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Topic Name(s): Community Energy Reliability and Resilience Investment (CERRI) Program

Subject: Re-Opening Solicitation GFO-23-312 – Community Energy Reliability and Resilience Investment (CERRI) Program with Revised Application Submittal Checklist (Attachment A), Budget Forms (Attachment 05), and Solicitation Manual Addendum 03.

Message:

The California Energy Commission (CEC) reviewed each application submitted for **GFO-23-312, the Community Energy Reliability and Resilience Investment (CERRI) Program** and determined that many submissions were not of sufficient quality or did not meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the solicitation manual. For this reason, the CEC is re-opening the solicitation for application resubmission. The deadline for previous applicants to resubmit applications, and for new applicants to submit applications, is extended to **Friday, September 27, 2024, at 11:59 PM**. This solicitation is open to new and previous (i.e., those who already submitted applications) applicants. Previous applicants may either amend their previously submitted applications or submit entirely new applications.

- The issues identified below are not exhaustive; they highlight concerns found in the current batch of applications. This list does not cover all prohibited activities, application requirements, or attachment requirements.
- Review the list below to ensure your application complies with all guidelines, avoids prohibited activities, and meets all application and attachment requirements.
- The CERRI Program Solicitation Manual Addendum 03, updated Budget Forms (Attachment 05), and updated Application Checklist (Attachment A) have been released with this email notice. Review the entire solicitation manual for a comprehensive list of program requirements.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the full Solicitation Manual Addendum 03 to ensure that all program and application requirements have been clearly addressed.
- Failure to meet [GFO-23-312's](#) solicitation requirements may result in a deduction in scoring or disqualification from consideration. The reasons for disqualification can be found under Section IV.E. Stage One: Application Screening of the solicitation manual.

- Some applications may already comply with all requirements and exclude prohibited activities; these applications do not need to submit any edits.
- Previously submitted applications have not been scored. All applications received by the September 27, 2024, submission deadline will be evaluated and scored after the submission date.
- Updates may be communicated in a future announcement.

Prohibited Activities:

- CERRI funds and match funds **must not be used for prohibited activities** (Section I.B.2 of the Solicitation Manual, page 3), **such as** covering the costs of:
 - Construction of a new electric generating facility, including the purchase or installation of an emergency generator
 - Solar photovoltaic (PV) generation and all other new energy generation
 - Battery Energy Storage Systems for any use other than system adaptive capacity (e.g., such systems cannot be used for peak demand periods unless they are specifically designed to also handle system adaptive capacity)¹
 - As defined in [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \(BIL\) 40101\(d\) FAQs](#), system adaptive capacity is the ability of the electrical grid to continue to supply electricity where needed during disruptive events.¹
 - Electrification and weatherization of residential and commercial buildings
 - Weatherization technologies and equipment must be directly related to grid hardening activities to be eligible project costs.
 - Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers
 - Light-Emitting Diode (LED) lighting or solar carport lighting
 - Manufacturing
 - Workforce development activities that are not coupled with eligible activities
 - Workforce development activities must be paired with an eligible activity to be eligible project costs. For example, if an entity proposes a reconductoring project, workforce development may include the hiring, training, and/or development of line workers who will either perform the proposed work or will maintain reconductored lines in the future. Workforce development activities must focus on relevant tasks and not include peripheral activities such as firefighter training.

- Community engagement activities outside the scope of the CERRI Program, such as developing a broader regional community resilience plan
 - Community engagement activities must be directly related to the proposed project and to electric grid reliability/resilience (e.g., community input workshops and/or electric outage preparedness workshops).
 - If CERRI and match funds are used to award grants and scholarships, an application's Project Narrative should provide details about relevant curricula and training objectives of the awarded grants and scholarships. The Project Narrative must demonstrate how the grants and scholarships align with the community engagement and workforce development activities that support the eligible activities proposed in the application's Scope of Work. Any grants or scholarships must also be defined and included as Tasks in the Scope of Work.
- Proposed activities must strictly adhere to the eligible activities list (Section I.B.1 of the Solicitation Manual, page 2) and aim to improve the reliability and resilience of the electric grid against disruptive events.
 - Per [BIL section 40101\(a\)\(1\)](#), a disruptive event is “an event in which operations of the electric grid are disrupted, preventively shut off, or cannot operate safely due to extreme weather, wildfire, or a natural disaster.”
 - Disruptive events, per [BIL section 40101\(a\)\(1\)](#), do not include threats from human causes (e.g., vehicle collisions, mylar balloons), nuisance pests (e.g., squirrels), or other non-environmental factors.

Application Requirements:

- Total funding requests must not exceed the maximum funding allotment listed for each group in the solicitation manual (Section I.C, page 5); applications requesting more than the maximum agreement funding for their project group will fail the application screening and be disqualified
- Match funding amounts stated in Commitment Letters (Attachment 08) must match the match funding amounts listed on the Budget Attachments (Attachment 05)
 - If the amounts listed in an application are inconsistent, the total amount pledged in the signed commitment letter(s) will be considered for match funding points
- At least one Community Based Organization and/or tribal partner should be identified at the time of application (Section II.B, page 11)

- Applications should include all anticipated Build America, Buy America Act (BABA) waiver requests (Section III.C.5.8, page 18)
 - Applicants who do not submit BABA waivers with their application must accept the risk that any BABA waivers submitted after being awarded may not receive Department of Energy (DOE) approval
- Applications should include requested reliability and resilience data (Section IV.F Scoring Criteria 1, Technical Merit, page 27)
 - Applications will be evaluated and scored based on the data provided by the application submission deadline
 - Applications that include all requested reliability and resilience data will be evaluated favorably based on Section IV.F Criteria 1, Technical Merit

Attachment Requirements:

- Applications must include all required attachments (Attachments #1-10). Attachments must be completed according to the instructions outlined in Section III.C, Application Organization and Submission Instructions, of the solicitation manual (page 15); applications that do not include all 10 required attachments and supporting documentation will fail the application screening and be disqualified
 - Applications must include all required documentation with relevant attachments (e.g., site and satellite maps, schematics, single line diagram)
 - Applicants must ensure all required and relevant attachments are correctly referenced in the application proposal
- If applicable, Applications should include Attachments 11 and 12. Applicants who do not submit the Foreign National Participation Document (Attachment 11) and Request for Unclassified Foreign National Access (Attachment 12) with their application must accept the risk that any documents submitted after being awarded may not receive Department of Energy (DOE) approval
- All proposed deliverables outlined in the Project Narrative should be listed in the Scope of Work (Attachment 03) and Project Schedule (Attachment 04)
- Applications must complete and include separate Budget Forms (Attachment 05) for all subcontractors or subrecipients receiving:
 - a) \$100,000 or more in CEC/CERRI funds or
 - b) 25% or more of the total CEC/CERRI funds
 - This requirement applies even to subcontractors that have not yet been identified or are listed as “to be determined (TBD)”
- Subcontractors and Vendors should be listed on the “Subcontracts” tab in the Budget Forms (Attachment 05)

- For additional details on the definition and characteristics of subcontractors, subrecipients, and vendors, navigate to the CEC's [Sub-to-Vendor Verification Form](#) listed in the [ECAMS Resources](#) page
- Applications must complete all Budget Form worksheets (Attachment 05) and include an itemization of expenses in the budget forms
 - E.g., General categories such as 'Community Benefits Plan', 'System Related Materials', or 'General Project Tasks' are not acceptable budget items
 - Acceptable budget items must include a description of each component of the system or task with justification of need, basis of cost, and number of units
- All expenses outlined in application attachments must be reflected in the Budget Forms (Attachment 05)
- Failure to include sufficient and accurate documentation for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Compliance Form (Attachment 06) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Questionnaire (Attachment 07) will result in delays in the award review process and may result in a reduction in scoring. Applicants must:
 - Ensure both attachments are complete and present accurate information at the time of application
 - Identify the lead CEQA agency
 - Include clear descriptions of the project scope and activities
 - Identify and reference the appropriate sections of the CEQA Guidelines for categorical exemptions
 - Provide detailed site layout maps that indicate specific locations for installations and modifications
 - Include documentation from any prior Initial Studies, Environmental Assessments, Finding of No Significant Impact, or Mitigated Negative Declaration performed (if applicable)
 - Identify all necessary permits, particularly for construction and installation activities
 - Complete all NEPA questionnaire sections and ensure all relevant environmental and cultural site impacts are addressed
 - Coordinate with appropriate offices to determine impacts on historical and prehistoric resources before submitting NEPA documentation
 - Include a comprehensive decommissioning plan outlining the process for equipment replacement and disposal at the end of its lifecycle
 - Describe the scope of worker safety programs, including any lab safety training and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliance, and provide details on safety protocols and procedures to prevent injury and illness

- Applicants must ensure CEQA and NEPA processes are completed in a timely manner after the CEC’s Notice of Proposed Award. Failure to do so may result in the cancellation of a proposed award (Section III.C.5.6 and Section III.C.5.7, page 19-20)
 - Applicants must confirm timelines and the completeness of the documents, including the NEPA Addendum, CEQA forms, and Notice of Exemption (NOE) filing
 - Applicants must clarify responsibilities and deadlines for specific project permits and filings, particularly regarding the Lead Agency and timeline feasibility

Anticipated Key Activities Schedule Update:

ACTIVITY	DATE	TIME ²
Solicitation Release	March 28, 2024	
Pre-Application Workshop	April 11, 2024	10:00 a.m.
Deadline for Written Questions	April 26, 2024	5:00 p.m.
Anticipated Distribution of Questions and	May 24, 2024	
Support for Application Submission in ECAMS	June 28, 2024	5:00 p.m.
Deadline to Submit Applications	[July 12, 2024] <u>September 27, 2024</u>	11:59 p.m.
CEC Recommends Awards to DOE for Approval ³	[September 6, 2024] <u>November 1, 2024</u>	
Anticipated Notice of Proposed Award Posting	Q4, 2024	
Anticipated CEC Business Meeting Date	Q1, 2025	
Anticipated Agreement Start Date	Q1, 2025	
Anticipated Agreement End Date	April 30, 2028	

² Pacific Standard Time or Pacific Daylight Time, whichever is being observed.

³ DOE maintains final approval on all awarded projects.

Application Checklist:

To facilitate the revision and review of applications, the CEC has revised Attachment A, Project Eligibility Checklist, which can be found on the solicitation website for CERRI’s GFO-23-312.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read through the entirety of the Solicitation Manual and Attachment Instructions before resubmitting applications.

Updates may be communicated in a future announcement.

More Information:

- [Community Energy Reliability and Resilience Investment \(CERRI\) Program](#)
- [GFO-23-312 CERRI Solicitation website](#)

¹For additional details and clarification on BIL Section 40101(d) terms and conditions, navigate to [40101\(d\) FAQs](#) located under “Other Grant Award Resources.”