However, if the building owner is an eligible entity, they may apply for the grant. Additionally, projects that have already begun work or are completed are not eligible – project cannot have entered into a construction contract.*