

July 10, 2024, Renew America's Nonprofit Grant Program Informational Webinar Q&A

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 | 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.

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

Entegrity 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.

Q: Is it accurate to say that the initial application will determine if your organization qualifies for assistance, and then after that the MARC team will determine how much you'll be able to get based on the energy assessment?

A: After the deadline, the MARC team and partners will review every application to determine if the organization and their building are eligible for the program. For all eligible applicants, MARC will work with our partners and Evergy to conduct the energy assessment/audit to identify possible improvements that could save energy and be cost-effective in achieving at least a 15% energy savings.

The Community Advisory Board is going to review all eligible applications to select the 25 to 30 nonprofits to be assisted. The board will review your energy assessment and utilizing the grant selection criteria will determine the best candidates for receiving grant funding.

Once the Community Advisory Board selects our 25-30 building projects, our engineers will estimate costs for all projects and will conduct an ASHRAE Level 2 audits for projects that require more complex cost estimating. The team will confirm that all projects will achieve at least 15% energy savings and that no project or combination of a building's projects exceeds the DOE's \$200,000 cap for subgrants.

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.

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.

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.

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 that provides more details: <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!