



Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) FY27 Energy Challenge Grant

Type of Program:	Competitive Challenge Grant
Target Audience:	Open (e.g. businesses, nonprofits, local governments, certain higher education institutions, and others).
Program Webpage:	https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/energychallenge.aspx
Issue Date:	09/30/2026
Modification Date:	10/06/2026
Application Deadline:	Stage 1: 3:00 PM Eastern Time December 02, 2026 through the My MEA portal
	Stage 2: 3:00 PM Eastern Time February 10, 2027 through the My MEA portal
Application Submission through My MEA:	MEA.maryland.gov
Anticipated Notification of Grant Award or Non-Award:	Spring 2027

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1. Program Purpose:

The Maryland Energy Administration (“MEA”) FY27 Energy Challenge Grant (“Energy Challenge”, “Program”) offers funding to whichever entities propose the most promising and innovative solution to address a specific problem statement. Each challenge targets a critical component needed to make energy for all Marylanders affordable, reliable, and sustainable.

The specific problem statement for FY27 is:

While Maryland continues to lead in deploying solar, battery storage, EVs, and smart building appliances, a critical gap remains in orchestrating these assets to act as unified grid resources. Most of these assets cannot currently be coordinated to improve grid reliability, reduce electricity costs, or support emergency resilience because of technical, communications, interoperability, market participation, and customer engagement barriers.

2. Type of Grant Program:

This grant program is offered statewide on a competitive basis for eligible applications through a two-stage application process:

- 2.1. **Stage 1:** The applicant submits a preliminary application, including a brief concept paper, as detailed in Section 13, below. MEA notifies the applicant if the application is approved to proceed to Stage 2.
- 2.2. **Stage 2:** If MEA approves the application to proceed to Stage 2, the applicant submits a detailed proposal and additional supporting documentation, as detailed in Section 14, below.

3. Application Deadline:

Stage 1: 3:00 PM Eastern Time December 02, 2026

Stage 2: 3:00 PM Eastern Time February 10, 2027

4. Program Description:

The program provides grant funding to entities proposing the most promising and innovative solutions to address a specific problem statement.

- 4.1. The applicant may submit one or more applications. Each application is for one project, as defined and justified by the applicant.
- 4.2. The program uses a two-stage application process.

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- 4.3. **Application portal status terminology:** Applicants should refer to the definitions for Stage 1 and 2 in Section 4. Program Description before applying. The following terminology will be used to describe the status of your application in the MyMEA portal. The Step 1 language applies to applications in Stage 1 of the program. The Step 2 language applies to applications that have advanced to Stage 2 of the program.

4.3.1. **Step 1 (Preliminary Application)**

- 4.3.1.1. **In Progress:** By starting an application for “Step 1”, the applicant is preparing a Stage 1 application and has saved the application for later, but has not yet submitted the application to MEA;
- 4.3.1.2. **Step 1 Submitted:** By submitting the application for “Step 1”, the applicant has requested a Stage 1 application from MEA prior to proceeding forward Stage 2;
- 4.3.1.3. **Step 1 In Review:** MEA is reviewing the applicant’s Stage 1 application;
- 4.3.1.4. **Step 1 Approved:** MEA has confirmed eligibility and approved the Stage 1 application. After receiving notification of this status, applicants may proceed with submitting the Stage 2 application;
- 4.3.1.5. **Missing Information:** MEA has electronically notified the designated primary contact that the Stage 1 application requires additional information, additional documentation, or documentation revisions. The applicant must submit the information or documentation within fourteen (14) calendar days after the notification by MEA.

4.3.2. **Step 2 (Detailed Proposal and Additional Supporting Documentation)**

- 4.3.2.1. **In Progress:** By starting an application for “Step 2”, the applicant is preparing to submit a Stage 2 application after

the approval of a Stage 1 application, has saved the Step 2 application for later, but has not yet submitted the Step 2 application to MEA;

4.3.2.2. **Step 2 Submitted:** By submitting the application for “Step 2”, the applicant has submitted the required detailed proposal and additional supporting documentation;

4.3.2.3. **Step 2 In Review:** MEA is reviewing the applicant’s Stage 2 application;

4.3.2.4. **Missing Information Step 2:** MEA has electronically notified the designated primary contact that the Stage 2 application requires additional information, additional documentation, or documentation revisions. **The applicant must submit the Missing information or documentation must be submitted within fourteen (14) calendar days after the notification by MEA.**

5. Program General Provisions:

MEA will enter a grant agreement with the grantee that includes standard requirements referred to as “Program General Provisions”. MEA provides a copy of these provisions (“General Provisions v4 09.26”) on the [website](#)¹, and is provided as Attachment A to this FOA.

6. Law and Regulations:

MEA grant programs funded by the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) are subject to section 9-20B-05 of the State Government article and the regulations found in COMAR 14.26.02. To access these regulations, click [here](#)² and use the sidebar “Regulations by Title” to navigate to: 14 - Independent Agencies → 26 - MARYLAND ENERGY ADMINISTRATION → 02 - Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Program.

7. Anticipated Program Budget:

MEA anticipates up to \$2,000,000 will be available from the SEIF for grants awarded under this Program. The total amount awarded may be more or less,

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

² dsd.maryland.gov/Pages/COMARSearch.aspx

depending on the funding sources, the amount available and restrictions on each funding source, and the number and quality of applications received.

See Section 10 “Eligible Activities” and Section 12 “Minimum Eligibility Requirements” below for the allowable uses of funding and restrictions on funding.

8. Grant Amount:

- 8.1. The grant amount will be calculated using a formula, based on the variables described in Table 1.
- 8.2. The maximum grant amount per application is \$750,000.
- 8.3. The applicant must utilize FOA Attachment D: Budget Workbook to calculate the total grant amount requested from MEA.

Table 1. Grant Amount Formula

The FOA Attachment D: Project Workbook calculates the total grant amount in three (3) parts: Total Grant Amount = base amount + justified supplemental amount + administrative amount (up to a maximum total grant amount of \$750,000).			
Part	Grant Amount Component Name	Grant Amount Basis	Formula
1	Justified Supplemental Amount (if requested)	The applicant may request a “justified supplemental amount.” The applicant may isolate a direct cost category for which the applicant has faced the greatest difficulty securing leveraging funding. The applicant must enter in the workbook: a) the total estimated amount for this isolated cost category; and	Up to 90% of Isolated Direct Cost Category

		b) The percent of the total estimated cost requested in grant funding from MEA, up to 90% maximum.	
2	Base Grant Amount/Direct Costs	The “base amount” is calculated for every project. The applicant must enter in the workbook: a) The total estimated amount for the remaining direct costs, excluding the costs from part 1; and b) The percent of the total estimated cost requested in grant funding from MEA, up to 75% maximum.	Up to 75% of Total Direct Costs
3	Administrative Amount (if requested)	The applicant may request an “administrative amount”. The applicant must enter in the workbook: a) The percent of the total grant amount requested in grant funding from MEA for administrative costs, up to 15% maximum.	Up to 15% of Total Grant Amount
	Total Grant Amount		Up to \$750,000 total

8.4. Grant Reimbursement Condition: Regardless of the calculated total grant amount, MEA will establish in the grant agreement a condition for grant reimbursement. The grant reimbursement condition is at MEA’s discretion and is dependent on the applicant’s proposed solution to the challenge.

9. Eligible Applicants:

9.1. The following types of entities are eligible to apply:

- 9.1.1. Incorporated towns, cities, and counties of Maryland
- 9.1.2. Incorporated Nonprofit entities
- 9.1.3. Businesses and limited liability companies
- 9.1.4. Local education agencies
- 9.1.5. Maryland Institutions of Higher Education accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education are eligible to apply with the following notable exceptions:
 - 9.1.5.1. Public senior higher education institutions – as defined in §10–101(m) of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland³ – are ineligible to apply;
 - 9.1.5.2. Any institution of higher education for which funds were appropriated from the SEIF in the FY27 budget
- 9.1.6. Other entities not listed above on a case by case basis

9.2. The applicant must be the entity that will execute the MEA grant agreement and be designated as the grant funding recipient.

9.3. See Section 10 “Eligible Activities” and Section 12 “Minimum Eligibility Requirements” below for the allowable use of funds and restrictions on funding.

10. Eligible Activities:

- 10.1. Eligible activities address the specific problem statement for Fiscal Year 2027, as described in Section 1 “Program Purpose”.
- 10.2. Grant funds may be used for direct costs related to project implementation, including but not limited to personnel, fringe benefits, materials, contractual, and other. A portion of the grant amount may be used for administrative or indirect costs.

11. Ineligible Applicants and Activities:

- 11.1. Ineligible applicants and ineligible activities under this FOA may be eligible for other incentive programs instead. To learn more:
 - 11.1.1. A copy of the General Notice of Intent for Fiscal Year 27 (FY27)

³<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=ged&section=10-101&enactments=false>

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- Maryland Energy Administration Energy Programs⁴ is available on [MEA's website](#).⁵
- 11.1.2. A library of Maryland incentive programs for buildings is also available on the Maryland Clean Buildings Hub webpages here:
- 11.1.2.1. [Clean Buildings Hub homepage](#)
- 11.1.2.2. [Clean Buildings Hub financial resources](#)
- 11.2. Specific ineligible activities under this FOA include but are not limited to:
- 11.2.1. Standalone Planning;
- 11.2.2. Standalone Outreach and Education;
- 11.2.3. Workforce Development; and
- 11.2.4. Fossil Fuel Expansion
- 11.3. Specific ineligible applicants under this FOA include but are not limited to:
- 11.3.1. Maryland state government agencies;
- 11.3.2. Units of federal or foreign governments (even if the property is located in Maryland); and
- 11.3.3. Public senior higher education institutions, as defined in §10–101(m) of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.⁶ Specifically:
- 11.3.3.1. The constituent institutions of the University System of Maryland and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science;
- 11.3.3.2. Morgan State University; and
- 11.3.3.3. St. Mary's College of Maryland.
- 11.3.4. Any institution of higher education for which funds were appropriated from the SEIF in the FY27 budget.
- 11.4. MEA programs will not award grants to projects that violate or conflict with the Fossil Fuel Policy. For more information, please review the Fossil Fuel Policy provided as FOA Attachment B.
12. Minimum Eligibility Requirements:
To be considered a complete application and to be evaluated as set forth in

⁴ Please note the General Notice of Programs is provided for planning purposes only. Each individual Program Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) will include specific program requirements. Program names and details may change based on the final program design and stakeholder feedback.

⁵<https://energy.maryland.gov/SiteAssets/Pages/all-incentives/ACCESSIBLE%20FY27%20General%20Notice%20of%20Upcoming%20Programs.pdf>

⁶<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Laws/StatuteText?article=ged&section=10-101&enactments=false>

Section 15 “Competitive Evaluation Criteria”, the following requirements must be met:

- 12.1. **Ability to Comply with General Provisions:** The General Provisions are provided as FOA Attachment A.
- 12.2. **Ability to Comply with Fossil Fuel Policy, if applicable:** The Fossil Fuel Policy is provided as FOA Attachment B.
- 12.3. The applicant must have an established Employer Identification Number (“EIN”, sometimes referred to as a “taxpayer identification number,” or “TIN”) when the application is submitted.
- 12.4. **Compliance with Relevant Certifications, Licenses, and Requirements:** The Grantee shall be responsible for compliance with the following:
 - 12.4.1. **Authority to Operate in Maryland:** All work performed on behalf of the Grantee pursuant to a Grant Agreement shall be carried out by the Grantee’s staff and contractors holding all necessary Maryland certifications and licenses. Any business or nonprofit 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 Assessments and Taxation](#)⁷, if applicable.
 - 12.4.2. All work performed pursuant to a Grant shall comply with all applicable local, State, and federal building codes and other applicable laws and regulations.
- 12.5. **Nonprofit applicants only:** Ability to provide a letter from the Internal Revenue Service attesting to the tax-exempt status of the organization. If a letter from the Internal Revenue Service attesting to tax exempt status is not available, an applicant may provide alternative documentation for MEA to review on a case-by-case basis.
- 12.6. **Prior Expenses Restrictions:** MEA will not disburse grant funds for costs incurred prior to the Effective Date of the Grant Agreement unless MEA agrees otherwise in writing.

⁷ dat.maryland.gov/pages/default.aspx

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- 12.7. **Duplicate Funding Restrictions:** An applicant cannot receive more than one MEA incentive for the same project scope at the same location.
- 12.8. **Ability to Enter into a Grant Agreement:** Each applicant awarded a grant under the Program must enter into a formal Grant Agreement with MEA, before requesting payment of any grant funds.
- 12.9. **Grant Implementation Period:** Any project funded under the Program must complete the project, including all milestones and required reporting documents, within approximately **24-48** months of an executed grant agreement. MEA will establish a grant implementation period in the grant agreement. The period is at MEA's discretion and is dependent on the applicant's proposed solution to the challenge.
- 12.10. If MEA determines that any activity undertaken violates or conflicts with the Grant Agreement, MEA may rescind the Grant or take any other appropriate action, as determined by MEA.
- 12.11. **Alignment with Program Purpose:** The applicant demonstrates that the proposed project addresses the specific problem statement for Fiscal Year 2027, as described in Section 1 "Program Purpose".
- 12.12. **Company Organizational Chart (if applicable):** An organizational chart may be required depending on the applicant, as described in Section 13: "Required Application Components: Stage 1."
- 12.13. **Property Ownership (if applicable):** The project must be on property either owned, leased, or otherwise legally controlled by the applicant. Applicants must provide documentation of ownership as described in Section 14 "Required Application Components: Stage 2."
- 12.14. **Project Narrative:** The applicant must be able to provide a Project Narrative as described in Section 14 "Required Application Components: Stage 2."
- 12.15. **Budget Workbook:** The applicant must be able to provide a Budget Workbook as described in Section 14 "Required Application Components: Stage 2."
- 12.16. **Implementation Timeline:** The applicant must be able to provide an
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Implementation Timeline as described in Section 14 “Required Application Components: Stage 2.”

- 12.17. **Letters of Support:** The applicant must be able to provide Letters of Support as described in Section 14 “Required Application Components: Stage 2.”
- 12.18. **Additional Minimum Eligibility Requirements:** After the preliminary review of all applications in Stage 1, MEA may issue additional minimum eligibility requirements, dependent on the applicants’ proposed solutions to the challenge. Additional requirements are at MEA’s discretion.
13. Required Application Components: Stage 1
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. MEA will not consider applications it deems incomplete. Each application to the Program must include the following in Stage 1:
- 13.1. **Application:** Applicant must provide a complete and accurate application.
- 13.2. **Contact Information:** directly in the online application, provide contact information for the primary contact, the secondary contact, the authorized signatory.
- 13.3. **Applicant Organization Information:** directly in the online application, provide information about the organization applying for grant funding.
- 13.4. **Funding Recipient Information:** directly in the online application, enter funding recipient information that matches the IRS Form W9 uploaded to the application, as described in Section 13.6.
- 13.5. **Self-Verification of Minimum Eligibility:**
- 13.5.1. The applicant’s authorized representative must sign an attestation of the following, and provided as Attachment C of this FOA:
- 13.5.1.1. I have reviewed the General Provisions.
- 13.5.1.2. I have reviewed the Fossil Fuel Policy.

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- 13.5.1.3. I have reviewed all requirements of this program, as specified in this Funding Opportunity Announcement.
- 13.5.1.4. To the best of my knowledge, all information provided in this application is complete, accurate, and true, and all work performed pursuant to a Grant shall comply with the terms and conditions of the Program, the General Provisions, the Fossil Fuel Policy, and all applicable local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and building codes.
- 13.5.2. MEA may request documentation confirming the authorized representative.
- 13.6. **IRS Form W9:**
- 13.6.1. **If the Funding Recipient is a Federal Income Tax Paying Entity:** The applicant must submit a complete and accurate IRS Form W-9. The IRS Form W-9 organization name, dba name if applicable, address, and employer identification number ("EIN", sometimes referred to as a "Taxpayer Identification Number," or "TIN") will be used to execute a grant agreement, if the project is selected for a grant. The applicant's name and address provided on the IRS Form W-9 and on the application must match, and the address must be the billing address (rather than the project installation address or mailing address, if different).
- 13.6.2. **If the Funding Recipient is a Disregarded Entity for U.S. Income Tax Purposes:** The applicant must submit a separate complete and accurate IRS Form W-9 for the disregarded entity and for its federal income tax-paying parent.
- 13.6.2.1. MEA may request additional documentation for the disregarded entity.
- 13.6.3. A blank copy of the most recent IRS Form W-9 and IRS Instructions can be found on the [IRS Form W-9 webpage](#)⁸. As the MEA is unable to give tax advice, any tax-related questions should be directed toward a qualified tax professional.
- 13.7. **Certificate of Good Standing:** The applicant must provide documentation demonstrating that any business or nonprofit organization identified at the time of the application operating in Maryland with which the applicant will contract or partner to carry out the purposes of the Grant

⁸ irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-w-9

is registered and in good standing with the [Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation](#)⁹ (SDAT), if applicable. Instructions on how to obtain a Certificate of Good Standing are available on [SDAT's website](#).

- 13.8. **Nonprofit applicants only:** The applicant must provide a letter from the Internal Revenue Service attesting to the tax exempt status of the organization. If a letter from the Internal Revenue Service attesting to tax exempt status is not available, an applicant may provide alternative documentation for MEA to review on a case-by-case basis.
- 13.9. **Company Organizational Chart (if applicable):**
- 13.9.1. The applicant must upload an organization chart, if any of the following scenarios are true:
- 13.9.1.1. If the funding recipient is a disregarded entity for U.S. tax purposes, the applicant must upload an organizational chart.
- 13.9.1.2. If the applicant has a parent company or subsidiary company that is relevant to understand the applicant's experience and qualifications, the applicant must upload an organizational chart.
- 13.9.2. The organizational chart must identify each related company:
- 13.9.2.1. The project company must be identified as the applicant, proposed Grantee, and funding recipient.
- 13.9.2.2. The federal tax paying entity must be identified.
- 13.9.2.3. Other intermediaries or holding companies must be identified.
- 13.9.2.4. Explain the function of each company.
- 13.9.2.5. Identify each entity by its full legal name, DBA name (if applicable), employer identification number ("EIN", sometimes referred to as a "taxpayer identification number," or "TIN"), and mailing address.
- 13.10. **Summary of Proposed Project:** directly in the online application, enter the following information to summarize the proposed project:
- 13.10.1. **Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:** Provide a clear, concise title that summarizes the project.
- 13.10.2. **Brief Summary of Project Purpose:** Provide a brief summary describing the purpose of the project(s) included in this application. This should be a high-level overview rather than a detailed funding

⁹ dat.maryland.gov/pages/default.aspx

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- narrative; program-specific details may be requested elsewhere in the application.
- 13.10.3. **Proposed Project Impact:** Briefly describe the expected impact of your project, including who will benefit, what upgrades will be completed, and estimated results such as households served, energy savings, utility cost savings, or greenhouse gas reductions.
- 13.10.4. **Proposed Project Start Date:** Date when the project is expected to begin.
- 13.10.5. **Proposed Project End Date:** Date when the project is expected to be completed.
- 13.10.6. **Primary Project Location:** Select one or more Maryland counties or select “All” if the impact is statewide.
- 13.10.7. **Total Requested Grant Amount:** This is the dollar amount calculated based on the formula described in Section 8 “Grant Amount.” The applicant must utilize FOA Attachment D: The Budget Workbook to calculate the total requested grant amount.
- 13.10.8. **Leveraged Funds Amount:** Leveraged funding refers to financial support the project receives from other sources, such as federal, state, or local programs, grants, or matching funds. Using leveraged funding can strengthen your application by demonstrating additional investment and support. The amount entered here must be supported by the Budget Workbook uploaded to the application, as described in Section 14.2.1.
- 13.11. **Brief Concept Paper:** The applicant must upload a Brief Concept Paper. The applicant must answer the following prompts in either a PDF or Word Document accessible format. The Brief Concept Paper word count must be 1000 words to 2500 words. The following components should be included:
- 13.11.1. **Cover Page**
- 13.11.2. **Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:** Provide a clear, concise title that summarizes the project.
- 13.11.3. **Introduction/Executive Summary:** ~~Provide a brief introduction. A detailed description of the project, including a description of the electric grid or network infrastructure (e.g., distribution grid), site descriptions (e.g., building and/or plant types, sizes and quantities), grid edge technical measures—including distributed energy~~
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~~resources (DERs) (e.g., types, sizes and quantities), location(s), efficiency improvements, system integration, management and control architecture, local energy networks (e.g., microgrids or thermal energy networks), etc.;~~

13.11.4. **Statement of Need and Project Overview:**

- The applicant must articulate how their proposed project responds to the specific problem statement for the FY27 Energy Challenge Grant Program, as described in Section 1 “Program Purpose”.
- In order to do so, the applicant must reiterate the problem statement. The applicant must identify who is affected by the problem, what and where are the major pain points, when does the problem occur, and why it is important to fix.
- The proposed technology, including its basic operating principles and how it is unique and innovative;
- Include a statement explicitly detailing how the proposed project directly aligns with MEA’s mission to promote clean, affordable, and reliable energy for Marylanders.
- Include a project delivery window, including targeted start date and completion date (keeping within the required **24–48 month** performance window);
- The potential impact that the proposed project would have on the relevant field and application;
- Describing the role of the utility and/or PSC partner(s) on the proposed project’s scope of work; and

13.11.5. **Applicant Qualifications and Experience:** Applicants are required to describe succinctly the qualifications, experience, and capabilities of the proposed project team, including:

- Whether the applicant and project team have the skill and expertise needed to successfully execute the project plan;
- Whether the applicant has prior experience which demonstrates an ability to perform tasks of similar risk and complexity;
- Whether the applicant has adequate access to equipment and facilities necessary to accomplish the effort and/or clearly explain how it intends to obtain access to the necessary equipment and facilities; and
- Describing the role of any regulated energy utility company on the proposed project’s scope of work;

~~13.11.6. **AI Usage Disclosure:** The applicant must disclose whether and to~~

~~what extent artificial intelligence tools were used in drafting the Concept Paper. If AI tools were utilized for tasks such as brainstorming, conducting background research, editing or drafting text, summarizing documents, analyzing data, or generating images, that usage must be disclosed to MEA by answering the following questions:~~

- ~~1. Which AI tools were utilized? (Model Name, Model Version, Company, e.g. Claude Opus 5, Anthropic)~~
- ~~2. What tasks were the AI tools utilized for?~~
- ~~3. Which portions of the Concept Paper does this apply to?~~
- ~~4. What steps were taken to ensure the quality of the tool's output? (e.g. reviewing for clarity and accuracy, checking citations)~~

~~13.11.7. Applicants may provide graphs, charts, or other data to supplement their Technology Description.~~

- 13.12. **Confidential Information** (optional): To the extent permitted by law, personally identifiable information will not be disclosed. Directly in the online application, applicants should clearly identify and describe any parts of their application that they consider to be confidential, proprietary information or trade secrets and provide any justification why such materials, upon request, should not be disclosed by the State under the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA).

14. Required Application Components: Stage 2

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. MEA will not consider applications it deems incomplete. Each application to the Program must include the following in Stage 2:

- 14.1. **Detailed Project Narrative:** The applicant must upload answers to the following Project Narrative prompts in either a PDF or Word Document accessible format. The following components must be addressed in detail in the narrative:

- 14.1.1. **Applicant Organization Name:** this application identifier should match what you entered directly in the online application as described in as described in 13.3.

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- 14.1.2. **Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:** this application identifier should match what you entered directly in the online application as described in Section 13.10.1.
- 14.1.3. **Project Overview:** The applicant should provide a summary description of the overall work scope and approach to achieve the objective(s). The overall work scope is to be divided by performance periods that are separated by discrete, approximately annual decision points. The applicant should describe the specific expected end result of each performance period. Identify how the proposal impacts the who, overcomes the major pain points, why now, and the impact.
- 14.1.4. **Statement of Need:** Identify who is affected by the problem, what and where are the major pain points, when does the problem occur, and why it is important to fix.
- 14.1.5. **Project Timeline:** Applicants must include a realistic and feasible timeline of all milestones. Applicants are encouraged to provide a Gantt Chart or other visual aid to depict the project timeline. Applicants should include a discussion of potential timeline challenges or constraints and mitigation strategies.
- 14.1.6. **Project Partners:** Provide a list of project partners along with their defined roles and responsibilities, including the intended contractor and subcontractors. Applicants should provide letters of support describing partnerships or contracts (draft or final) outlining roles and responsibilities of participating partners. Letters of support should be signed by an individual with the authority to enter into agreements on behalf of the partner organization.
- 14.1.7. **Anticipated Challenges:** Identify any anticipated challenges and propose how it will be mitigated, including the role that the proposed investment will play in overcoming those challenges.
- 14.2. **Budget Workbook:** The applicant must complete and upload the template Budget Workbook. The Budget Workbook Template is provided as FOA
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Attachment D and is available on the program webpage.¹⁰ The following are required components of the ~~Project and~~ Budget Workbook:

- 14.2.1. **Sheet 1: Introduction & Leveraged Funds:** The applicant must use the template workbook to breakdown the proposed budget. The budget breakdown tab must include details on total anticipated project costs and the applicant's intended use of grant funds and leveraged funds. Leveraged funding refers to financial support the project receives from other sources, such as federal, state, or local programs, grants, or matching funds.
- 14.2.2. **Sheet 2: Direct - Justified Supplemental Amount:** The applicant must use the template workbook to include any supplemental justified amounts as described above in Section 8. Grant Amount.
- 14.2.3. **Sheet 3: Direct - Personnel&Fringe:** The applicant must use the template workbook to include personal and fringe costs for the proposed solution to the challenge.
- 14.2.4. **Sheet 4: Direct - Contractual:** The applicant must use the template workbook to include contractual costs for the proposed solution to the challenge.
- 14.2.5. **Sheet 5: Direct - Materials:** The applicant must use the template workbook to include material costs for the proposed solution to the challenge.
- 14.2.6. **Sheet 6: Direct - Other:** The applicant must use the template workbook to include other costs for the proposed solution to the challenge.
- 14.2.7. **Sheet 7: Admin Costs, Indirect:** The applicant must use the template workbook to include indirect costs for the proposed solution to the challenge.

14.3. **Property Ownership Documentation (if applicable):** The property

¹⁰ <https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/energychallenge.aspx>

ownership documentation requirement is at MEA's discretion and is dependent on the applicant's proposed solution to the challenge. Property ownership documentation may not be applicable, may be a minimum eligibility requirement for grant award, or may be a condition of payment. After Stage 1, MEA will notify the applicant if property ownership documentation is not required, required in Stage 2, or required as a condition of payment.

14.4. Letter(s) of Support

- 14.4.1. For proposals involving a project site that is not owned or controlled by the applicant, the applicant must upload a Letter of Support from the entity that owns the site. The letter must be signed by the applicant and the site owner.
- 14.4.2. For proposals where a project is to be conducted in partnership with a local government, the applicant must upload a Letter of Support from the local government. The letter must be signed by the applicant and local government.
- 14.4.3. For proposals where a project is to be conducted in partnership with a utility, the applicant must upload a Letter of Support from the utility. The letter must be signed by the applicant and utility.

14.5. Supplemental Documentation (optional): The applicant may upload additional documentation if needed to support the project narrative.

14.6. Confidential Information (optional): To the extent permitted by law, personally identifiable information will not be disclosed. Directly in the online application, applicants should clearly identify and describe any parts of their application that they consider to be confidential, proprietary information or trade secrets and provide any justification why such materials, upon request, should not be disclosed by the State under the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA).

15. Competitive Evaluation Criteria

The Evaluation Team will competitively evaluate each Stage 2 application meeting the Minimum Eligibility Requirements of this FOA using the following criteria ("Competitive Evaluation Criteria"). MEA will base grant selections on the ranking of applications from highest score to lowest score, subject to Program funding availability.

Table 2. Competitive Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Description	Points Available
<i>Overall Project Feasibility</i>	The application includes a detailed overview of the project's scope of work and plans for project execution with specific tasks, milestones, deliverables, project timeline, and project partners. The applicant provides a clear and concise answer to the program statement.	20
<i>Project Justification</i>	The application demonstrates that the proposed activities are aligned with the program purpose and Eligible Activities as described in Section 1 "Program Purpose" and Section 10, "Eligible Activities."	15
<i>Budget Workbook</i>	The applicant must complete to the best of their ability and upload the template Budget Workbook. The Budget Workbook includes a breakdown of the intended use of grant funds and leveraged funds, and potential incentive amounts. The budget is competitive in scale relative to desired project outcomes.	25
<i>Affordability/Equitable Solutions</i>	To effectively support communities that are disproportionately affected by environmental harms, MEA prioritizes equity. This is particularly relevant in the context of delivering benefits from numerous environmental programs. An "Overburdened Community" in Maryland is defined as any census tract where at least three environmental health indicators are above the 75th percentile statewide, in accordance with the criteria established by Maryland's Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 ¹¹ . While the Program is statewide, MEA will give preference to projects that benefit overburdened communities.	10

¹¹ "Overburdened Community" is defined in the [Environment Article §1-701\(7\)](#)

Criteria	Description	Points Available
	Applicants can use the MDEnviroScreen Tool ¹² to identify overburdened census tracts.	
<i>Applicant Qualifications and Experience</i>	The applicant demonstrates past success with the execution of the project scope and plan. The applicant may provide past metrics, data, and/or reports to support the success of this type of project previously.	30
	Total	100

16. Review Process:

16.1. MEA will evaluate each application package. The evaluation includes review steps described below.

16.1.1. **Program Staff Eligibility Review:** The MEA Program Staff reviews the application for eligibility according to Section 12 “Minimum Eligibility Requirements” listed in this FOA. MEA Program Staff may request additional information in Stage 1 or Stage 2.

16.1.1.1. **Stage 1:** An application that does not meet the Minimum Eligibility Requirements under preliminary review in Stage 1 will be rejected from grant consideration and the applicant will be notified. An application that meets the Minimum Eligibility Requirements under preliminary review in Stage 1 will be notified and is eligible to proceed to Stage 2.

16.1.1.2. **Stage 2:** An application that does not meet all Minimum Eligibility Requirements will be rejected from grant consideration and the applicant will be notified.

16.1.2. **Evaluation Team Member Individual Review:** The Evaluation Team will be made up of MEA staff or other individuals. Each Evaluation Team member reviews and scores each application according to the Competitive Evaluation Criteria established in this FOA.

¹² See the MDEnviroScreen here:

https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e4148f01acf743bf8ac1d2aa2dc0947f/page/MarylandEJ3_0#data_s=id%3AdataSource_5-1946a6bb1d3-layer-3%3A1424

- 16.1.3. **Evaluation Team Group Review and Grant Recommendations:**
The Evaluation Team convenes for a group review of their scores and makes grant recommendations.

17. Full, Partial, and Augmented Grants:

- 17.1. A fully funded grant is a grant amount offered that is the amount calculated when the formula described in section 8 “Grant Amount” is applied. The following stipulations apply to fully funded grants:
- 17.1.1. The funding formula must be applied correctly; if the applicant applied it incorrectly, it will be adjusted.
 - 17.1.2. Funding will be awarded only for eligible measures; ineligible measures will not be funded.
- 17.2. A partially funded grant is a grant amount offered that is less than the amount calculated when the formula described in section 8 “Grant Amount” is applied. Partial grants are possible under this Program. The following are possible reasons for giving partial grants:
- 17.2.1. If the program fund balance is insufficient to offer a fully funded grant, there may be one grant that is offered the remaining budget, until grant funds are exhausted.
 - 17.2.2. If funding amount and project outcomes can be scaled down at a proportional rate, one or more grants may be offered partial funding.
 - 17.2.3. There may be additional reasons, at MEA's discretion.
- 17.3. An augmented grant is a grant amount offered that is greater than the amount calculated when the formula described in section 8 “Grant Amount” is applied. Augmented grants are possible under this program. The following are possible reasons for offering augmented grants:
- 17.3.1. If funding amount and project outcomes can be scaled up at a proportional rate, one or more grants may be offered augmented funding.
 - 17.3.2. There may be additional reasons, at MEA's discretion.

18. Payment and Reporting:

The following requirements apply to each grantee:

- 18.1. **Electronic Payments:** Participation in MEA grant programs is voluntary. To

ensure the secure transmission of grant funds, each grantee is required to receive electronic payments from the State of Maryland. Electronic payments are set up through the State of Maryland's Comptroller's Office. Each grantee must fill out and submit the [Electronic Funds Transfer/ACH for Vendors](#) form¹³ to the Comptroller's Office via the submission methods outlined in the X-10 form. ACH/Direct Deposit Authorization for Vendor Payment Form X-10 cannot be sent to MEA. Failure to submit ACH/Direct Deposit Authorization Form X-10 may result in payment being delayed. If an applicant is unable to receive ACH/Direct Deposit payments, MEA may make an exception to this requirement on a case-by-case basis.

- 18.2. Reporting and Invoicing: Each grantee must ensure timely and current compliance with the Program's reporting and invoicing requirements. The Program reporting requirements will be specified in the grant agreement.
- 18.3. **1099-G Form:** Grants issued by the State of Maryland may be taxable and may result in the issuance of a 1099-G form to the grant recipient (if the grant recipient is a federal tax paying entity) or the tax paying entity listed on the application (if different from the grant recipient). As the MEA is unable to give tax advice, any tax-related questions should be directed toward a qualified tax professional.

19. Application Submission Instructions:

- 19.1. To apply using My MEA:
- 19.1.1. Navigate to the [My MEA Portal](#) ¹⁴ and select 'Login' on the top right of the page.
- 19.1.2. For new users, create an account by clicking "Sign up" under "Create an account for your energy project".
- 19.1.2.1. Complete the questions using your organization's information.
- 19.1.2.2. You will need to verify your account via email.
- 19.1.3. For Existing User: Select the 'Login' button and enter your existing username and password.
- 19.1.4. On the [My MEA home page](#)¹⁵, click the FY27 Energy Challenge

¹³ <https://www.marylandcomptroller.gov/state-agencies/accounting/eft-ach-for-vendors.html>

¹⁴ [Apply for a program at mea.maryland.gov](#)

¹⁵ [Apply for a program at mea.maryland.gov](#)

Grant Program.

19.1.5. Review the information on the page and select “Apply” when ready.

19.1.5.1. Complete the application with the required information. An application can be saved for later.

19.1.5.2. Upload all the required documents.

19.1.6. Applicants can track application status in the portal and may receive update emails as necessary.

19.2. To continue a Saved Application:

19.2.1. Navigate to the [My MEA home page](#)¹⁶ and select ‘Login’ on the top right of the page.

19.2.2. Click the "My Applications" button from the main page.

19.2.3. Scroll down to “My Saved Applications” and click the linked application.

19.3. To submit using My MEA missing information or documentation:

19.3.1. Navigate to the [My MEA home page](#)¹⁷ and select ‘Login’ on the top right of the page.

19.3.2. Click the ‘View More Details’ button from the main page to access the FY27 Energy Challenge Grant Program details page.

19.3.3. Click the “Manage My Application” button.

19.3.4. Under “Manage My Application,” Click “Continue”.

19.3.5. To submit Missing Information select ‘Provide Missing Information to my Submitted Application.’

19.4. To submit a Stage 2 Application:

19.4.1. Navigate to the My MEA home page and select ‘Login’ on the top

¹⁶ [Apply for a program at mea.maryland.gov](#)

¹⁷ [Apply for a program at mea.maryland.gov](#)

right of the page.

19.4.2. Click "My Applications" from the main page.

19.4.3. Scroll down to "My Applications" and click the linked application with status of "Step 1 Approved" and "Step 2 Required Tasks".

20. Questions:

Applicants can direct questions not answered by this FOA to MEA by sending an email to grid.mea@maryland.gov.

21. Attachments:

- 21.1. Attachment A: MEA General Provisions
- 21.2. Attachment B: MEA's Fossil Fuel Policy
- 21.3. Attachment C: Self-Verification of Minimum Eligibility
- 21.4. Attachment D: Budget Workbook