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CERRVF Supplemental Comments on DEBA Round 2 Draft Solicitation

Please accept the attached Supplemental Public Comments submitted by the California Emergency Response, Recovery, and Venue Facilities (CERRVF) regarding the June 2026 Proposition 4 Distributed Electricity Backup Assets (DEBA) Round 2 Draft Solicitation (TN #270606). These comments acknowledge several improvements made in response to earlier stakeholder input and provide targeted recommendations intended to strengthen the final solicitation by improving resilience outcomes for California's emergency response facilities while maintaining the program's statutory objectives. Thank you for your consideration.

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

July 15, 2026

California Energy Commission

Dockets Office, MS-4

715 P Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

Via email: docket@energy.ca.gov

Re: Docket No. 22-RENEW-01 — Supplemental Public Comments on the Proposition 4 Distributed Electricity Backup Assets (DEBA) Draft Solicitation (TN #270606)

Dear Commissioners and Staff:

The California Emergency Response, Recovery, and Venue Facilities coalition ("CERRVF") submits these supplemental comments on the June 12, 2026, Draft Solicitation. They update and extend the coalition's March 12, 2026, filing in this docket.

Our coalition represents California's District Agricultural Associations, county fairgrounds, expo centers, and related public venues. These are not entertainment properties. They are the state's standing infrastructure for emergency response. When PSPS events, wildfire evacuations, floods, or heat emergencies occur, our facilities are activated by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), and county Offices of Emergency Services as evacuation centers, mass-care and shelter sites, large-animal evacuation points, incident command posts, base camps for mutual-aid personnel, and points of distribution for food, water, and medical supplies. Over the past five fire seasons, member facilities have been activated hundreds of times in that capacity. The people who run these sites do it while running county fairs, junior livestock programs, and year-round community events — often on operating budgets that make every dollar of resilience investment count.

We appreciate the substantial work the Commission and staff have put into the June 2026 draft. Several of the coalition's March 2026 asks were carried through, and we say so at the top of this letter because we mean it. We also identify the items that were not carried through and one new issue that has emerged in the June draft. Our aim throughout is to help the Commission finalize a solicitation that works — for the sites the program is meant to serve and for the Commission's own resilience objectives under Proposition 4.

Part 1 — What the June 2026 Draft Addresses

CERRVF thanks the Commission for the following revisions, each of which responds to points raised in the coalition's March 12, 2026, filing:

- **Capacity floors eliminated.** The 6 MW and 15 MW minimums from the February 2024 concept are gone. Fairground-scale microgrids — typically 1 to 3 MW — are within scope. This was our topline ask and the single most consequential change.
- **Single-pool award structure.** Replacing the three-group structure with one $2M–$8M range simplifies application and matches realistic fairground project budgets.
- **Cost share reduced to 25%.** The reduction from 50% net of credits to a 25% applicant match makes participation feasible for public-agency applicants that do not carry a private-developer balance sheet.
- **Streamlined dispatch pathways.** Retaining Daily Dispatch while removing Emergency Dispatch reduces operational complexity for community-resilience configurations.
- **Eligible-applicant clarity.** Restricting eligibility to public agencies, JPAs, nonprofits, tribes, utilities, and water companies keeps the program aligned with its public-benefit purpose.

These are significant improvements for California's community-resilience infrastructure. CERRVF supports them without reservation.

Part 2 — Not Yet Addressed (Re-filed from March 2026)

The items below were in the coalition's March filing and were not incorporated into the June draft. We re-file them for staff consideration ahead of final solicitation issuance.

A. Scoring credit for long-duration backup

Public Safety Power Shutoffs, multi-day wildfire evacuations, and extended heat activations routinely exceed four hours. When a member fairground stands up as an evacuation shelter, families and evacuated livestock remain on site for days, not hours. This operational profile is fundamentally different from commercial peak-shaving applications and is precisely the type of public resilience investment Proposition 4 was intended to support. The four-hour rated-capacity normalization in the current draft is a reasonable measurement convention, but as written it gives no scoring credit to projects designed to sustain longer events.

Requested change: Add a long-duration sub-criterion under Criterion 1 (Technical Merit). Award additional points for projects demonstrating 8+ hours of continuous rated discharge and a further tier for

12+ hours. State plainly that the four-hour normalization is a funding-calculation convention only, not a cap on project design or an implicit disincentive to longer duration.

B. Diesel replacement as incremental clean capacity

A substantial share of California's fairgrounds and state-designated emergency facilities today rely on diesel generators for backup. That is legacy infrastructure the state is otherwise working to retire. The June draft is silent on diesel replacement. Under the current text, a project that removes a diesel generator and installs zero-emission backup gets no funding-sizing credit for the retired capacity, even though the emissions and public-health benefit are real and measurable.

Requested change: Recognize diesel replacement projects as eligible. Recognize permanently retired diesel capacity when evaluating project benefits and determining award sizing. Award scoring preference to projects that permanently retire diesel backup as a condition of grant funding, with a documented decommissioning plan.

C. Scoring recognition for state-designated emergency-response facilities

California's DAAs, county fairgrounds, and expo centers operate under formal designations and mutual-aid relationships with Cal OES, CAL FIRE, and county emergency-services agencies. Member facilities maintain current emergency operations plans, hold executed mutual-aid agreements with state and county emergency-services agencies, and carry documented histories of recurring emergency activations. These are not paper designations. Member facilities have been repeatedly activated as:

- Evacuation and mass-care shelters under Cal OES coordination
- CAL FIRE incident command posts, base camps, and staging areas during wildfire response
- Large-animal and livestock evacuation sites (a category few other California facilities are equipped to serve)
- County OES points of distribution for water, food, and emergency supplies
- Regional cooling centers during declared heat emergencies
- Post-disaster local assistance centers coordinating FEMA, Red Cross, and county-agency intake

The public value delivered by a resilient power system at these sites during an emergency is different in kind from a comparable investment at a facility without an activation history. The scoring rubric should reflect that difference.

Requested change: Add a scoring sub-criterion under Criterion 2 (Community Benefits) awarding additional points for projects sited at facilities with documented state emergency-response designations, executed Cal OES or CAL FIRE mutual-aid agreements, or formal county emergency-services memoranda. Accept letters of designation, mutual-aid agreements, and activation history (including declared-emergency proclamations) as supporting documentation. Clarify that time spent as an activated evacuation shelter or incident command post qualifies as community-resilience value even outside normal peak-load definitions.

D. Multi-application clarification

The coalition's March filing asked that the program permit coordination across multiple host sites. The June draft appropriately prohibits multi-site aggregation of the same technology under a single application. It does not, however, clarify whether one eligible applicant may submit separate applications for distinct host sites in the same cycle. Several members of the coalition operate under a single governing entity (a JPA or a single DAA hosting multiple sub-sites) and need this point resolved before spending resources on multiple application packages.

Requested change: Confirm in the final solicitation that a single eligible applicant may submit separate applications for distinct host sites within the same award cycle, and that each application will be evaluated independently on its own technical merit and community benefits. Confirm that the $8M per-application ceiling is not aggregated across separate applications from the same applicant.

E. IRA §6417 Direct Pay treatment of the 25% match

For tax-exempt public-agency applicants — DAAs, JPAs, and other public owners of the facilities the coalition represents — the Inflation Reduction Act §6417 Elective Payment mechanism is the primary federal cost-recovery pathway. The June draft is silent on whether the cash value of anticipated Direct Pay receipts may count toward the 25% applicant match. Public agencies need certainty on this point at the application stage in order to structure project financing.

Requested change: Issue explicit guidance in the final solicitation confirming that the cash value of anticipated IRA §6417 Direct Pay receipts is an allowable component of the 25% applicant match. Define the documentation standard sufficient to evidence anticipated receipt at the application stage — for example, a technical eligibility memo and a certified statement of intent to file.

Part 3 — Section II.B.3.e as Applied to Long-Duration Backup

This issue was not present in the February 2024 concept and therefore was not addressed in the coalition's March 2026 filing. We raise it now because it directly affects the long-duration configurations our facilities need.

The concern

Section II.B.2 of the June draft identifies the technologies eligible for DEBA Round 2. Stationary fuel cells are not expressly listed and not expressly excluded — they occupy the space of a zero-emission distributed generation technology that must independently satisfy the Section II.B.3.e lifecycle test. That test, as currently drafted, requires that eligible DG technologies not produce greenhouse gas emissions on a lifecycle basis, including during fuel production, transport, and storage.

Read strictly, that language is difficult for any hydrogen configuration to satisfy — even electrolytic hydrogen produced with RPS-eligible electricity — because "zero" on a full lifecycle basis is a standard no chemical-fuel supply chain can literally meet today. Read that way, the clause creates substantial uncertainty regarding the practical eligibility of hydrogen fuel-cell projects under DEBA. That uncertainty risks foreclosing the leading commercially available non-fossil long-duration backup technology at the scale our member facilities need.

Why long-duration matters at our sites specifically

Battery energy storage is the right primary technology for many DEBA applications, and coalition members expect batteries to anchor most projects. But the operational profile of an activated fairground during a multi-day emergency is not a peak-shaving profile. It is a continuous critical-load profile: cold storage for donated food and evacuee medications, walk-in refrigeration for on-site animal care, incident command communications, potable-water pumps, sanitation, lighting for shelter operations, HVAC in extreme heat, and charging infrastructure for first responders. A battery-only system sized to that duration becomes a very large capital line item; a hybrid design that pairs shorter-duration batteries with a fuel cell for extended runtime is often the more cost-effective and space-efficient path.

The Commission's own analytical record supports this distinction. The June 2026 report Assessing the Role of Hydrogen in California's Decarbonizing Electric System (CEC-500-2026-018), prepared under SB 1075 (Skinner, 2022), finds that stationary fuel cells are most appropriate for backup power applications rather than for utility-scale wholesale generation (p. A-20). DEBA is, by design and statute, a backup and reliability program. The report's cautions about hydrogen are directed at a different use case than the one DEBA funds.

What we are asking for

CERRVF is not asking the Commission to relax the zero-emission intent of Proposition 4. We are asking the Commission to express that intent in a way that is technically workable and consistent with how the state already treats hydrogen lifecycle emissions in adjacent programs.

Requested change: Clarify Section II.B.3.e so that it defines eligibility by lifecycle carbon intensity rather than absolute zero, using a standard consistent with the federal §45V Clean Hydrogen Production Tax Credit framework and California's ARCHES hub certification protocols, or another California-approved clean hydrogen certification program. Deem eligible any hydrogen produced via electrolysis powered by RPS-eligible electricity, a zero-carbon Power Purchase Agreement, or on-site renewable generation. Recognize ARCHES-affiliated hydrogen supply as presumptively eligible. Apply the same lifecycle standard consistently across all eligible DG technologies. This clarification preserves the Commission's zero-emission intent, is consistent with the SB 1075 record, and keeps the leading long-duration clean backup technology available to the emergency-response facilities the program is meant to serve.

Part 4 — Administrative Request: Pre-Release FAQ

Several of the items in this letter — hydrogen lifecycle eligibility under Section II.B.3.e, IRA §6417 Direct Pay treatment of the applicant match, evaluation of multiple applications from a single eligible applicant, and expected interconnection documentation at the application stage — are questions affecting a broad range of prospective applicants, not just coalition members. They can be addressed through staff clarification without reopening the solicitation text.

Requested administrative action: Prior to final solicitation issuance, publish a DEBA Round 2 Frequently Asked Questions document that addresses (i) hydrogen lifecycle eligibility, (ii) IRA §6417 Direct Pay treatment, (iii) evaluation of multiple applications from a single applicant, and (iv) interconnection documentation expectations at the application stage. A pre-release FAQ will meaningfully improve application quality and reduce the volume of post-release clarification questions the Commission would otherwise need to answer individually.

Conclusion

The coalition appreciates the Commission's engagement with our March 2026 filing and the substantive revisions carried into the June draft. Coalition members are ready to support the Commission and staff through final solicitation issuance and are actively preparing site-level readiness for Round 2 application. The changes requested here — particularly the recognition of state-designated emergency-response facilities, the treatment of long-duration backup, and the lifecycle clarification in Section II.B.3.e — will help ensure that the final solicitation delivers the full resilience value Proposition 4 was funded to provide.

Clarifying these issues before final solicitation issuance will improve application quality, reduce unnecessary applicant risk, and help ensure the Commission receives proposals that are technically feasible and capable of timely implementation.

Please direct any questions or follow-up to the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Trygg

President

California Emergency Response, Recovery, and Venue Facilities (CERRVF)