

Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Open Energy Innovation Program

Program Description:

The Maryland Energy Administration (“MEA”) welcomes proposals for energy projects and initiatives outside of the agency’s suite of established programs to foster innovation and create opportunities for efforts that are not eligible for MEA’s sector-specific energy programs offered in a given fiscal year.

MEA’s OPEN Energy Innovation Program (“Open Energy Innovation” or “Program”) is a competitive program designed to support forward-thinking energy projects that drive greenhouse gas reductions, equity in energy projects, and energy affordability.

The primary focus of this Program is to fund Capital Projects (meaning you're building or creating something tangible) that lead to increased clean energy development within the State of Maryland. Applications to the Program should be for projects that have the potential to be scalable and replicated to benefit new sectors of the economy or demonstrate the deployment of new emerging technologies and provide a public benefit beyond a single project or activity, in support of Maryland's energy and environmental goals.

Type of Grant Program:

This is a statewide competitive program

Eligible Applicants:

Businesses, non-profits, local governments, educational institutions – basically, a lot of different groups! Just make sure your project is happening in Maryland, and any subcontractors are also registered to do business in Maryland.

Application Deadline: February 27, 2026, 11:59 PM EST

Anticipated Funding:

A total of **Seven Million Dollars (\$7,000,000.00)** is anticipated to be available from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (“SEIF”). The total amount awarded may be more or less, depending on availability of funds, the restrictions on funds, and the number and quality of applications received.

Grant amount:

Typically, grants will be up to **two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00)**; however, larger grants are possible for exceptional proposals. Proposals exceeding the typical maximum funding amount of \$200,000.00 will require exceptional and thorough justification; must have the potential for large scale energy and greenhouse gas reduction benefits, including clearly defined

outcomes closely aligned with the State of Maryland's statutory goals and MEA's mission; and must demonstrate a high probability of generating a steady influx of capital as a result of instituting the proposal. Larger requests will likely entail follow-ups for additional data as well as a thorough due diligence review by MEA.

Review of a proposal submitted in response to an OPEN Energy Innovation Program FOA is not a guarantee of funding.

Notes on Funding:

MEA funding sources have various restrictions, including geography, income limitations, and other aspects. In evaluating proposals and negotiating awards, MEA will work with the applicants to align their proposals to meet the restrictions of the funding source used to support selected activities. For example, some funding for the Program is geographically restricted by statute to projects that are owned by or directly benefit low-to moderate-income communities located in a census tract with a median income at or below 80% of the median income for the State, or overburdened communities as defined § 1-701 of the Environmental article. MEA will coordinate funding with awardees based on the nature of the proposal and availability and alignment of the activity with the funding source.

MEA cannot guarantee the amount of time from application to award. While the intent is to award grants in Spring 2026, due to the innovative and diverse nature of proposals received under the program MEA may need to undertake substantial due diligence before making a funding decision. Prospective applicants with time sensitivities or constraints should consult the program manager before applying.

Ineligible Activities:

- Proposals for a technology, service, application, or other initiative similar to those covered by one of [MEA's other FY26 programs](#) are ineligible. A proposal that differs from an existing program only in the amount of incentive requested typically will be ineligible.
- Proposals for bill assistance are ineligible.
- Proposals focused solely on workforce development are ineligible. The Maryland Department of Labor sector-based [EARN Maryland Program](#) offers funding for training providers of green career workforce development.

Projects that include fossil-fuel or other combustion technologies that produce greenhouse gas emissions are typically not eligible for funding. This includes new installations, infrastructure expansion, or upgrades that extend the life of fossil fuel systems—except for basic health and safety repairs that do not prolong system use. Limited exceptions may be considered only with a thorough technical analysis demonstrating that zero-emission alternatives are not feasible for technical or safety reasons. Cost alone is not a valid justification. All exception requests must include justification, consideration of alternative technologies, and a plan to reduce or phase out fossil fuel use in the future

Applicants who have questions as to whether a proposal may be eligible should contact the Program Manager for initial guidance prior to submitting an application. Any guidance provided is not a guarantee of award or endorsement of a project proposal.

Competitive Evaluation Process:

Each application package will be evaluated competitively by an Evaluation Team. The Evaluation Team will be made up of MEA staff. The evaluation includes three (3) review steps that are described below.

1. Program Manager Eligibility Review: The MEA Program Manager reviews the application for eligibility according to the Minimum Eligibility Requirements listed in this FOA. An application that does not meet the Minimum Eligibility Requirements will be rejected from grant consideration and the applicant will be notified.
2. Evaluation Team Member Individual Review: Each member of the Evaluation Team reviews and scores each application meeting the Minimal Eligibility Requirements according to the Evaluation Criteria established in this FOA.
3. Evaluation Team Group Review and Grant Recommendations: The Evaluation Team convenes for a group review of their findings and scores. An Evaluation Team member is permitted to modify their score for an eligible application considering new information discovered during the Group Review discussion. The final score for each eligible application is determined by taking the average of the individual Evaluation Team member scores for that application. The Evaluation Team will finalize all scores and make grant recommendations. Grants will be recommended in order of highest final score to lowest final score.

A favorable evaluation by a review committee is not a guarantee of award as additional vetting may be performed by agency leadership, and funding must be available to support the proposed activity. MEA may fund a proposal in full or in part. MEA may also elect to fund an application in a future year or request that an applicant reapply under a future year's funding terms, where applicable. Applications determined to be ineligible will not be reviewed further.

Minimum Eligibility Requirements:

Each of the requirements in Table 1 must be met in order for an application to be considered "complete" and be evaluated under the Program. Complete applications will be evaluated as set forth in the "Competitive Evaluation Criteria" section of this FOA.

Table 1: Minimum Eligibility Requirements	
Minimum Eligibility Requirement	Description
Applicant	Applications are submitted by the grantee: Third parties may not submit an application on behalf of the grantee

	<p>A signature applied to the application by an officer with the authority to commit the grantee to execute the grant’s requirements (e.g., Chair of the Board, President, Chief Financial Officer, General Manager, etc.). This individual should have sufficient authority to identify, authorize, and provide the necessary resources to perform implementation</p>
	<p>The applicant, and any contractor that the applicant will work with on the proposed project, must be legally authorized to do business in the State of Maryland, and must have an established Employer Identification Number (“EIN”, sometimes referred to as a “taxpayer identification number,” or “TIN”) at the time they apply to the Program.</p> <p>IRS Form W-9 for the applicant must be submitted with the application. The name on the W-9 form must match the organization name as it should appear if awarded a grant. The mailing address on the W-9 should match the business address for the organization, where bills and other financial correspondence would be directed.</p>
	<p>Any business or non-profit organization operating in Maryland with which the Grantee contracts or partners to carry out the purposes of the Grant shall be registered and in good standing with the Maryland State Department of ¹ Assessments and Taxation , if applicable. Instructions on how to obtain a Certificate of Good Standing are available on DAT's website .²</p>

¹ <https://dat.maryland.gov/pages/default.aspx>

² <https://dat.maryland.gov/businesses/Pages/Internet-Certificate-of-Status.aspx>

	<p>Consistent with the intent to develop capacity for ongoing efforts, applicants should identify staff involved who will be responsible for overseeing the continuation of the activities outlined in this grant announcement after the end of the award’s period of performance</p>
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	Applicants must provide a comprehensive narrative outlining their vision for utilizing the grant funding. Include qualifications and experience of the applicant. Include a description of the types of projects you intend to pursue such as capital project improvements, anticipated timelines, target buildings or systems, and expected outcomes. If applicable, identify key partners, internal or external resources, and any relevant planning already completed that informs your proposed approach. Demonstrate how the proposed project supports State energy policy goals , MEA’s mission, or environmental goals ³ related to clean energy or energy use. Any application that does not clearly and thoroughly demonstrate how the proposed project meets these goals will not be evaluated.
Detailed Budget	Applicants must provide a detailed budget that includes a breakdown of intended use of grant funds and matching funds. The budget should breakdown administrative/overhead cost as well as direct investment in the project (e.g. materials, labor, contractual, other).
Attachments	Applicants must include attachments showing partner engagement and matching funds

³ Examples of energy and environmental goals include, but are not limited to: (1) Advancing compliance with the State’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS); (2) Achieving the greenhouse gas reduction targets established by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 (Ch.38, 2022 Laws of Maryland); and, (3) Helping Maryland achieve the Governor’s goal of 100% clean energy by 2035.

Competitive Evaluation Criteria:

Each application that has met the Minimum Eligibility Requirements of this FOA will be competitively evaluated using the following criteria in Table 2 (“Competitive Evaluation Criteria”).

Table 2: Competitive Evaluation Criteria		
Competitive Evaluation Criteria	Description	Score
Applicant Qualifications and Experience	The applicant demonstrates they have the qualifications and experience to execute the proposed activities.	0-3

	The applicant demonstrates a track record of success.	
Value Proposition	Proposal must thoroughly explain the project and clearly define the value proposition to MEA.	0-5
	Discuss how the project meets the State's energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals; define and explain direct public benefits; clearly demonstrate that the project is not eligible for existing MEA programs or resources; and explain why its consideration under OPEN Energy Innovation Program fits the purpose of the program and how outcomes will be achieved.	
Greenhouse Gas Reductions	Demonstration of Energy Benefits and GHG Impact (Qualitative Requirement). Proposals must clearly demonstrate how energy benefits accrue that will directly yield quantifiable and measurable greenhouse gas reductions or how those energy benefits directly contribute to the development of projects and solutions that yield greenhouse gas reductions. These reductions and energy benefits must be substantial.	0-5
	Quantitative Energy Analysis and Cost Effectiveness (Numeric Requirement). Proposals should quantitatively demonstrate the anticipated energy benefits, GHG reduction and the project cost, including the total funding request from MEA. This information will be used to estimate the greenhouse gas reductions and cost per metric ton of greenhouse gas reduction (\$/MTGHG Reduced). https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator	

Affordability/ Equitable Solutions	Proposals must clearly demonstrate, define, and quantify to the highest extent possible the benefits to low-to-moderate income and overburdened communities. Proposals should clearly address the following, where applicable: reduce energy burden; enhance the efficiency, sustainability, and resilience of low-to-moderate income, overburdened, or affordability; increase access to the direct benefits of clean energy, energy efficiency, and energy resilience technologies for low-to-moderate income and overburdened communities; or help these communities mitigate the harmful impacts of climate change and environmental disparities, as well as historic environmental and social justice.	0-5
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Innovation and Uniqueness	Proposal must demonstrate, with sufficient detail and vetted evidence, that the project is innovative and unique from existing technologies and solutions, and that no existing MEA programs or anticipated programs that have been announced can consider it. It must also demonstrate that existing non-MEA programs are unable to support it, or that the funding that is requested of MEA would help to fill a funding gap that existing non-MEA programs and sources of affordable capital could satisfy.	0-5
Scalability, Replicability and Knowledge Transfer	The project has the ability to grow and expand its impact and shows a clear plan for incremental expansion. The proposal can be duplicated or transferred to similar contexts or different regions. The proposal shows efforts to train and build the capacity of local personnel and communities.	0-5
Effective Partnerships	Must demonstrate that the Applicant has consulted key partners as part of the proposed activity and has engaged the critical stakeholders key to the project's success. Project partners that are essential to the implementation of a project must be explicitly named in the application and letters of support or participation provided (e.g., host facilities, applicable local government leaders where a project is to be conducted in partnership with the local government, applicable utility where a project seeks to modernize or update the utility grid).	0-5
Budget Justification	Appropriateness and justification of the proposed budget. The budget is competitive in scale relative to the desired outcomes. The intended use of grant funds is appropriate and justified.	0-5

Required Application Documents

To be considered complete, an application must include the following documents. Failure to submit any of the required documents may result in the application being considered incomplete.

1. A Concept Paper (max 10 pages) explaining your project, budget, requested funding, partners, and how it meets program goals and the evaluation criteria.
2. Attachments showing partner engagement or matching funds.
3. A detailed budget.
4. A completed IRS Form W-9.
5. Nonprofits and businesses only: Evidence of Good Standing

MEA may request an expanded version of the proposal or additional information and documentation. A request for additional information may include follow-up meetings

How to submit:

To apply complete the FY26 OPEN Energy Innovation Program Application JotForm, [click here](#).

Grant Program General Provisions:

MEA grant programs are covered by general requirements (“General Provisions”) that will be made part of the grant agreement between MEA and a grantee. A copy of these provisions (“General Provisions v3 2.11.22”) is available on MEA’s website [here](#). The most recent version⁴ of this document will be incorporated into all MEA grant agreements.

COMAR:

Grants from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund are covered by regulations found in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), 14.26.02.00 through 14.26.02.9999.

Other OPEN Energy Innovation Program Provisions and Requirements:

In addition to the General Provisions, the following requirements apply to this program: • MEA may negotiate additional requirements into awards to increase public benefit. Such additional requirements may include reduction in the requested grant amount to reflect factors related to return on investment such as the social cost of carbon, financial or in-kind cost share, use of funded facilities for public engagement, local product content, minority business participation, revenue sharing or other requirements consistent with agency mission, State goals, and statute.

- MEA at its discretion may fund some, all, or no proposals received through an OPEN Energy Innovation Program FOA in a given fiscal year.
- MEA may determine, at its discretion, that a proposal has merit and develop a future year competitive or publicly advertised program to address the proposed need instead of funding the proposal through the OPEN Energy Innovation Program.
- A proposal cannot receive funding if it is not permissible within MEA’s established resources in a given fiscal year and within the allowable uses of the Strategic Energy Investment Fund.
- Based on the evaluation criteria and funding availability, MEA may consider funding a⁴

<https://energy.maryland.gov/SiteAssets/Pages/all-incentives/General%20Provisions%20v3%202.11.22.pdf>

component or subset of the activity proposed.

- MEA may, at its discretion, seek to bring multiple proposals together into broader coalitions to achieve State policy and Open Energy Innovation program goals.
- Notice on Public Information: No sensitive or otherwise confidential information should be disclosed to MEA in an OPEN Energy Innovation proposal without prior written approval from the MEA Program Manager. If sensitive or confidential information must be provided to MEA, the submitter of the proposal must first contact MEA to determine the most secure way to transmit this information. All information submitted in an OPEN Energy Innovation proposal is subject to the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA). If the submitter of the proposal believes information in the proposal is confidential and therefore should not be disclosed, the submitter should clearly mark this information and identify it by page and section or line number. Upon request for information from a third party, MEA is required to make an independent determination whether the information must be disclosed under the PIA. Designating information as confidential does not guarantee that it will be withheld from disclosure.
- If an applicant is selected for a grant under the Program, funds will be committed for the applicant, and the applicant will be required to execute a grant agreement with MEA. The grant will be issued to the name, address, and federal tax identification number provided by

the applicant to MEA on the applicant's IRS Form W-9. Once funds have been committed or a grant agreement has been executed between MEA and a grantee, the grant cannot be reassigned to an entity with a different federal tax identification number.

- Grant funds cannot be used for project expenses that are incurred prior to the execution of a grant agreement with MEA, unless MEA agrees otherwise in writing.
- Participation in MEA grant programs is voluntary. If awarded a grant and to ensure the secure transmission of grant funds, recipients of MEA funding are generally required to receive electronic payments from the State of Maryland. Electronic payments are set up through the State of Maryland's Comptroller's Office. **Grantees must fill out and submit the "[ACH/Direct Deposit Authorization for Vendor Payments Form X-10](#)" to the Comptroller's Office via the submission methods outlined on the X-10 form.** ACH/Direct Deposit Authorization for Vendor Payment Form X-10 should not be sent to MEA.
- If selected for a grant, the grantee must ensure timely and current compliance with the Program's reporting requirements. The Program reporting requirements will be specified in the grant agreement.

Program Updates or Clarifications:

Any update (e.g., extension of a deadline) or clarification about the OPEN Energy Innovation Program and any corrections to inadvertent errors in the Program information will be available on the Program webpage. In addition, MEA will communicate clarifications and updates made directly to applicants or grantees, as applicable, by letter and/or e-mail. The final grant amount is subject to funding availability for the Program and any relevant statutory requirement applicable at that time.

Questions can be directed to:

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