

Energy Retrofits for Public Buildings – Energy Efficiency 2022 Q&A

Submit all questions to the RFA Coordinator at energyretrofits@commerce.wa.gov. Commerce will post answers periodically through May 19, 2022. Questions must be submitted by May 17, 2022.

Questions received through 4/12/2022

1) Does this apply to personal or rental properties as well?

Properties owned by individuals, for-profit, or non-governmental organizations do not qualify for this program. This program provides grants to local agencies, public higher education institutions, school districts, federally recognized tribal governments, and state agencies for publicly owned buildings. Publically owned affordable housing may qualify.

2) Is a stand-alone LED light retrofits eligible?

No more than 50% of energy savings can come from lighting efficiency projects, with the exception of K-12 schools. For K-12 schools, PCB lighting replacement projects may be 100% of energy savings. Please see section 3.3 of the RFA for more detail.

3) Are insulated 2x4 ceiling panels an eligible expenditure?

Yes. Any measure that results in significant energy savings may be a component in an eligible project.

4) For the 50% of energy savings, is that per project or is that a total of all grants?

An application is considered to be for one project. The project may be made up of any number of related measures. An Energy Audit must be prepared for each building in the project. Lighting savings must be calculated separately; no more than 50% of the savings can come from lighting projects except as above, see Question 2. A project total energy saved figure is required. Please see RFA sections 3.3 Technical Requirements and 4.2 Scoring for further details.

5) Q: I am interested in applying for an energy efficiency grant for one of our facilities. We are replacing 18 large single pane 1948 era windows with energy-efficient windows at the Talking Book and Braille Library

in Seattle. The building is owned by the Secretary of State's Office (not DES). Can this project be considered for a grant?

Yes. Energy Efficiency grants are offered to local governments, public higher education institutions, school districts, federally recognized Tribal governments, and state agencies for improvements to existing facilities and related projects that result in energy and operational cost savings. Applications will be evaluated as detailed in RFA section 4.

Questions received through 4/18/2022:

- 6) Do Indian housing authorities qualify as an eligible applicant - a local agency independent of the federally-recognized tribal government?**

Yes. Tribal housing authorities which are designated by a federally recognized Tribal government qualify as Tribal governments (and will be evaluated as Tribal governments for the purpose of match, etc.). Commerce will use HUD's [list of Tribally Designated Housing Entities](#) for verification.

Questions received through 4/26/2022:

- 7) Based on the RFA and Life Cycle Tool posted online, is what the threshold is for dollars or energy savings that makes something "cost prohibitive" rather than just more or less expensive. I would like to know how much of a difference the cost needs to be to justify a client staying (or going) with fossil fuel rather than changing to all electric.**

The Life Cycle Cost Analysis provides comparative costs of using fossil-fuel vs. an alternative. If the alternative costs less over the lifetime of the improvement measure, we would want to see the alternative fuel chosen for the proposed project. It is not required to include the social cost of carbon in the LCCA calculation.

- 8) For question 6, in the project we are proposing, we are adding controls to domestic water use in showers, toilets, etc. By nature that is not using fossil fuels, however, fossil fuels heat the water that is being controlled. We are unsure as to how to answer question 6, as this does not directly relate to fossil fuel usage.**

For Zoom Grants question 6, choose: "No it does not use fossil fuels." The question refers to the purchase and installation of heating equipment or systems that consume fossil fuels. Existing fossil-fuel equipment not altered by the project does not need to demonstrate why an alternative was not feasible. See RFA 3.3B.

- 9) Under Priority Communities, it has a section that is a priority, but is not in the application. We work with low income and very much a vulnerable community, but weren't sure how to best convey this, since most of these individuals are not tracked in the census.**

Applicants who work with vulnerable communities can demonstrate engagement and benefits to those communities (see RFA section 4.2, Evaluation Breakdown). In addition, an applicant may or may not

qualify as a priority community per the definitions in RFA section 1.7. The four vulnerable Priority Communities are: Highly Impacted, Lower Income, Rural and federally recognized Tribal governments.

Note: An amendment to the RFA is expected shortly that will further clarify this RFA section.

- 10) Please elaborate on “supplanting or displacing” funding designated for the submitted project. If the applicant’s governing board approved funding for the proposed project in the current year’s budget, but bids have yet to be advertised, received or awarded, would receipt of grant funding from this program be considered “supplanting or displacing” funds designated for the project?**

Yes, if funds have been already approved for the same project it would be considered as displacing other funding. (See RFA Section 4.7 D). However, if the application is for a related project or extended scope designed to further enhance the energy savings of the overall project, and qualifies in other aspects, the application is eligible for consideration.

- 11) Diverse Business Inclusion Plan. Who competes this form? If the contractor has been selected would they provide the plan % ? The applicant is the Town so we compete it for all the employees of the Town and out subs?**

Commerce assumes that all Exhibits and the ZoomGrants are submitted on behalf of the potential grantee organization. This question references Exhibit B of the RFA and the plan described would be that of the applicant organization. If the contractor has been selected and fits one of the business types listed, the applicant organization may enter the percentage applicable to that contractor.

Questions received through 5/3/2022:

- 12) Would staff time to directly support the project be considered an eligible source of matching funds; such as project inspection by Public Works staff; project management, etc?**

Funds for staffing costs can be used as match if eligible as defined in the RFA Sec. 1.2 and directly attributable to the project. These internal costs should be reflected in the budget under Eligible Costs. Please provide additional details in the budget narrative about how project management costs were estimated if they are not reflected in the budget documentation.

- 13) How do I get the actual application for the energy retrofit for public buildings? The link on the webpage takes you to a document, but is there an actual separate application available to download?**

The RFA document includes a link to the online application. Applicants will complete and submit the application in ZoomGrants. When you follow the link, you can also see a preview of the application.

Questions received through 5/11/2022:

14) Just to clarify, buildings eligible must be OWNED by the public? A 1921 building that houses businesses OPEN to the public is not eligible?

A: Yes. The facility to be retrofitted must be owned by the public entity that applies for the grant. Please see the response to Question 1.

15) We are building new facilities at [College]. Our hope is to have them as energy efficient as possible. We have no authority or skilled staff to guide this process. Can we add an FTE position to this application so that we can have a knowledgeable person in the lead as we convert and build?

A: Staff costs are eligible expenses as defined in the RFA Sec. 1.2 and directly attributable to the project. There is no restriction on whether staff costs include a new position. See the answer to question 12.

Please note, this grant is not available for new construction; the facility must receive a certificate of occupancy prior to the application deadline.

16) We are renting a county-owned building. Does this grant apply to our building?

A: The county may apply for the grant if the project meets the primary purpose of the solicitation:

Energy Efficiency grants under this program are offered to local governments, public higher education institutions, school districts, federally recognized Tribal governments, and state agencies for improvements to existing facilities and related projects that result in energy and operational cost savings.

17) Are applications still being accepted for this grant?

A: Applications are due May 25th at 4:00PM Pacific time. No late applications will be accepted.

18) We are working with an Energy Service Company in getting a new boiler and new controls installed this summer before school starts again in fall, since we cannot make it through another winter with our current system the way it is. I am wondering about the energy efficiency grant, and if our controls upgrade and possibly a lighting upgrade could qualify for this grant. I understand that the funds would not be available until October, and we are needing to start this project in June so as to not disrupt school this fall, and to finish the project by early fall when the heat is needed. If we were to receive the grant, could

we be reimbursed for funds we have already spent throughout summer that apply to the scope of the grant?

A: Any activities an awardee takes prior to execution of a grant contract are at their own risk. There are no commitments between the parties prior to execution of a grant contract and that can take several weeks or months after awards are announced. The date that a signed Award letter is returned and received by Commerce marks the earliest possible date for reimbursement of project-related costs of any kind. Commerce will likely send Award letters to awardees the 3rd or 4th week of August.

19) I have attached an energy audit the City received in 2020 from Tacoma Power, would this fulfill the energy audit requirements? Would we also need to have an audit done for a high-efficiency HVAC system?

A: The Energy Audit must have been completed or updated no earlier than January 2019 so a 2020 audit would be acceptable. The audit information must be used to complete the specified Audit Template that is required for every application. See RFA section 3.3 for specific instructions and a link to the template.

20) We are looking at possibly applying for funding to upgrade some of our drinking water pumping facilities with Variable Frequency Drives to reduce energy costs. Do we use your audit template or is there a another methodology or analysis that you would required for that (assuming that these would be good projects).

A: Yes. The Audit Template specified is required for every application. See RFA 3.3 for specific instructions and a link to the Audit Template. See RFA sections 1.1 for the purpose of the grant and section 1.3 for minimum qualifications.

Questions received through 5/17/2022:

21) [Applicant's] Maintenance Office at [Address] was constructed in 1975 and has some issues of its own (roof leaks & metal siding corrosion), and I am hopeful it will be eligible for an emergency repair or standalone grant to make the following improvements:

- replace the original windows with energy efficient windows
- replace the fairly flat metal roof with a roof that has greater pitch
- install solar panels on a new roof
- replace existing siding and increase insulation within the exterior walls

A: An Energy Efficiency grant may be appropriate for building envelope upgrades such as insulation improvements in public buildings. Please read the Energy Efficiency RFA closely, and consider if the requirements align with your particular situation. Emergency repairs are not offered by the Energy Efficiency program; you may have seen that term in reference to the State Project Improvement grants the Energy Retrofits for Public Buildings program offers for state agencies only.

22) Could a roof replacement & solar panel reinstallation on a new metal roof be a qualifying Emergency Repair Application?

A: No. Energy Efficiency grants do not provide for either Solar installations nor emergency repairs. If you are interested in a solar installation, you may want to consider a Solar program grant which is also accepting applications right now. See the [Energy Retrofits for Public Buildings](#) webpages for details.