



Commercial & Community Buildings Grant Program

FY27 Frequently Asked Questions

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Eligibility - Building Type

Are State universities eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings funding?

Public senior higher education institutions as defined in §10– 101(m) of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland are ineligible to apply, as well as any institution of higher education for which funds were appropriated from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) in the FY27 budget.

Is Commercial & Community Buildings funding available to State agencies for state owned or leased facilities?

No. State agencies are ineligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings funding.

Are performing arts centers eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings funding?

Yes. Performing arts centers, as well as arts centers in general, are eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings grant funding.

Are private school student housing projects eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings funding?

Student housing is eligible to apply for grant funding as long as the building is owned by an eligible private school and is located on-campus.

Are warehouses eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings?

Yes. Warehouses are eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings funding.

Are volunteer fire stations eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings?

Yes. Volunteer fire stations are eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings grant funding.

Are religious institutions eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings?

Yes. Religious institutions are eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings grant funding.

Are multifamily affordable housing buildings eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings?

No. Multifamily affordable housing buildings are not eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings. Instead, they're eligible for funding via the [Department of Housing & Community Development](#).

Are agriculture buildings eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings?

Yes. Agricultural buildings are eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings as long as they're not classified as residential.

Are single-family residences that are also the registered location of a for-profit LLC and serves as the operating site for the business eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings?

To be eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings, prospective applicants for Tracks 1, 2, 3, and 4 must provide proof their building is classified as non-residential. Applicants are required to provide utility bills from the past 12 months - if the most recent of those utility bills demonstrates the building is NOT classified as residential, it qualifies as a non-residential building.

Do private K-12 schools qualify as Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)?

Private K-12 schools qualify under Track 1 (Commercial Buildings) for FY27 Commercial & Community Buildings.

Are community colleges eligible to apply for Renewable Measures (Solar) projects under Section 10.3, Pre-Implementation Costs under section 10.4, and Community Resilience projects under Section 10.6 of the Funding Opportunity Announcement?

Yes. Community colleges established pursuant to the Education article of the Maryland Code are eligible to apply for renewable measures (solar) projects, pre-implementation costs, and community resilience projects.

Are Local Education Agency (LEA) applications for an administrative building located in an overburdened census track eligible for the \$50 bonus?

Yes, all LEA applications are eligible for the \$50 bonus, as long as they meet the overburdened or ENOUGH ACT criteria.

Eligibility - Project Type

Are electric-to-electric upgrades allowable?

Yes. Electric-to-electric energy efficiency projects are eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings funding.

Are there minimum energy efficiency standards or other requirements for equipment?

Yes. Appliance upgrades, such as commercial kitchen and refrigeration equipment, must be ENERGY STAR-certified to qualify for funding.

Are dual-fuel projects eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings funding?

No. Measures that include fossil fuel or other combustion technologies that produce greenhouse gas emissions are not eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings funding.

For buildings upgrading kitchen equipment, must the new units be induction to qualify for funding, or is electric acceptable?

New kitchen equipment can be either induction or electric as long as it's ENERGY STAR-certified.

Do water heaters need to be ENERGY STAR-certified to qualify for funding?

No. Water heaters do not need to be ENERGY STAR-certified to be eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings funding.

Are Local Education Agencies (LEAs) eligible to apply for funding for school administration buildings under Track 3 (LEAs)?

Yes. LEAs should apply for school administration building projects using the LEA track (Track 3).

Are major renovation projects eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings?

Yes. Major renovation projects may be submitted for Commercial & Community Buildings grant funding consideration.

Are both new construction projects eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings?

Only LEAs are eligible to apply for new construction projects under Commercial & Community Buildings. New construction is defined as the design and construction of new, ground-up buildings or significant additions.

Are roof upgrades an eligible measure in tandem with rooftop solar projects?

Yes. Eligible buildings may include roof upgrades in their proposed scope of work if their project includes the purchase and installation of rooftop solar systems.

What building types are eligible to apply for solar rooftop, solar ground mount, and/or solar canopy related funding?

Only non-profits, local governments, and local education agencies are eligible to apply for solar rooftop, solar ground mount, or solar canopy funding.

Can Commercial & Community Buildings funding be used to support the installation of LED lighting and street or outdoor lighting upgrades in local government-owned, standalone parking garages and surface lots?

Yes. Local government-owned, standalone parking garage and surface lot projects are eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings funding.

Can a Commercial & Community Buildings grant applicant be a non-profit developer/owner that will sign a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with a for-profit entity for a solar installation project?

No. Non-profit developers cannot submit grant applications on behalf of a for-profit business looking to advance a PPA solar installation project. The grant applicant and funding awardee must be the actual building undergoing upgrades. For solar projects, eligible applicants are limited to non-profit buildings, local governments, and local education agencies.

Are heat pumps with fossil fuel back-ups eligible for Commercial & Community Buildings Grant funding?

Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) funding cannot be applied to any fossil fuel back-up power system components. Back-up systems can exist, but MEA will only fund the electrification portion of the project, not the fossil fuel portion.

Do Resilience Hubs need to have a minimum kW to qualify for Commercial & Community Buildings funding?

No. There is no minimum kW requirement, but the proposed resilience hub project would need to be able to “island” and stay powered during a major weather event.

How are pre-implementation costs incorporated into the calculator and greenhouse gas emissions reductions?

Pre-implementation costs (for eligible building sectors) are not part of the calculator and are not taken into consideration in terms of greenhouse gas emissions reductions. However, all qualifying pre-implementation costs must be noted in the application's budget breakdown.

Do local education agency new construction projects need to be net-zero to qualify for Commercial & Community Buildings funding?

No. New construction projects at local education agencies do not need to be net-zero to qualify for Commercial & Community Buildings funding.

Is indoor LED lighting an eligible Commercial & Community Buildings measure?

Yes. Indoor LED lighting is an eligible measure ONLY for local education agencies and local government buildings.

Are Battery Energy Storage Solutions (BESS) eligible?

Battery storage is eligible under Track 5 and must be connected with a solar system or other Tier 1 renewable source to be eligible for funding consideration.

Can one building apply for electrification under one project scope and system and energy efficiency under another project scope and system, and solar under another project scope and system? One building, one application for multiple grant categories?

Applicants are encouraged to group individual building upgrades or measures into one combined scope of work per building project.

Evaluation Criteria

Are the equipment spec sheets required to be submitted with the initial application or as the project is installed/completed?

Equipment spec sheets are required upon application submission. Please submit spec sheets for the equipment you're planning to install. If the equipment purchased changes from the time of application submission, updated spec sheets may be emailed to

CommercialCommunity.MEA@maryland.gov.

How do applicants assess baseline data for a building that is not currently occupied?

Please work with a verified service provider or vendor to help assess baseline data for currently unoccupied buildings. Please visit the [Maryland Clean Buildings Hub](#) for [Service Provider & Vendor Resources](#).

For rented or leased buildings, is there a standard letter of intent that can be submitted alongside the Commercial & Community Buildings application?

No. There is not a standard letter of intent for the building or property owners to utilize. A signed letter from the building/property owner is acceptable.

For applicants who own their building, is a signed letter of intent required?

No. A letter of intent is not required for building owners. Building owners only need to identify an individual with the authority to commit them to execute the grant's requirements.

Can parishes and Catholic schools provide documentation showing proof of inclusion under the USCCB group exemption/Official Catholic Directory to satisfy the nonprofit tax-exempt documentation requirement for Commercial & Community Buildings?

Yes. Commercial & Community Buildings will accept proof of USCCB group exemption/Official Catholic Directory to fulfill the nonprofit documentation requirement for parishes and Catholic schools.

For the Solar Technical Feasibility requirement, can the preliminary engineering studies be provided directly by the solar company, or do they need to be stamped by a certified engineer?

Yes. Preliminary engineering studies for the Solar Technical Feasibility requirement for applicable Commercial & Community Buildings projects can be provided directly by the solar company.

Do community colleges established pursuant to the Education article of the Maryland Code need to provide documentation verifying their non-profit, tax-exempt status per Section 15.5 of the Funding Opportunity Announcement?

No. Community colleges established pursuant to the Education article of the Maryland Code do not need to provide additional documentation certifying they are a non-profit, tax exempt entity. The "Non-Profit Applicants Only" requirement in Section 15.5 of the [Funding Opportunity Announcement](#) is not applicable.

Would a solar PV system installed on a new construction building be considered ineligible for funding under Section 11.2.2 of the Commercial & Community Buildings [Funding Opportunity Announcement](#)?

Solar PV systems installed on a new construction building are eligible to apply for Commercial & Community Buildings funding consideration. This exception applies only to non-profits, local governments, and LEAs.

Does the overburdened census bonus apply if a Local Education Agency (LEA) school pulls from overburdened tracks but is not physically located in an overburdened tract?

If a potential LEA applicant believes a school may serve a qualifying census tract but is not physically located itself in a qualifying census tract, please contact MEA prior to applying for grant funding to determine eligibility.

Are there provisions for Local Education Agency (LEA) net zero design/construction grants for qualifying new construction projects?

LEAs are eligible for new construction projects and do not need to comply with net zero standards.

Do solar projects need to be in any specific census tract to qualify for funding consideration?

Solar projects do not need to be in any specific census tract to qualify for funding consideration.

Can prospective applicants submit multiple applications if there are projects occurring at more than one building?

Yes, prospective applicants may submit multiple applications if there are projects at multiple buildings.

Funding

Is the grant funding disbursed prior to work beginning or does the applicant need to pay upfront and then receive reimbursement?

Grant funding will only be disbursed to awardees in stages following the full execution of a grant agreement. Funding will only be issued as reimbursement for completed work upon proof of purchase via detailed invoice documentation and project status updates provided to MEA throughout the performance period.

Once commitment letters have been signed, can a grantee get started with purchase orders (POs) before signing the official grant agreement?

Yes. As long as no payments are actually being made, grantees who have signed commitment letters but have not yet signed the official grant agreement can proceed with POs at their own risk as long as they reach out to MEA first for approval.

Are engineering and design services eligible for grant funds?

Yes. Engineering and design services are eligible for reimbursement and must be listed as a line item in the proposed budget.

Are applicants allowed to apply for multiple Maryland Energy Administration Grant Programs for the same project?

Applicants cannot receive funding for the same equipment or upgrade from more than one program; but they may apply to several Maryland Energy Administration Grant Programs as long as each request covers a distinct upgrade.

How should prospective applicants provide total project costs for eligible building improvements if pricing will likely not be finalized until after the Commercial & Community Buildings application deadline?

Applicants are encouraged to provide the most accurate cost information possible for their upcoming projects. Once grant applications are submitted, changes cannot be made and will be evaluated based on the included cost details. Once grants are awarded, the grant amount cannot be increased to accommodate any changes in the project.

Are Commercial & Community Buildings total project costs and the subsequent percentage cap applied before or after other funding sources are taken into consideration?

Grant funding percentage caps will be applied to the proposed total project costs inclusive of leveraged funds. All leveraged funds must be accounted for in the application "Budget & Timeline" tab of the required Energy Impact & Grant Calculator for Tracks 1, 2, 3, and 4 projects.

For a non-profit applicant, can reasonable energy-modeling and technical-planning costs incurred while preparing the application qualify as pre-implementation costs, or must those expenses occur after execution of a grant agreement?

Any qualifying pre-implementation costs, including energy-modeling and technical-planning, are only eligible for reimbursement if the activities occur after the grant agreement is fully executed. Pre-implementation costs incurred while preparing to submit a Commercial & Commercial Buildings application are ineligible for funding.

Please clarify FOA Section 9.5 for max funding for LEAs - does this mean we could ask for \$3M for an HVAC project, and \$3M for roof / window / door replacement, for the same facility if we achieve the max energy savings?

The max grant amount will be applied per scope of work for an entire building's application, not per measure.

Vendors & Service Providers

Are there any contractor procurement rules regarding Commercial & Community Buildings funding?

No, there are no contractor procurement stipulations.

Is there a "preferred-vendor" list based on the type of installation or upgrade?

There is no preferred-vendor list, but those interested are encouraged to visit the [Maryland Clean Buildings Hub](#) for [Service Provider & Vendor Resources](#) to review a list of possible Service Providers and vendors for their projects.

What are the steps to become a vendor?

There are no vendor requirements for Commercial & Community Buildings projects. All grantees are encouraged to thoroughly research their vendors and Service Providers to ensure companies are fully insured, licensed, and verified to perform and complete the planned project upgrades.

Miscellaneous

How does the reporting process work once a grant agreement is fully executed?

Once the grant agreement is fully executed, grantees must provide a project status update alongside any detailed invoices (if applicable) on a regular basis as determined by the Program's reporting requirements throughout the period of performance.

What timeframes should be kept in mind for awarded Commercial & Community Buildings projects? When must projects start and be completed by?

Grantees who are awarded funding may only apply it to activities that occur after the grant agreement is fully executed. Once the grant agreement is executed, grantees have a specified number of months (see the Funding Opportunity Announcement for details) to complete their project. An extension for good cause may be requested by a grantee and must be justified with written documentation explaining the need for an extension.

How many applications and calculators must be submitted for projects that contain both solar ground mount/rooftop AND canopy solar installations?

One application and one calculator should be submitted for projects that contain both types of solar upgrades.

Are applicants required to pay contractors first and then request reimbursement?

Yes. Commercial & Community Buildings operates on a reimbursement basis. Applicants must cover project costs upfront, including contractor payments, and then submit invoices and required documentation to MEA for reimbursement once the project is complete. Applicants who need financing or bridge loans to cover upfront project costs should refer to the Maryland Clean Energy Center (MCEC) for potential financing assistance.

What is the difference between direct ownership and third-party ownership for solar installation projects?

Direct ownership is when the building owner purchases and maintains the solar system.

Third-party ownership is when the building owner enters into a contract with a third-party who purchases and maintains the solar system.

Should an account be created on the [My MEA Portal](#) before submitting a grant application?

Yes. All applicants must create an account on the [My MEA Portal](#) before getting started with their application submissions.