



Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for the FY 23 OPEN Energy Program

Description: The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) occasionally receives proposals for energy projects and initiatives outside of the agency's suite of established technology and sector-specific energy programs offered in a given fiscal year. MEA acknowledges that these types of proposals can potentially help advance the state's energy goals and agency mission in innovative ways while also being responsive to evolving energy issues and engaging a broad range of stakeholders. MEA's OPEN Energy Program (OPEN Energy) provides an avenue for the agency to consider these proposals for funding. Applications under OPEN Energy should be efforts that have the potential to be replicated to benefit sectors, technologies or provide a public benefit beyond a single project or activity.

Application Deadline: There is no firm deadline by which an open-energy proposal must be submitted to MEA. Applications will be accepted, and eligible proposals will be considered, throughout the fiscal year as long as funds are available. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications no later than March 15, 2023, for best chance of consideration.

Funding: A total of \$1,100,000 is anticipated to be available in FY23. The actual amount available may vary, depending on the quantity and quality of applications received and MEA's available resources within the fiscal year. Typically awards will be up to \$250,000; however, larger awards are possible for exceptional proposals.

Proposals exceeding the typical maximum funding amount of \$250,000 will require exceptional and thorough justification, must have the potential for large scale energy benefits including clearly defined outcomes closely aligned with state statutory goals and agency mission, and must demonstrate a high probability of success. Larger requests will likely entail extensive follow-ups for additional data as well as additional due diligence.

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

Eligible Applicants: Businesses, nonprofit organizations, local governments, state government and educational institutions.

Eligible Activities: A proposal may include capital projects, technical assistance, and other activities that align with the evaluation criteria specified in this FOA. In certain compelling cases, studies or strategy development will be considered.

Ineligible Activities: Proposals for a similar technology, service, application, or other element covered by one of MEA's other technology or sector programs are ineligible. A proposal that differs from an existing program only in the amount of incentive requested typically will be ineligible. An application submitted because another applicable MEA program is no longer accepting applications in a given fiscal year or has not yet launched for the year will be ineligible. Applicants who have questions as to whether a proposal is eligible should contact the program manager for initial guidance. Any guidance provided is not a guarantee of award or endorsement of a project proposal.

Evaluation Process: Applications for the Open Energy will be evaluated for eligibility by the Program Manager prior to sending the application to the review committee. Applications determined to be ineligible will not be reviewed further.

Evaluation Criteria: To be successful, a proposal must be consistent with MEA's mission and allowable uses for the Strategic Energy Investment Fund and must provide public benefits directly to Maryland. Examples may include, but are not limited to, proposals in the following areas:

- Energy efficiency;
- Clean energy deployment and progress towards Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard;
- Electric or alternative fuel vehicle adoption and electric vehicle infrastructure deployment.

Specifically, the evaluation will consider:

- Distinctness from MEA's existing portfolio of technology or sector specific programming, which may include novel approaches not covered by existing programs or integration of multiple elements in a new way or for a magnified outcome;
- Tangibility and measurability of energy related benefits to Maryland, or demonstrated ability to develop analysis or other aspects that can result in energy related benefits;
- Potential of the proposal to contribute to MEA's mission;
- Uniqueness or innovativeness of the proposal;
- Type and magnitude of public benefit anticipated;
- Likelihood that the public benefit will accrue;
- Likelihood of the project to be completed and provide a verifiable public benefit;
- Potential replicability or scalability within a sector or technology;
- Technical and financial feasibility;
- Other criteria deemed consistent with state or agency priorities.

For FY23, MEA will provide additional consideration to proposals that address one or more of the non-energy public benefits below, when a project combines these non-energy benefits with an energy benefit:

- Greenhouse Gas Reductions
- Resiliency

- Job creation
- Innovation
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Environmental justice

Submissions will also be evaluated based on the reasonability of the proposal, from both a technical and financial perspective, by a review committee of subject experts selected by MEA.

Application Format:

The initial proposal submitted to MEA should consist of 1) the OPEN Energy Application Form and 2) a concept paper that will enable the MEA review committee to assess potential eligibility and interest by MEA.

The concept paper submitted to MEA shall be no more than 10 pages. The concept paper must include at a minimum the following information:

- the name and address of the entity submitting the proposal;
- a description of the organization submitting the proposal;
- the name of the point of contact for the proposal, along with contact information;
- the date of submission;
- a description of the proposed project;
- anticipated public benefits of the proposed project and how these benefits relate to the state's energy goals and MEA's mission;
- discussion of all applicable evaluation criteria addressed by the proposal; in order to be referred to the review committee, an application must address at least one and preferably multiple energy related issues or criteria identified in the evaluation criteria section;
- requested funding amount;
- project partners (if applicable); and
- matching funds (if applicable).

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

No sensitive or otherwise confidential information shall be disclosed to MEA in an OPEN Energy proposal without prior approval. If sensitive or confidential information must be provided to MEA, the submitter of the proposal shall first contact MEA to determine the most secure way to transmit this information.

Notice: All information submitted in an OPEN Energy 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 shall 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.

Application Submission Method:

An application to OPEN Energy shall be submitted to the following MEA email address:

OPEN.MEA@maryland.gov. To aid in identification, the subject matter for the email should be “OPEN Energy Program: [Project Description]”.

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. The General Provisions are available for review on [MEA’s website](#)¹. For FY23, the [General Provisions Version 3.0](#) will be incorporated into all MEA FY23 grant agreements.

Other Program Provisions:

In addition to the general provisions, the following funding qualifications apply to this program:

- MEA may negotiate additional requirements into awards to increase public benefit. Such additional requirements may include cost reductions, return on investment, financial or in-kind cost share, use of funded facilities for public engagement and education, local product content, minority business participation, 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 FOA in a given fiscal year. Additionally, as an OPEN Energy FOA proposal may reduce the amount of funding available for future energy programs, MEA may decide not to fund an application that appears to have merit under the evaluation criteria review.
- 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 a specific proposal through the OPEN Energy 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 SEIF.²
- Based on the evaluation criteria and funding availability, MEA may consider funding a component or subset of the activity proposed.
- Any funding awarded under this program is solely at MEA’s discretion.

Program Changes:

- Any update (e.g., extension of a deadline) or clarification about the Open Energy 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.

¹ <https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/all-incentives.aspx>

² Or any additional funding sources that may arise in the future.

Questions can be directed to

Garry Aime, Program Manager at

Garry.aime@Maryland.gov

443-306-8149.