

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM 6/26/24 AND 7/10/24 WEBINARS AND QUESTIONS POSED TO INFO@MARC.ORG OR BY EMAIL TO MARC STAFF.

### WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Eligible organizations are required to be 501c3 and serve disadvantaged populations or are located in a disadvantaged neighborhood. The organization must be registered in SAM.gov to receive federal funds and have a UEI number.

#### **SAM.gov**

If your organization has not registered in the federal SAM.gov system, here is a link to begin that process. [SAM.gov | Home](#) The organization applying for funds does not have to have the SAM.gov registration complete by the August 23 deadline but will need to be registered to be eligible for the funding. There are different choices for registration - make sure to register to be eligible to receive federal funds, either directly from a federal agency or as a sub-grantee. Here is guidance on the DOE website. <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/appendix-7-sam-registration-and-uei-user-guide-sept-2022.pdf>

### FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

**Q:** Can a church apply if it does not have a 501 C3 designation?

**A:** No. Unfortunately, it's a requirement by the Department of Energy that we can only serve 501c3 organizations. 6/26/24

**Comment:** Faith-based organizations that have a 501c3 designation must confirm that at least 51 percent of their building space is used for social services. The program is intended to support organizations that serve disadvantaged residents with services other than religious services.

### NONPROFIT CAPACITY TO SERVE AS SUBRECIPIENT FOR THIS GRANT

**Q:** How do you determine that a nonprofit is able to handle federal funds? (Organizational capacity)

**A:** MARC uses a risk assessment tool, like a checklist, to see if organizations are prepared to contract for, receive and utilize federal funds. We will provide you with a copy of the checklist and answer additional questions. In general, we want sub-recipients to be able to manage federal funds, accounting for their receipt and expenditure, process to approve payments to ensure fiscal responsibility, ability to bid and contract for a construction project, ability to manage a construction project, etc. If there are small nonprofits that don't have all of the necessary capacities, MARC or CCF may be willing to serve as fiscal agent. 6/26/24

### CAPACITY OF ORGANIZATIONS TO SERVE AS SUBRECIPIENT - RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

**Q:** What is on the checklist or the risk assessment tool to evaluate organizational and financial capacity.

**A:** MARC will share the checklist and provide it to those who participated in the webinar and post on our website. 6/26/24

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY - WHAT IS REQUIRED?**

**Q:** We have never applied for or received federal grants before. What kind of capacity are you talking about for a small staff operation?

**A:** MARC works with many nonprofit sub-recipients to pass through federal funds. We have a checklist to make sure that the nonprofits we select for this program understand the federal requirements. In general, there are two parts that are most important - fiscal responsibility and project management capacity. For fiscal responsibility, we want to make sure that our sub-recipients understand requirements for use of federal funds and can account for the use of the funds with financial statements or audits if necessary. For some smaller nonprofits, cash flow for a project like this might be a challenge given that it is a reimbursement grant. Please reach out if you have further questions on how this might affect your organization's financials.

In terms of project management, your organization's staff will need to manage the bidding and contracting process as well as the construction project itself. This might involve working with the selected contractor to make sure they complete the project successfully to your satisfaction and meet federal requirements. DOE requires that we meet Davis-Bacon rules to ensure that the contractors are paying their workers a living wage. This requires regular interviews with workers on site and to provide necessary documentation to the Department of Energy.

Having staff and board members with experience managing capital improvement projects will be helpful in navigating your energy efficiency project. In addition, our staff and technical consultants can provide guidance or troubleshoot issues with your team when they occur.

If you've not received federal funds before, the sam.gov registration is a simple online process, but it will ask you about your ability to comply with various federal regulations. Once you've applied and received the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, the registration is good for a year. Renewal is also easy. [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) | [Home](#) The registration is something that both for profit and nonprofit companies and organizations apply for and then they are then eligible to apply for federal funds and receive them. 7/10/24

## **WHAT BUILDINGS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR ASSISTANCE?**

The nonprofit organization applying for the grant must own the building in the name that is registered with the IRS as a 501c3. Buildings must be located in the Kansas City metro area, including Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri; and Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami and Wyandotte in Kansas. DOE encourages MARC as the grantee to target funds to serve disadvantaged populations and areas of the community where large proportions of disadvantaged populations reside. The MARC website has links to several tools to identify those parts of the metro area identified as "environmental justice" areas.

The building must have been owned and occupied by the nonprofit for at least 12 months prior to the time of application. We are not able to help nonprofits with costs to renovate a building that is not currently being used to deliver services to disadvantaged populations.

## **TRANSITIONAL HOUSING**

**Q:** Are transitional housing shelters considered multi-unit housing buildings and thus not eligible?

**A:** In general, multi-unit housing buildings are not eligible because the individual units may have separate meters, or the occupants are the ones adjusting the temperature in their units. If the shelter has one meter set and monitored by the non-profit, it is possible that the building could be eligible. 6/26/24

## **ANIMAL SHELTERS**

**Q:** Are animal shelters eligible for the program?

**A:** No, only emergency shelters for people, but not animal shelters. 6/26/24

## **LAND OWNERSHIP FOR BUILDING ELIGIBILITY**

**Q:** We may be one of the very few agencies that have this situation, but our building is owned by us. We have title to the building, but the land under it, the land that it sits on, belongs to the university. And we have a long-term (100 year) lease. Would our building be eligible?

**A:** We believe it would, but we will check with DOE program staff. (Follow up confirmed that the building IS eligible under this situation). DOE is interested in getting as many buildings improved as possible. They would want to make sure that once the building is improved, that it's able to be maintained for the services that you provide to the community. 7/10/24

## **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

### **APPLICATION(S) FOR MULTIPLE BUILDINGS**

**Q:** Are non-profit organizations allowed to submit an application for multiple buildings?

**A:** A separate application is required for each building. Organizations are allowed to submit applications for more than one building. 6/26/24

Additional note: Given that we expect many applications, we encourage non-profits to identify their top priority building for assistance.

## **WHEN ARE BIDS REQUIRED?**

**Q:** Do applicants need to have a bid before the August 23rd deadline?

**A:** Bids are not required prior to the August 23rd deadline. After the top 25-30 nonprofit buildings are selected by the Community Advisory Board later this fall and a Phase 2 energy audit is conducted, MARC will submit a portfolio of recommended buildings to the DOE. We expect a 2-week review by DOE, followed by working with the selected non-profits to execute a sub-recipient agreement with MARC and provide technical assistance as needed to prepare bid documents for the selected energy conservation improvements between late November and late January/early February. will happen in November 24th through January 25th. The selection of top projects will be based on the selection criteria including the energy assessment/energy audit to determine those improvements that could achieve the 15% savings. 6/26/24

## **HOW DO WE DETERMINE WHETHER WE ARE IN THE 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN?**

This is a federal requirement that we cannot use funds for properties in the 100-year floodplain. Your insurance carrier may know (or if you have a loan on the building, your lender would know.) We can check maps to determine if your building is in a designated 100-year floodplain area (mapped by the US Corps of Engineers). Unless you know it is in such a flood zone, we suggest answering NO.

## **WHAT TYPES OF IMPROVEMENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE PROGRAM?**

The improvements must be directly related to helping the building owner achieve at least a 15% energy savings. Typical improvements include HVAC systems and controls, LED lighting, windows and doors. No projects involving ground disturbance are allowed.

## **ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS**

**Q:** Are new roofs allowable?

**A:** Yes, new roofs are allowable. Given the expense of a new roof, we will need to evaluate the cost of the improvement in relation to the return on investment in terms of energy savings. As part of the energy assessment/Level 1 energy audit, our engineers and other team members may be able to help your organization evaluate the possible costs of certain improvements such as a roof in relation to energy savings. 6/26/24

## **ELIGIBLE COSTS**

**Q:** Can funds be used to pay construction salaries, but not salaries of the nonprofit agency?

**A:** That is correct. Your organization, if selected, would be bidding out the work. And if, for example, a part of the work that you would desire to be accomplished would be to replace some windows that would require some construction, then the construction company that would bid on that would pay their workers' salaries. (The organization will be responsible for meeting Davis-Bacon federal requirements to collect information on worker salaries through on-site interviews). 6/26/24

The DOE grant and matching funds that MARC has raised for the program cannot be used to cover a nonprofit's administrative or project management costs.

## **HOW TO IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS FOR YOUR BUILDING?**

**Q:** What resources are available to help a nonprofit with a walkthrough to begin to identify what types of energy improvements might be best for our building?

**A:** Our program provides all eligible applicants with a walkthrough (when needed) following the deadline of the application. As part of the application process and prior to a walkthrough, you can work with Metropolitan Energy Center's staff to input your utility data in Energy Star Portfolio. This will give you an initial understanding of your energy performance. Following the application deadline, MARC staff will review your application to confirm your eligibility for the program. Once confirmed, we will work with you to understand what analysis is necessary to identify the energy efficiency improvements that would be most beneficial to your organization and meet the DOE's energy reduction

targets. If needed, the walkthrough will be conducted by our engineering partners Entegriety Energy Partners and Custom Engineering (this analysis is known as an “ASHRAE Level 1 audit”) or Evergy professionals (known as an “energy assessment”). The teams will look at your prior energy use, your building's heating and cooling systems, lighting, and building envelope and help identify areas where you where they think you might achieve the most energy savings.

In advance of the application deadline, Evergy can provide your organization with an energy assessment if you are in their service area and are eager to understand your energy saving opportunities. This is through their existing programs and you can reach out to them via their [website](#) or our staff can connect you.

We expect that we may not be able to support every applicant with grant funding; however, going through the Energy Star portfolio system and receiving an energy assessment will provide a helpful roadmap for all applicants in pitching opportunities to other funders where they could save on monthly expenses and devote more future funding to their mission. 7/10/24

**Q:** How will you **determine the energy savings** for the program - is it based on reduction in energy use per meter or by improvement project (e.g., HVAC replacement, energy control system, lighting) or change in energy use for the entire building?

**A:** Energy savings will be based on the overall reduction in energy usage for the building. If a building has more than one meter (electrical or gas) the savings will be determined by the combined usage per meter. Energy savings will not be based per improvement (e.g., replacing an old HVAC unit with a unit that is 15% more efficient). While that will contribute to the total decrease, the overall energy savings will be based on the entire building.

#### **GRANT MINIMUM/MAXIMUM**

**Q** You have said the maximum amount of grant funds for any single building is \$200,000. Do you have a minimum dollar figure for a request?

**A:** We don't have a minimum. We want to make sure that we spend the right amount of dollars to help you achieve at least a 15% energy savings for your building. We do expect that we will spend less than \$200,000 to improve some buildings. Let's say your organization has already replaced your HVAC system. Maybe you would benefit from some LED lighting in certain parts of your building that have the old fluorescent lighting, and that may not be a big expense, but it would achieve significant energy savings. 7/10/24

#### **ABILITY FOR NONPROFIT TO COMPLETE OTHER ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS NOT FUNDED BY DOE GRANT**

**Q:** What if an organization has a larger capital project that includes energy conservation, could the federal funds be used for a portion of a larger capital improvement?

**A:** It is possible as long as the energy conservation improvements proposed for the DOE funds have a cost of no more than \$200,000 and can easily be accounted for separate from the other capital investments. If the timeline works for your organization and you have the

funding available to you, it is possible to coordinate this grant with other funding. It will need to be clear to DOE what their funds were used to pay for and to document the energy savings that would be accomplished by those improvements. 6/26/24

**Comments:** If some organizations would like to undertake larger projects or if this DOE grant program has limited funding, we may spend less than \$200,000 for some building projects that would allow us to provide assistance to more nonprofits.

## **SOLAR PROJECT ELIGIBILITY**

**Q:** Are solar project improvements eligible?

**A: NO.** DOE is not allowing solar improvements for this grant. There are some other DOE and EPA grants that may be possibilities and a federal tax incentive for nonprofit organizations. The state of Missouri has been awarded a Solar for All grant from DOE, and the state expects to support housing and some nonprofit organizations in disadvantaged communities. Additional DOE grants may be available later this year. A link for the federal tax incentive is [Understanding the Solar Tax Credit for Nonprofits \(everybodysolar.org\)](https://www.everybodysolar.org)  
6/26/24

## **OTHER GRANT OPPORTUNITIES**

**Q:** In addition to the resources Ashley just shared, can you discuss the relationship between this and other related grant opportunities, those that support facility improvements and GHG reduction?

**A:** Some in our audience may have been involved or heard about a large EPA grant application that MARC submitted in late April to the EPA (Carbon Pollution Reduction Grant - CPRG). A significant portion of the grant, if it's awarded, would support building energy efficiency. Ashley was very involved in that grant application. That could be another source of funding to support buildings for either renewables like solar or for the more conventional energy conservation improvements that we've been discussing as part of this particular DOE grant. And for any eligible organization that's not able to be assisted through our grant, we'll make sure that we have you connected to that grant program if it's funded, and we're hoping to learn the outcome of that grant by late August. We will be sure and share the news with this audience. **UPDATE: The CPRG grant application submitted to EPA by MARC was not selected for funding.** 6/26/24

What other federal resources are available for nonprofits interested in energy efficiency?

- a. Information about energy efficiency can be found at the following DOE webpages:
- b. Renew America's Nonprofits Funding Opportunity
- c. <https://www.energy.gov/scep/renew-americas-nonprofits>
- d. Weatherization Assistance Program grants
- e. <https://www.energy.gov/scep/wap/apply-innovation-grant>
- f. (Database) Tax Credits, Rebates & Savings (organized by state)
- g. <https://www.energy.gov/savings/dsire-page>

- h. (Toolkit) Energy Savings Performance Contracting (ESPC)
- i. <https://www.energy.gov/eere/slsc/articles/toolkit-energy-savings-performance-contracting-espc>
- j. Energy Savings Performance Contracting
- k. <https://www.energy.gov/eere/slsc/energy-savings-performance-contracting>

What federal resources are available for nonprofits interested in renewable energy?

- l. Information about renewable energy can be found at the following DOE webpages:
- m. Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) Funding Opportunities
- n. <https://www.energy.gov/eere/funding/eere-funding-opportunities>
- o. National Community Solar Partnership
- p. <https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/join-national-community-solar-partnership>
- q. Information about clean energy tax credits available to nonprofits can be found at the following government webpages:
- r. Federal Solar Tax Credit Resources
- s. <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/articles/federal-solar-tax-credit-resources>
- t. IRS Guidance on Direct Pay and Transferability
- u. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1533>

## TECHNICAL TOOLS

### DOE ANALYSIS SOFTWARE

**Q:** Will we use DOE analysis software?

**A:** We are not familiar with that software. We expect to work with partner Metropolitan Energy Center to make use of the Energy Star Portfolio Manager program. The website to register to use this software is <https://portfoliomanager.energystar.gov/pm/login> MEC will offer a one-hour training on the use of the Energy Star Portfolio Manager program on July 17 at 10 am and again on August 5 at 10 am. Information to register for the webinars will be posted on the MARC website.

**Q:** Are applicants required to use the EPA Energy Star Portfolio Manager as part of their application?

**A:** No, but we strongly encourage applicants to use it as a way to benchmark current energy use and help track how improvements could reduce energy use.

### ENERGY STAR PORTFOLIO MANAGER PROGRAM

**Q:** Is the Energy Star Portfolio Manager something that our organization can do ourselves? Or do we need to contract with someone to do that with us or for us?

**A:** The Metropolitan Energy Center has offered to assist all applicants with use of the system, and have arranged for two training sessions, July 17 and August 5 from 10 am - 11:15 am. The links to register for the virtual training is on the MARC website. You can also enter the data yourself. And, Metropolitan Energy Center does have customer service representatives to help answer questions. 7/10/24

## **GRANT MANAGEMENT**

### **ROLE OF NONPROFITS AS SUBRECIPIENTS/ROLE OF MARC**

**Q:** Will MARC pay the contractors directly or will the nonprofit agency pay the contractors and then get reimbursed by MARC.

**A:** The intention is that MARC will have an agreement with your organization. If you're selected, your organization would do the bidding and the contracting directly with the selected contractor. Your organization would be responsible for paying the contractor as you outline in your contract with the company for either progress payments or upon completion of the work. As you receive invoices from your contractor(s), you would review to make sure the work for which payment is requested has been successfully completed, and then you would submit that paperwork to MARC. Your organization would be responsible for paying the contractor for the invoice, and MARC would reimburse your organization. If you're making progress payments, you would be submitting those invoices to us, and we would be reimbursing you for those costs along the way. And then for final approval and payment, there may be an inspection that your organization and perhaps our organization might want to do together to make sure the contractor has successfully completed the work before a final payment is issued, 6/26/24

### **APPLICATION SELECTION PROCESS**

MARC and project partners, including Community Capital Fund, have formed a Community Advisory Board to help review applications and select those for funding. Following the deadline on August 23, MARC and partners will review all applications to determine basic eligibility of the applicant and building. Each building that does not have a current energy audit or assessment will receive one. The energy information will help in the selection process.

### **SCORING PROCESS**

**Q:** Is there a scoring process for the application, or is a lot of this driven by the initial audit or both?

**A:** The selection criteria that we showed on the screen and is in a document on the MARC website describes a point system for four areas - location, need, organizational capacity and energy savings. One of the selection criteria areas is the potential for energy savings. We will be looking at the location of the building - whether it is in a disadvantaged neighborhood or community and if the building provides services to disadvantaged people in or near the neighborhood around the building location; the need for the project; the non-profit's capacity to handle the project and federal funds; and the potential to realize at least a 15% energy savings. 6/26/24

### **OTHER COMMENTS**

**Comments:** Andrew Davis with Community Capital Fund mentioned the requirement that non-profits must be a 501c3 organization and the building to be improved must be owned



by that 501c3 organization. There are two maps to show the Justice 40/Environmental Justice census tracts. [environmental-justice-tracts-map \(marc.org\)](https://environmental-justice-tracts-map.marc.org) or <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>

Andrew offered to help answer questions ([andrew@ccfkansascity.org](mailto:andrew@ccfkansascity.org))

If anyone has questions, you mail email one of us - MARC staff:

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We want to clarify that the energy audits will be conducted after the applications are submitted by August 23, 2024. If your organization has a recent energy assessment or energy audit completed within the last 5 years, please upload with your application.

For those buildings in the service area for Evergy, they offer an energy assessment service for small businesses and nonprofits and have agreed to assist us with some of our energy assessments.

**Comment:** One of the advantages of the program is even though 25 to 30 will be chosen as the final grant awardees, the process of going through an energy assessment or Level 1 energy audit will give you a roadmap for some energy improvements that you can make. So hopefully beyond just the 25 or 30 that are awarded you will get value in going through the application process. You might be able to share that information with other funders or take steps on those projects that could help you achieve the greatest energy savings.

**Comments:** During the first information webinar on June 26, 2024, we had some other questions, and a summary of that Q&A session is on our website.

Though this grant does not include solar, for non-profit organizations interested in solar improvements, there is a federal incentive called the Investment Tax Credit. It applies to nonprofits as a direct pass-through and is a great pairing once your building is more energy-efficient. Here is an article: <https://www.cleangroup.org/what-nonprofits-need-to-know-about-the-investment-tax-credit/>

Also note that this application is extensive. If you are remotely interested, we recommend that you start as soon as you possibly can with your team, because there's a lot of information that is being asked of your organization. The deadline is August 23, 2024.

As you're going through the application and have questions that come up, please feel free to contact us. We have a wealth of technical professionals involved in this project with expertise on federal grants, nonprofit management, and energy efficiency projects. We are happy to help you through the application process.

