



# Funding Opportunity Announcement

## Solar on Schools

### FY2026 Decarbonizing Schools Program

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**\*\*\*This FOA is for Area of Interest 3: Solar on Schools\*\*\***

#### **Program Purpose: Area of Interest 3**

This is the funding opportunity announcement for AOI 3: Solar on Schools (“AOI 3”, “this AOI”) as part of the FY26 Decarbonizing Schools Program. This program provides Maryland LEAs with the opportunity to request funding to support the installation and planning of roof-mounted solar, ground-mounted solar, or solar canopies on existing schools or school facilities. Eligible locations are ones in specific census-tracts that meet specific criteria set by § 9-20B-05 of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

**Type of Grant Program:** Competitive - statewide

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

#### **Anticipated Funding**

A total of \$11,000,000 is anticipated to be available, from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (“SEIF”) Alternative Compliance Payments (ACP). 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>

#### **Period of Performance**

Expected period of performance: Thirty-six to thirty-nine (36-39) 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 granted by and at the sole discretion of MEA.

#### **Eligible Activities**

The planning and installation of rooftop solar systems on existing buildings and infrastructure, and/or the installation of ground mounted solar, and/or the installation of solar canopies over

existing parking lots, parking garages, or other permanent impervious areas that are owned by the applicant.

Applicants are eligible to submit multiple applications under this AOI and other AOI's under the Decarbonizing Public Schools Grant Program. Each application submitted will be reviewed, evaluated, and awarded individually by the evaluation team.

Applicants are encouraged to submit a single, comprehensive proposal rather than multiple, smaller proposals. Though applicants are NOT limited to one award under AOI 3, consolidating efforts into one larger application can improve cost efficiency and maximize the impact of your proposal.

To receive funding the applicant must identify in the application the school(s) for which funding support is sought. Eligible activities include:

- Planning and technical studies:
  - Applicants may be eligible to apply for funding up to \$50,000, specifically earmarked for comprehensive technical reporting, evaluation and preliminary planning of solar installations.
  - The scope of 'technical reporting' encompasses, but is not limited to, detailed site evaluations, solar potential assessments, structural analyses of existing school infrastructure, and preliminary engineering studies. These reports aim to provide LEAs with a clear pathway to solar implementation, outlining logistical, technical, and financial feasibility.
    - Targeted Utilization of Funds: The funds should be directed towards high-value projects that have been identified in collaboration with the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) as 'solar ready' or those that will be viable post-completion of funded upgrades. The enhanced funding is designed to complement, not complicate, the current web of programs. LEAs in the early stages of solar project consideration are encouraged to leverage the [MES program for preliminary screening](#) before pursuing targeted technical studies with the additional funds.
- Solar purchased by applicant: For the installation of a solar system purchased/owned by the applicant, up to \$3,000/kW of grant funds are available with a cap of \$1,000,000 per application. On a case-by-case basis, MEA may consider increasing the grant to \$3,500/kW with the cap remaining at \$1,000,000 per application when unique circumstances or a compelling reason is specified in the application.
- 3rd Party-Owned Solar System: For the installation of a 3rd party-owned solar canopy system, up to \$750/kW of grant funds are available, with a cap of \$1,000,000. For installation of a 3rd party-owned rooftop system, up to \$500/kW of grant funds are available, with a cap of \$1,000,000. To be eligible, a system must be net metered.

### **AOI 3 Deliverables**

The following deliverables are anticipated to document 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, by June 1st, 2027
- Explanation of how funding from this grant will be used to meet the scope and deliverables of this grant award
- 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.
- Quarterly progress reports and invoices submitted to MEA.

### **Environmental Justice**

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.

To effectively support communities in Maryland that are disproportionately affected by environmental harms, MEA prioritizes equity. Funding for FY26 Solar on Schools is restricted to schools in specific census-tracts that meet specific criteria set by § 9-20B-05 of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The school must be located in a census tract designated as “overburdened” or with an income at 80% or below of the median income for the State, which can be referenced using Maryland Department of Environment’s MDEnviroScreen Tool, to be eligible for funding under this AOI.

A list of approved census tracts can be found on the [MEA website](#) or referenced on the [MDEnviroScreen Tool](#).

**If a school serves one or more qualifying census tract(s) but is not physically situated in a qualifying census tract itself, applicants must provide documentation showing that at least 50% plus one of the students enrolled in the school come from qualifying census tracts.** If a potential 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 to determine program eligibility.

### **Direct Pay Incentives from the Federal Government**

Tax-exempt LEAs and governments may be eligible for substantial direct pay reimbursement towards the cost of the design, materials and installation of solar directly owned by the LEA, per the [federal Investment Tax Credit](#). The amount a project may be eligible for varies depending on the details of the project, location etc but may amount to 30 to 50% or more of a project’s costs subject to IRS requirements. A full list of rules and regulations is listed on the IRS [website](#). While MEA cannot provide tax advice, we recommend LEAs discuss with their financial office and solar consultants.

MEA will evaluate and award applications for LEA-owned solar system(s) regardless of the availability and eligibility of the tax credit. If a grantee claims the federal tax credit for a project awarded under this Program, the remaining, unused grant funds can be used to support additional eligible activities of the applicant's choice.

### **AOI 3 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 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.
- Budget: Project budget showing full cost and requested funding from MEA.
- Technical Feasibility: Technical reports including site evaluations, solar potential assessments, and preliminary engineering studies.
- Environmental Justice: Demonstration that the project site is located in a census-tract with a income at or below 80% of the median income for the State, or in an overburdened community.
- System Design: Detailed system diagram, site map, electrical schematic, and construction schedule.
- Energy Production: Output(s) from a recognized Solar Energy Calculator showing expected energy production.

### **AOI 3 Competitive Application Criteria**

As a proxy, the calculation evaluates the energy generation (kWh) per dollar of grant funding (kWh/\$). All evaluation criteria will be considered concurrently, with kWh per MEA grant dollars having the most weight.

Applications will be considered based on all of the evaluation criteria outlined on pages 5-7.

### **Funding**

A total of \$11,000,000 is anticipated to be available for AOI 3. Applicants are encouraged to submit a single, comprehensive proposal rather than multiple smaller proposals. Though applicants are NOT limited to one award under AOI 3, consolidating efforts into one larger application can improve cost efficiency and maximize the impact of your proposal.

The amount awarded may vary depending on the quantity and quality of applications received. Each applicant is eligible to apply for the \$50,000 planning funds for technical assistance and additional funds for installation.

The minimum funding request per application is \$50,000. The maximum funding request per application is \$1,000,000. The review and ranking process will prioritize awarding one eligible application per applicant. Additional awards may be made to applicants only if there is remaining budget after the initial awards.

**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 proposals received and is subject to funding availability for the Program and any relevant statutory requirement applicable at that time.

**Evaluation and Ranking Methodology**

Applications will be evaluated individually based on the following criteria. The primary element for evaluation is the amount of MEA grant funding requested per unit of GHG savings. As a proxy, the calculation evaluates the value of energy generation (kWh) per dollar of grant funding (kWh/\$).

To score fairly and consistently across all applications, values for the Cost Effectiveness score will be normalized on a 0-1 scale, where higher energy generation (kWh) per MEA dollar requested results in a higher normalized score.

The highest scoring applications will be recommended for funding, subject to the program’s funding availability. The highest final score possible is 5 and will be calculated as follows:

Criteria Category	Requirement Type	Requirement/Criteria Description	Points	Weight %
Administrative	Minimum	Application submitted by LEA and signed by an LEA officer with sufficient authority.	N/A	
Administrative	Minimum	Identification of LEA staff person responsible for project oversight.	N/A	
Budget	Minimum	Detailed budget	N/A	

		including the full cost, requested funding, and additional leveraged funds.		
Technical Feasibility	Minimum	Submission of technical reports including site evaluations, solar potential assessments, and preliminary engineering studies.	N/A	
Environmental Justice	Minimum	The application indicates the project site is located in a census-tract with a median income at or below 80% of the median income for the State, or in an overburdened community.	N/a	
System Design	Minimum	Detailed system diagram, site map, electrical schematic, and construction schedule.	N/A	
Energy Production	Minimum	Output(s) from a recognized Solar Energy Calculator showing expected energy production.	N/A	
Cost-Effectiveness	Competitive	Energy generated per MEA dollar awarded	Calculated	70%
Community Engagement	Competitive	Engagement plan detailing how the project involves students, staff, and community, integrating with educational activities.	1-3	20%

Leveraged Funding	Competitive	Identification and quantification of additional funding sources leveraged alongside the MEA funds.	0-1	10%
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**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.

**Electronic Payments**

Participation in MEA grant programs is voluntary. If selected for award and to ensure the secure transmission of grant funds, grantee 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. Grantee 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:schools.mea@maryland.gov)

# Attachment A: Example Calculations

## AOI 3: Solar on 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	Cost-Effectiveness (kWh/\$)	Community Engagement (1-3)	Leveraged Funding (0-1)
A	$267,767 \text{ kWh}/\$500,000 = 0.54$	3	1
B	$708,280 \text{ kWh}/\$1,000,000 = 0.71$	1	0

### Step 2: Normalize the Calculated Values

- Cost Effectiveness: Min = 0.54, Max = 0.71
  - **Normalized Value = (Value - Min) / (Max - Min)**

Table B: Normalization

Application	Normalized Cost-Effectiveness Score
A	$(0.54-0.54)/(0.71-0.54) = 0$
B	$(0.71-0.54)/(0.71-0.54) = 1$

### Step 3: Apply Weights

Table B: Weighting Factors

Application	Cost-Effectiveness (70%)	Community Engagement (20%)	Leveraged Funding (10%)
A	$0 * 70\% = 0$	$3 * 20\% = 0.6$	$1 * 10\% = 0.10$
B	$1 * 70\% = 0.7$	$1 * 20\% = 0.2$	$0 * 10\% = 0$

### Step 3: Sum the Weighted Scores

<b>Application</b>	<b>Total Weighted Score</b>
A	$0 + 0.6 + 0.1 = 0.7$
B	$0.7 + 0.2 + 0 = 0.9$

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.