Maryland Energy Administration

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
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Funding Opportunity Announcement
Capacity Building Grants for Energy Management, Efficiency, Sustainability, and Portfolio Planning
FY2026 Decarbonizing Schools Program

*****This FOA is for Area of Interest 1: Capacity Building Grants for Energy Management, Efficiency, Sustainability, and Portfolio Planning*****

Program Purpose: Area of Interest 1

This is the funding opportunity announcement for AOI 1: Capacity Building Grants for Energy Management, Efficiency, Sustainability, and Portfolio Planning ("AOI 1", "this AOI") as part of the FY26 Decarbonizing Schools Program. This is a **competitive program** that provides Maryland's Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with the opportunity to request funding for capacity building and data management purposes as they plan for Net Zero Energy (NZE) construction. Funding will allow more Maryland LEAs to build the capacity for managing energy data, reduce operating costs, and insert energy performance criteria into capital improvement planning. The primary objective of the program is to improve the energy efficiency and decrease the lifecycle expenses of educational facilities, thereby diminishing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across the entire collection of properties. This collection, referred to as a "portfolio," encompasses all the buildings and facilities that are under the ownership and management of the LEA.

Grant funding for this AOI is offered in two categories. The first category will defray the costs of energy data management and use of ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager® (Portfolio Manager) (or similar software). The second category will help cover the cost of integrating energy efficiency, renewable energy strategies, and sustainability principles into their facility development portfolios and long-term capital plans. Grants under the second category are intended to boost LEA capacity to cost-effectively plan, design, and implement energy and sustainability improvements that support the broader goal of achieving net zero energy operations across school facilities . For this program, "net zero energy" means that the total amount of energy used by a school building, complex, or entire LEA facility portfolio on an annual basis is less than or equal to the amount of renewable energy created annually on the site(s), contributing to energy reduction, cost savings, and sustainability goals.

Type of Grant Program: Formula-based; Competitive - statewide

Application Deadline: 3:00 P.M. EST on Friday, November 21, 2025.

Anticipated Funding
A total of $1,500,000 is anticipated to be available from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund ("SEIF"). The amount awarded may be more or less, depending on the quantity and quality of applications received.

Eligible Applicants
State of Maryland Local Education Agencies.

Application URL: https://form.jotform.com/251605585653159

Program Description
Applicants may submit multiple applications under this AOI and other AOIs within the Decarbonizing Public Schools Grant Program. However, applicants are only eligible to receive one grant per Category under this AOI. Each application will be reviewed, evaluated, and awarded separately by the evaluation team.

AOI 1 grants will be awarded under two (2) Categories:

- **Category 1: Energy Data Management Support for K-12 Schools:** This category provides funding for approximately one year of technical support to establish or expand the use of Portfolio Manager (or similar software) accounts intended to build an LEA's capacity for energy data analytics. Program grants can defray the LEA's costs of implementing the Portfolio Manager (or similar software) benchmarking tool, as well as the costs of consultants and other resources to initiate the collection, analysis, and dissemination of critical energy performance metrics. When implemented, Portfolio Manager (or similar software) will inform LEAs' efforts to plan for energy efficiency activities. Category 1 is open to all LEAs, including those previously awarded funding in previous years; however, FY26 funding awards will prioritize LEAs starting the energy data management process. LEAs that received funding from previous years may request funding to expand their current energy data management efforts to expand from portfolio-wide monitoring to more granular data management at the building, or sub-meter, level.
- **Category 2: Strategic Capital Planning for Energy Efficient Schools:** As a forward-looking approach, integrated energy and sustainability planning can challenge traditional school construction practices. The intent of this grant is to help LEAs identify energy reduction and sustainability opportunities on a portfolio scale. Grants can be used to cover the costs of consultative services, feasibility studies, or additional LEA staff for tasks specific to integrating energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainability considerations into the LEA's Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP). An LEA applying solely for Category 2 must demonstrate that it has already incorporated energy data collection and analysis into its facility management and capital planning efforts.

Category 1: Energy Data Management Support for K-12 Schools

Category 1 Period of Performance

Expected period of performance: Eighteen to twenty-one (18-21) months, beginning with the effective date of the executed grant agreement. An extension for good cause may be requested by a grantee and must be justified with written documentation explaining the need for an extension. Extensions are allowed at the sole discretion of MEA.

Category 1 Eligible Activities

- Creation of a Portfolio Manager account (or similar software) for receiving utility data either directly from utility invoices or downloaded from the applicant's existing software for facilities management.
- Creation and use of a Portfolio Manager account (or similar software), to be populated with the applicant's utility bill data for its portfolio of facilities (or alternatively, for a significantly sized subset of those facilities).
- Analysis of energy information generated after data has been entered into the Portfolio Manager (or similar software) account.
- Tracking and benchmarking the energy performance of facilities, using information derived from Portfolio Manager (or similar software).
- Development of decision-making protocols for using energy performance metrics to improve portfolio-wide lifecycle cost management and to support data reporting duties.
- Creation of an outline of the applicant's plans and provisions for continuing energy data management activities subsequent to this grant's period of performance.
- Enhancement and expansion of Portfolio Manager (or similar software) to drill down to each building level or to include sub-metering data.

Category 1 Examples of Allowable Costs

- Consultant support for the portfolio-wide collection, input, and analysis of historic and current utility bill data on a portfolio-wide, school-level basis into Portfolio Manager (or similar software).
    - Historic data collection should represent at least 12 months of energy bill data.
- Funding for a new temporary position (e.g., interns, temporary employees, contractual) to manage and analyze energy bill data.
- Acquisition, setup, operation and use of utility bill management software that can facilitate the management of utility data and export of data to Portfolio Manager (or similar software).
    - May include software licenses, modules, subscriptions and other necessary elements.

Category 1 Deliverables

The following deliverables are expected to be comprehensively prepared and submitted to accurately record and document all activities conducted during the grant period:

- A grant implementation plan to include the following:

    - Identification of any key LEA staff position(s) relevant to overseeing activities required by the grant, as well as the role(s) of individuals, consultants, etc. who will be responsible for completing the grant-funded work
    - Outline of the process, including a timeline to establish, and ideally populate with data, by June 1st, 2027, one or more Portfolio Manager (or similar software) accounts for administering LEA-wide energy use data
    - Outline of the process for using applicant's energy data to support current and future implementation of district-wide energy management activities and energy policy
    - Explanation of:
        - (1) how funding from this grant will be used to meet the scope and deliverables of this grant award, and
        - (2) how the applicant plans to continue energy data management after the end of this grant's period of performance to support facility planning, cost management, investment feasibility analysis, and policy implementation.
- Final close-out report outlining progress, identification of next steps occurring after the grant performance period, and a summary of lessons learned and recommended best practices.
- Sharing of school energy data with the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) and MEA via Portfolio Manager (or similar software) for the purposes of state-wide energy program planning.
- Quarterly progress reports in concert with invoices submitted to MEA.

Category 1 Minimum Application Requirements

The following requirements apply to each applicant to AOI 1. Each condition must be met for applications to be evaluated and considered for funding, no exceptions.

- Applications are submitted by the LEA
    - Third-parties may not submit an application on behalf of the LEA
    - A signature applied to the application by an LEA officer with the authority to commit the applicant to execute the grant's requirements (e.g., Chair of the Board of Education, Chief Financial Officer, General Manager, etc.). This individual should have sufficient authority to identify, authorize, and provide the necessary resources to perform the activities and access the necessary resources to implement the grant agreement.
- Consistent with the intent to develop capacity for ongoing efforts, applicants should identify an LEA staff person 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.

Category 1 Competitive Application Criteria

All evaluation criteria will be considered concurrently, with priority given to applicants that do not have an existing energy policy or do not already track utility data. Applicants should clearly describe these challenges in their application.

Applications will be considered based on all of the evaluation criteria outlined on pages 9-10.

Category 2: Capital Planning for Energy Efficient Schools

Category 2 Period of Performance

Expected period of performance: Eighteen to twenty-one (18-21) months beginning with the effective date of the executed grant agreement. An extension for good cause may be requested by a grantee, and must be justified with written documentation explaining the need for an extension. Extensions are allowed at the sole discretion of MEA.

Category 2 Eligible Activities

Applicants may choose to pursue any or all of the activities listed below. In their application, applicants must clearly indicate which activities they intend to undertake.

- **Net Zero Energy (NZE) Planning for New and Major School Projects**: Complete a portfolio-wide analysis to identify energy reduction, innovation, and sustainability opportunities that contribute toward NZE operations in future new school construction projects (new, replacement, and full renovation), including the following to be added to the applicant's EFMP:
    - Evaluate all future new, replacement, and full renovation projects for suitability as an NZE school;
    - Conduct feasibility and life cycle cost analyses of renewable and energy efficient electrical systems
    - Develop policies for guiding NZE school deployment
    - Develop NZE design criteria for new school construction.
- **Energy Efficiency Strategies for Partial Renovations and Systemic Projects**: Complete portfolio-wide analysis of schools to identify energy-saving opportunities in future partial renovation, addition, and major systemic projects, including the following to be added to the applicant's EFMP:
    - Identify ways to increase energy efficiency in building envelopes during renovation and roof projects;
    - Make recommendations for consideration of energy efficient equipment in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning replacement projects;
    - Develop policies for evaluating energy efficiency during the planning phases of systemic renovation projects
    - Develop design standards for incorporating energy efficiency into these projects.
- **Renewable and Clean Energy Generation Opportunities:** Complete a portfolio-wide analysis of schools to identify opportunities for renewable and cleaner energy generation, including the following to be added to the applicant's EFMP:
    - Identify locations conducive for solar arrays and other renewable energy opportunities;
    - Identify opportunities for power purchase agreements (PPAs) that can be used to access distributed energy resources such as solar and combined heat and power;
    - Identify policies for assessing solar feasibility during roof replacement and renovation projects
    - Identify alternative sources of financing, including bonds and leases supported by energy savings;

    - Identify opportunities for Energy as a Service (EaaS) agreements
    - Develop plans and procurement options to solicit PPAs.

Note: Grant award funds can be used for a new, temporary, or consulting position, or consultant support devoted to helping to update the applicant's EFMP to incorporate integrated energy, energy efficiency, and sustainability strategies, with long-term goals aligned with NZE operations, at the portfolio and facility level.

Category 2 Deliverables

The following deliverables are expected to be comprehensively prepared and submitted to accurately record and document all activities conducted during the grant period:

- Grant implementation plan defining the applicant's approach to portfolio scale energy and sustainability analysis, including key activities, milestones, stakeholder management and other aspects related to implementation.
- Energy and Sustainability Strategy Report, integrated into or supplementing the applicant's EFMP, including:
    - An inventory of the applicant's organizational, physical, and budgetary resources available for performing energy and sustainability design and planning work.
    - LEA-specific strategy to incorporate energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainability principles into successful processes for facility planning, construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of school facilities. These should include elements related to long term facility planning, obsolescence, replacement, and equity for underserved or economically vulnerable communities.
    - Identification and ranking of potential facility sites that are suitable for renewable energy installations, efficiency upgrades, and NZE operations.
    - Description of any known utility interconnection issues that need to be considered where on-site power generation technologies may be installed.
    - Evaluation of the applicant's current ability to pursue energy-related capital improvements with alternative finance and procurement methods that lessen impacts on traditional debt capacity. Alternatives to be evaluated should, at a minimum, include energy performance contracts, PPAs, EaaS business models, and "green" bonds. The evaluation should describe potential for the applicant's existing charters, regulations, or standard operating procedures to either help or hinder the use of alternative finance methods.
- Final closeout report outlining progress, next steps, and a summary of lessons learned and recommended best practices.
- Quarterly progress reports in concert with invoices submitted to MEA.
- Grant recipients must incorporate energy efficiency, renewable operations, and sustainability considerations into their FY27 EFMP (due July 1, 2027 to the IAC), and generate and submit to MEA by September 30, 2027 a comprehensive Energy & Sustainability Strategy Report. This report provides an LEA-wide blueprint for integrating energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainability criteria to LEA facility construction planning.

Category 2 Minimum Application Requirements

- Applications are submitted by the LEA
    - Third-parties may not submit an application on behalf of the LEA
- A signature applied to this application by an LEA officer with the authority to commit the applicant to execute the grant's requirements. This individual should have sufficient authority to identify, authorize, and provide the necessary resources to perform the activities and access the necessary resources to implement the grant agreement.
- Identification of an LEA staff person who will be responsible for overseeing the execution of the activities outlined in this grant announcement and ensuring continuity of activities after the end of the award's period of performance.

Category 2 Competitive Application Criteria

All evaluation criteria will be considered concurrently, with priority given to applicants that have not previously conducted a comprehensive energy, sustainability, or portfolio-wide analysis, and has no existing specific energy or sustainability design criteria. If some planning or analysis has begun, the extent and remaining work will be considered.

Applications will be considered based on all of the evaluation criteria outlined on pages 10-11.

Funding

A total of $1,500,000 is anticipated to be available for distribution between Category 1 and Category 2, with $1,000,000 anticipated for Category 1 and $500,000 anticipated for Category 2. The amount awarded may vary depending on the quantity and quality of applications received.

It is expected with both categories that the level of effort and funding amount will be more for applicants with higher student enrollments (as a reasonable approximation of facility footprint and energy use intensity). Therefore, grant award amounts will be calculated using the following scaling factors that were derived from the Maryland State Department of Education's approved audited 2020 total eligible Full Time Enrollment (FTE) values. Scaling factors are based on increments of 5,000 students.

Category 1: Individual awards provide a base grant of $75,000 plus an additional $3,000 x scaling factor.

Scaling Factors for LEAs		
Kent – 0	Allegany – 1	Harford – 7
Somerset – 0	Cecil – 2	Frederick – 8
Garrett – 0	Wicomico – 2	Howard – 11
Talbot – 0	Calvert – 3	Baltimore City – 15
Dorchester – 0	St. Mary's – 3	Anne Arundel – 16
Caroline – 1	Washington – 4	Baltimore County – 16
Worcester – 1	Carroll – 4	Prince George's – 16
Queen Anne's – 1	Charles - 5	Montgomery - 16

The largest LEAs are capped at a factor of 16, regardless of student enrollment, to allow for broader distribution of limited funds.

- Example: *If an applying LEA with a scaling factor of 11 were to apply for a grant under AOI1 Category 1, it would be eligible for an award amount of $75,000 + (11 x $3,000) = $108,000*

Category 2:
Actual grant funding will be based on 2020 FTE, using the chart of scaling factors for LEAs above. Individual awards provide a base grant of $70,000 plus an additional $3,000 X scaling factor.

- Example: *If an applying LEA with a scaling factor of 11 were to agree to complete AOI1 Category 2 it would be eligible for $70,000 + (11 x $3,000) = $103,000.*

Review Process

The review of applications will follow a structured, multi-stage process:

1. The program manager will first review each application for eligibility, ensuring it meets the minimum criteria outlined in the FOA
2. Each member of the evaluation team will independently score the application based on the specified competitive criteria
3. The evaluation team will then compile individual scores, finalize overall scores, rank all applications accordingly, and make final recommendations for funding

Applications will be reviewed by a team that may include individuals from MEA, IAC, and other entities with experience in energy, construction, and capital development. The review process will be guided by the evaluation criteria and priority factors outlined in this FOA. The final grant amount for each application will be made after review of all applications received and is subject to funding availability for the Program and any relevant statutory requirement applicable at that time.

Evaluation & Ranking Methodology:

Applications will be reviewed by a team that may include individuals from MEA and other entities with experience in energy, construction, and capital development. The review process will be guided by the following evaluation criteria and priority factors outlined below. Due to the complexity

of the selection process, MEA may request additional information after all applications have been submitted to facilitate the evaluation process.

All applications will be evaluated and ranked individually based on the following methodology. This evaluation will consider all relevant criteria outlined below. Tables 1 and 2 (pages 11-13) provide the criteria, maximum points available for each criterion, and the weight of each criterion toward the overall score.

All applications will be ranked from highest to lowest based on their overall score based on the evaluation criteria in the chart below. The highest scoring applications will be awarded, subject to the Program's funding availability.

Evaluation Criteria for Category 1: Energy Data Management Support for K-12 Schools
The primary element for evaluation is the applicant's current status in developing or implementing energy policy and utility bill management strategies. The highest final score possible is 23 and will be calculated as follows:

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria for Category 1: Energy Data Management Support for K-12 Schools

Criteria	Requirement Type	Requirement/Criteria	Points	Weight (%)
Administrative	Minimum	Application submitted by the LEA and signed by an LEA officer with sufficient authority	N/A	
Administrative	Minimum	LEA staff person identified for ongoing oversight	N/A	
Current Energy Management Status	Competitive	Outline of the applicant's current status in developing or implementing energy policy and utility bill management strategies. Applicants that do not have an existing energy policy or do not already track utility data will be given the full points allotted in this criterion.	1-3	40%
Justification of Funds	Competitive	Clear explanation of how funds will be used to support or expand activities aligned with the Scope of Work.	1-5	15%
Energy Policy and Utility Bill Management	Competitive	Demonstration of the applicant's current need for assistance in developing or implementing an energy policy and utility bill management strategies.	1-5	15%

Local Resource Challenges	Competitive	Demonstration of the applicant's challenges in raising local resources for energy management.	1-5	15%
Additional Capacity	Competitive	Demonstration of the need for enhanced capacity to implement energy policies or manage energy projects.	1-5	15%

Evaluation Criteria for Category 2: Capital Planning for Energy Efficient Schools

The primary element for evaluation is the applicant's current status in conducting a comprehensive energy, sustainability, or portfolio-wide analysis, and development of a specific energy or sustainability design criteria. The highest final score possible is 15 and will be calculated as follows:

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria for Category 2: Capital Planning for Energy Efficient Schools

Criteria	Requirement Type	Requirement/Criteria	Points	Weight (%)
Administrative	Minimum	Application submitted by the LEA and signed by an LEA officer with sufficient authority	N/A	
Administrative	Minimum	LEA staff person identified for ongoing oversight	N/A	
History of Portfolio-wide Analysis/Planning	Competitive	Outline of the applicant's current status in conducting a comprehensive energy, sustainability, or portfolio-wide analysis and developing or implementing energy or sustainability policies.	1-5	50%
Justification of Funds	Competitive	Clear explanation of how funds will be used to support or expand activities aligned with the Scope of Work.	1-5	25%

Readiness and Commitment to Implement Policies	Competitive	Demonstration of the applicant's proposed use of local and state (including other MEA and Decarbonizing Public School) funds, availability of qualified personnel to perform the scope of work, and ability to access additional resources to support NZE design standards, financing, procurement, and portfolio-wide energy strategies.	1-5	25%

Partial Awards

In general, partial awards are anticipated under this program. Awards will be distributed until funds are exhausted. In the case where the remaining funds are insufficient to fully fund an additional qualified application, a partial award will be offered to the applicant based on budget availability.

Category 1 Ineligible Activities

- Activities that include fossil-fuel or other combustion technologies that produce greenhouse gas emissions are typically not eligible for funding. Limited exceptions may be considered where there is no other technically feasible technology or where a source can be demonstrated to be zero emission. You must contact the MEA Program Manager in writing if seeking funding for fossil-fuel technologies.
- Physical construction activities, the purchase of materials, or equipment are not eligible for funding under this AOI.

Equitable Funding Acknowledgement and Approach

MEA recognizes that LEAs across Maryland are diverse in their needs, priorities, and financial constraints. Understanding this variability, it is a fundamental objective of the FY26 Decarbonizing Public Schools Program to provide equitable funding opportunities to all LEAs within the state, regardless of their circumstances.

To this end, MEA is committed to ensuring that the allocation of funds under the Decarbonizing Public Schools Program helps address equitable access to clean energy and more sustainable schools.

Electronic Payments

Participation in MEA grant programs is voluntary. If selected for award and to ensure the secure transmission of grant funds, grant 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.

Failure to submit ACH/Direct Deposit Authorization Form X-10 may result in award reimbursement being delayed.

If an applicant is unable to receive ACH/Direct Deposit payments, MEA may provide an exception to this requirement on a case-by-case basis, at the sole discretion of MEA.

Grant Program General Provisions

MEA grant programs are covered by general provisions that apply to all of its grant programs, the most current version of these General Provisions is General Provisions v3 2.11.22. The latest approved version of this document will be incorporated into all FY2026 grant agreements issued by MEA.

Submission Instructions

All documents must be submitted no later than 3:00 P.M. EST on Friday, November 21, 2025. Once complete, application packages should be submitted to MEA via the online electronic application at https://form.jotform.com/251605585653159 or the PDF version via email to **Schools.MEA@Maryland.gov**.

Applications submitted to the direct email inbox(es) of MEA employees will not be considered. MEA will not accept any application packages after this deadline under any circumstances, and all documents received by the deadline will constitute the entire submission. If electronic submission is not possible, an applicant should contact MEA via email at Schools.MEA@Maryland.gov or by calling Program Manager Kristen Keim at 443-571-6976 no fewer than fourteen (14) days prior to the deadline to arrange an alternative method of submission.

Contact Information

For more information or assistance, please visit the FY26 MEA Decarbonizing Public Schools Program webpage or contact:

Kristen Keim
Program Manager, Schools Decarbonization Program
schools.mea@maryland.gov

Attachment A: Example Calculations

AOI 1 Category 1: Energy Data Management Support for K-12 Schools

Below are two hypothetical applications (A and B) with raw values for the given criteria.

Step 1: Apply Values

Table A: Example Applications

Application	**Current Energy Management Status** (1-3)	**Justification of Funds** (1-5)	**Energy Policy and Utility Bill Management** (1-5)	**Local Resource Challenges** (1-5)	**Additional Capacity** (1-5)
A	2	3	2	2	3
B	3	4	4	2	4

Step 2: Apply Weights

Table B: Weighting Factors

Application	**Current Energy Management Status** 40%	**Justification of Funds** 15%	**Energy Policy and Utility Bill Management** 15%	**Local Resource Challenges** 15%	**Additional Capacity** 15%
A	2 * 40% = 0.8	3 * 15%= 0.45	2 * 15%= 0.3	2 * 15% = 0.3	3 *15% = 0.45
B	3 * 40% =1.2	4 * 15%= 0.6	4 * 15%= 0.6	2 * 15% = 0.3	4 *15% = 0.6

Step 3: Sum the Weighted Scores

Application	**Total Weighted Score**
A	0.8 + 0.45 + 0.3 + 0.3 + 0.45 =2.3
B	1.2 + 0.6 + 0.6 + 0.3 + 0.6 =3.3

Results: In the above example, Application B would be more competitive than Application A. Application B would receive funding first based on its higher final score.

AOI 1 Category 2: Capital Planning for Energy Efficient Schools

Below are two hypothetical applications (A and B) with raw values for the given criteria.

Step 1: Apply Values

Table A: Example Applications

Application	**History of Portfolio-wide Analysis/Planning** (1-5)	**Justification of Funds** (1-5)	**Readiness and Commitment to Implement Policies** (1-5)
A	2	3	2
B	4	4	4

Step 2: Apply Weights

Table B: Weighting Factors

Application	**History of Portfolio-wide Analysis/Planning** 50%	**Justification of Funds** 25%	**Readiness and Commitment to Implement Policies** 25%
A	2 * 50% = 1	3 * 25% = 0.75	2 * 25% = 0.5
B	4 * 50% = 2	4 * 25% = 1	4 * 25% = 1

Step 3: Sum the Weighted Scores

Application	**Total Weighted Score**
A	1 + 0.75 + 0.5 = 2.25
B	2 + 1 + 1 = 4

Results: In the above example, Application B would be more competitive than Application A. Application B would receive funding first based on its higher final score.