



Funding Opportunity Announcement (“FOA”) FY25 Commercial Solar Grant Program

****FOA UPDATED OCTOBER 9, 2024 TO CORRECT INFORMATION ON HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION****

****FOA UPDATED NOVEMBER 13, 2024 TO INCREASE PROGRAM BUDGET AND CLARIFY COST-MATCH AMOUNTS FOR EACH AOI****

Program Purpose: The Maryland Energy Administration (“MEA”) is pleased to announce funding available from the new FY25 [Commercial Solar Grant Program](#)¹ (“CSGP”, “Program”). This Program uses solar alternative compliance payments and will help fund projects that are owned by or directly benefit 1) low-to-moderate-income communities located in a census tract with an average median income at or below 80% of the average median income for the State, or 2) overburdened or underserved communities, as defined in §1-701 of the Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. Funds are provided under two Areas of Interest, and are available to (1) help equitably increase access to solar PV technologies for nonprofit entities and Small, Minority, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises; and (2) support solar PV systems for commercial-scale businesses that have substantial energy needs. Helping Maryland’s businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations equitably adopt solar energy technologies is key to meeting our State’s clean energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Areas of Interest (“AOIs”):

AOI 1: Equitable Solar Access for Organizations: AOI 1 helps fund the installation of solar PV systems by (1) nonprofit organizations and (2) businesses that meet the requirements specified in the “Eligible Applicants” section for AOI 1 of this FOA (below). Potential outcomes realized from energy savings could include, but are not limited to: the ability to make long-needed renovations to facilities of organizations important to the community, the ability to lower

¹ <https://energy.maryland.gov/business/Pages/Commercial-Solar.aspx>

prices of goods and services for customers, the ability to increase staffing to better serve customers, etc.

AOI 2: Commercial Solar for Sustainability: AOI 2 helps fund the installation of solar PV systems by businesses that meet the requirements specified in the “Eligible Applicants” section for AOI 2 of this FOA (below). These projects will primarily improve organizational sustainability and contribute to Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Type of Grant Program:	Noncompetitive, awarded on a First-Come, First-Served basis
Application Deadline:	Applications will be accepted through 3:00 P.M. ET, March 31, 2025, or until funding is exhausted, whichever comes first.
Anticipated Program Budget:	\$10,000,000 \$5,000,000 is available from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund ² using Solar Compliance Funds, also known as Alternative Compliance Payments ("ACP"). Funds must be used for new projects that are owned by or directly benefit 1) low-to-moderate income communities located in a census tract with an average median income at or below 80% of the median income of Maryland, or 2) overburdened or underserved communities, as defined by §1-701 of the Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, <u>subject to the following restrictions:</u>

Initial AOI Reservations

The following amounts are initially reserved for each AOI through December 31, 2024. Beginning January 1, 2025, all remaining funds for each AOI will be made available to all eligible applicants, regardless of AOI.

- AOI 1: Equitable Solar Access for Organizations:
\$6,000,000 ~~\$3,000,000~~
- AOI 2: Commercial Solar for Sustainability:
\$4,000,000 ~~\$2,000,000~~

² [https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/Strategic-Energy-Investment-Fund-\(SEIF\)-.aspx](https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/Strategic-Energy-Investment-Fund-(SEIF)-.aspx)

MEA will provide timely updates to available fund balances on the CSGP webpage throughout the Program year.

The amount of Program funding awarded may be more or less depending on the quantity and quality of applications received.

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicant types are listed by AOI, as follows:

- **AOI 1:**

(1) A Maryland nonprofit entity that is located in or serves a low-to-moderate income community located in a census tract with an average median income at or below eighty percent (80%) of the median income of Maryland, or overburdened or underserved community, as defined by §1-701 of the Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.

(2) A Maryland business that is registered to operate in the State, is located in or serves a low-to-moderate income community located in a census tract with an average median income at or below eighty percent (80%) of the median income of Maryland, or overburdened or underserved community, as defined by §1-701 of the Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and:

(a) has been designated by, or is in the process of obtaining designation by, the Maryland Department of Transportation [Office of Minority Business Enterprise](#)³, as a **Small Business Enterprise (SBE), Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Airport Concessions Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE), or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE); OR**

(b) meets the size standards adopted by the United States Small Business Administration in

³ <https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/index.aspx?pageid=90>

[13 C.F.R. 121.201](#)⁴ and any subsequent revision of that regulation AND is at least fifty-one percent (51%) owned and controlled by one or more individuals who are veterans (where veteran is defined as an individual who is verified as having served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, other than for training, and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable).

- **AOI 2:** A Maryland business lacking the designations specified in AOI 1, that is registered to operate in the State and is located in or serves a low-to-moderate income community located in a census tract with an average median income at or below eighty percent (80%) of the median income of Maryland, or overburdened or underserved community, as defined by §1-701 of the Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.

Eligible Activities: A project must owned by or directly benefit: 1) low– to moderate–income communities located in a census tract with an average median income at or below 80% of the average median income for the State; or 2) overburdened or underserved communities, as defined in § 1–701 of the Environment Article.

Funds are provided under the CSGP for solar PV systems **purchased by applicants** and for solar PV systems that are **third-party owned** and provide solar PV energy and associated benefits to their applicants:

Applicant-Owned Systems: Equipment, installation, commissioning, and interconnection costs for the safe and successful installation of a solar PV system owned and operated by the applicant.

Third-Party Owned (“TPO”) Systems: Equipment, installation, commissioning, and interconnection costs for the

⁴ <https://www.sba.gov/document/support-table-size-standards>

safe and successful installation of a solar PV system that is owned and operated by a third-party provider for the sole benefit of the applicant. Acceptable TPO agreements include solar PV leases and solar PV power purchase agreements (“PPAs”). **THE FOLLOWING RESTRICTIONS APPLY:**

- **AOI 1 Requirement:** TPO systems under AOI 1 must limit the leasing fee or PPA rate, as applicable, so that the applicant is guaranteed at least twenty percent (20%) savings from their utility’s standard offer service rate throughout the life of the TPO agreement.
- **AOI 2 Requirement:** TPO systems under AOI 2 must limit the leasing fee or PPA rate, as applicable, so that the applicant is guaranteed to not pay more than the utility’s standard offer service rate throughout the life of the TPO agreement.

Note: Canopy-mounted solar PV systems over parking structures (sometimes called “solar canopy” systems) are not eligible for grants under the CSGP. MEA provides a [separate solar PV canopy grant program](#)⁵ for these installation types.

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FOA CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

⁵ <https://energy.maryland.gov/business/Pages/incentives/PVEVprogram.aspx>

Grant Formula: The table below explains how grant amounts are calculated:

AREA OF INTEREST	SYSTEM CAPACITY RANGE	GRANT AMOUNT CALCULATION
AOI 1: Equitable Solar Access for Organizations	1 - 500 kW _{DC}	Up to \$1,700 per kW _{DC} , not to exceed \$500,000 total, <u>OR</u> 75% of the Net Total Project Cost*, <u>WHICHEVER IS LOWER.</u>
AOI 2: Commercial Solar for Sustainability	1 - 500 kW _{DC}	Up to \$1,000 per kW _{DC} , not to exceed \$500,000 total, <u>OR</u> 50% of the Net Total Project Cost*, <u>WHICHEVER IS LOWER.</u>
	500 - 1,000 kW _{DC}	Up to \$750 per kW _{DC} , not to exceed \$500,000 total, <u>OR</u> 50% of the Net Total Project Cost*, <u>WHICHEVER IS LOWER.</u>
	> 1,000 kW _{DC}	Up to \$600 per kW _{DC} , not to exceed \$500,000 total, <u>OR</u> 50% of the Net Total Project Cost*, <u>WHICHEVER IS LOWER.</u>

*The Net Total Project Cost is the all-in, total project cost minus any non-MEA incentives. *Example: All-In Total Project Cost: \$1,000,000; federal solar investment tax credit: 30%; Net Total Project Cost = \$1,000,000 - (\$1,000,000 x 30%) = \$700,000.*

Partial Grants : Partial grants are possible under the Program. MEA will fully fund each complete and eligible application in the order that it is received, subject to funding availability. In the event that there is inadequate funding to fully-fund an application, MEA will offer the maximum available amount for the project to the applicant. If the applicant declines, MEA will consider the next eligible application, and this process will continue until

all remaining funds have been awarded, or each applicant has declined the funds, whichever comes first.

Minimum Requirements:

The following requirements apply to each applicant to the FY25 Commercial Solar Grant Program. Each condition **must be met** to be considered for funding.

- 1. Authorization to Operate in Maryland and SDAT Good Standing:** The applicant, and any contractor that the applicant works with on the project, must possess any required operating license and must be in Good Standing with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (“DAT”). The applicant must provide Evidence of Good Standing to MEA. See the “Required Application Documents” section of this FOA for further information.
- 2. Site Location:** The facility or facilities that the solar PV system will serve must be located within the State of Maryland.
- 3. Project Location:** The solar PV system must be located within the State of Maryland.
- 4. Cost Match:** The applicant must contribute toward the total cost for the project. For AOI 1, minimum cost match is 25% of the total project cost. For AOI 2, minimum cost match is 50% of the total project cost. Cash-in-kind, value of donated labor, other grants or incentives, and other external funding are eligible, including combinations thereof.
- 5. NABCEP Requirement:** A North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (“NABCEP”) certified PV Installation Professional (“PVIP”) must be directly involved with the design or construction of the solar PV system.
- 6. Prior Expenses Unallowed:** MEA Commercial Solar Grant Program funds cannot be used for costs that were incurred by the applicant prior to execution of a grant agreement with MEA, if the applicant is selected

for grant funding.

7. **Prior Funded Projects Restriction:** MEA will not award a grant for a project that has previously received funding from MEA through any grant or rebate program, including the CSGP.
8. **Limited Grant Funding per Applicant per Fiscal Year:** To encourage a fair and equitable opportunity to all applicants, MEA will limit the amount awarded to any single applicant in fiscal year 2025 to no more than \$500,000.
9. **Historic Preservation Restriction:** The installation of the solar PV system must not result in an “adverse finding” to the historical significance of the property, as deemed by the Maryland Historic Trust. Each application that is considered for funding will be reviewed by MEA’s Historic Preservation Specialist prior to issuance of a Commercial Solar Grant.
10. **Ability to Enter into a Grant Agreement:** The Applicant must be willing and able to enter into a Grant Agreement with MEA, if selected for a grant under the Program.
11. **Completion Deadline:** A grantee must complete the project **within eighteen (18) months** of Grant Agreement execution, unless MEA extends this deadline.

Required Application Documents:

The following documents **must be included** when applying to the CSGP to constitute a valid application submission:

1. **Application Form:** A complete, accurate FY25 MEA Commercial Solar Grant Program Application Form that is signed by an authorized representative of the applicant. A copy of this application form is available on the [Program webpage](#)⁶.

⁶ <https://energy.maryland.gov/business/Pages/Commercial-Solar.aspx>

2. **AOI 1 ONLY - Evidence of Applicant Status:** For AOI 1 applicants, documentation that certifies that the Applicant meets one of the designations for AOI 1 as specified in the "Eligible Applicants" section of this FOA. Acceptable documentation includes, as applicable:
- a. A Determination from the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE) that certifies the Applicant meets the requirements for Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Airport Concessions Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE), Small Business Enterprise (SBE);
 - b. A copy of the application **submitted** to the MDOT OMBE from the Applicant that demonstrates that the Applicant is in the process of being designated as a MBE, DBE, ACDBE, or SBE;
 - c. Documentation that meets the size standards adopted by the United States Small Business Administration in 13 C.F.R. 121.201 and any subsequent revision of that regulation AND is at least fifty-one percent (51%) owned and controlled by one or more individuals who are veterans (where veteran is defined as an individual who is verified as having served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, other than for training, and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable); OR
 - d. Nonprofits only: A letter from the Internal Revenue Service attesting to the tax exempt status of the organization.
3. **IRS Form W9:** A complete, current, accurate, and signed copy of the applicant's IRS Form W9. A copy of

this form and instructions on how to complete it are provided on the [IRS Form W9 webpage](#)⁷.

4. Evidence of Site Control: Evidence that the applicant has control of the project site and the authority to install the solar PV system, as follows:

- a. **Owned Project Site:** If the project site is owned by the applicant, a PDF copy of the project site's result on the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (DAT) Real Property Search that lists the applicant as the property owner, OR a copy of the property deed that lists the applicant as the property owner;
- b. **Leased Project Site:** If the project site is leased by the applicant, a copy of a signed and notarized letter from the property owner that gives explicit written permission for the applicant to install the solar PV system ("Property Owner's Permission Letter"), AND a PDF copy of the project site's result on the Maryland DAT Real Property Search that lists the same property owner as identified on the Property Owner's Permission Letter.

5. Good Standing Documentation: Evidence that the applicant and the solar PV provider are in Good Standing with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (DAT). Acceptable documentation includes a PDF of the organization's result from Maryland DAT's [Business Entity Search](#)⁸ that indicates Good Standing, or a Certificate of Status from Maryland DAT that indicates Good Standing. Instructions on how to obtain a Certificate of Good Status are available on DAT's website [here](#)⁹.

6. Project Budget Workbook: A complete and accurate FY25 Commercial Solar Grant Program Project

⁷ <https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-w-9>

⁸ <https://egov.maryland.gov/businessexpress/entitysearch>

⁹ <https://dat.maryland.gov/businesses/Pages/Internet-Certificate-of-Status.aspx>

Budget Workbook that includes the most up-to-date information on total project cost, sources and uses of funds, and all other information required by the workbook. A copy of this workbook is available on the [Program webpage](#)¹⁰.

7. **Utility History:** The most recently available twelve (12) **continuous** months of electric utility consumption data for the project site listed in a table or spreadsheet in an easily-readable format, **AND** PDF copies of the corresponding utility bills. The data in the table or workbook must **exactly match** the information provided on the utility bills.

8. **Solar PV System Information:** Comprehensive project information regarding the proposed solar PV project, which must include, at minimum:
 - a. Size of the solar PV system in kilowatts of direct current (“kW_{DC}”);
 - b. Location of the solar PV system, including street address and specific location on the installation property;
 - c. Solar production estimate from a widely-accepted solar estimation program, such as [PVWatts](#)¹¹, [PVsyst](#)¹², or others, on a case-by-case basis;
 - d. A one-line diagram of the proposed solar PV system, inclusive of all wiring, communications, and other ancillary equipment necessary for the safe and successful installation of the solar PV system; and
 - e. A basic electrical schematic of the facility’s electrical system (a one-line diagram is acceptable) and where and how the solar PV system connects to it.

9. **Project Map:** A site map exhibiting the location of the solar PV system on the property. Acceptable formats

¹⁰ <https://energy.maryland.gov/business/Pages/Commercial-Solar.aspx>

¹¹ <https://pvwatts.nrel.gov/pvwatts.php>

¹² <https://www.pvsyst.com/>

include screenshots or images from Google Earth, Google Maps, or similar widely-accepted online geographic information system with the proposed location of the solar PV system array indicated.

10. Contractor Agreement: A copy of an itemized and signed contract, or signed letter of intent, from the solar PV provider selected for the project, that must include, at minimum, the location and estimated nameplate capacity of the solar PV system. Ideally, this contract or letter of intent should include the same information specified in Item 5, above.

Review Process:

Each application will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis by the MEA Commercial Solar Grant Program Manager, **in the order that each complete application is received by MEA.** Only applications that meet the Minimum Requirements and include all Required Application Documents will be considered for funding, subject to funding availability of the Program.

Missing Information Policy: An applicant whose application is found to be missing required information, missing required supporting documentation, or requires one or more element(s) of the application or supporting documentation to be clarified for MEA (“Missing Information”), will be given **no more than fourteen (14) calendar days** from the date MEA notifies the applicant of the Missing Information to cure it and retain their place in the application review queue. Failure to meet this deadline will result in rejection of the application from funding consideration. An applicant whose application is rejected for this reason may reapply, so long as they meet the requirements of this FOA and any subsequently-issued revisions, as applicable.

Provisions:

MEA grant programs are covered by general requirements that will be made part of the grant agreement between MEA and the applicant, if the applicant is selected for a grant (“General Provisions”). A copy of the General Provisions document is available on [MEA’s website](#)¹³; this document will

¹³ <https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/all-incentives.aspx>

be incorporated into all MEA FY25 grant agreements.

Regulations:

MEA grant programs funded by the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (“SEIF”) are subject to the regulations* in COMAR 14.26.02. Applicants and associated projects funded through the SEIF must meet all applicable requirements in COMAR 14.26.02.

**To access these regulations, click [here](#)¹⁴ and use the sidebar “Regulations by Title” to navigate to: 14 - Independent Agencies → 26 - MARYLAND ENERGY ADMINISTRATION → 02 - Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Program.*

**Application
Submission
Instructions:**

Complete application packages must be submitted to MEA electronically, using the online FY25 Commercial Solar Grant Program application portal, available in the link below and on the [Program webpage](#)¹⁵.

[>>> CLICK HERE TO APPLY TO THE PROGRAM <<<](#)^{16,17}

If electronic submission is not possible, an Applicant should contact MEA by email at Commercial.Solar@Maryland.gov or by calling Program Manager Meg Cefail at 410.371.0976 **no fewer than fourteen (14) days** before the deadline to arrange an alternative method of application submission.

**Questions can be
directed to:**

**Meg Cefail, MEA Commercial Solar Grant Program
Manager**

Email: Commercial.Solar@Maryland.gov

Phone: 410.371.0976 or 410.537.4000, request to speak with Meg Cefail.

¹⁴ <https://dsd.maryland.gov/Pages/COMARSearch.aspx>

¹⁵ <https://energy.maryland.gov/business/Pages/Commercial-Solar.aspx>

¹⁶ <https://form.jotform.com/242814162379056>

¹⁷ **Update (October 9, 2024):** This information was updated from a prior version of the FOA that had incorrect information on how to apply. The information in this FOA (v.1.1) is accurate.

