

US-DOE OCED's \$400M ERA Funding Opportunity and Advice to Applicants



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Substituting for Toniqua Hay, OCED (unable to attend)





Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas

**Rural or remote areas are defined as cities, towns, or unincorporated areas with 10,000 or fewer people*

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, commonly referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) authorizes DOE to invest **\$1 billion in the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas Program**, managed by OCED.

Notice of Funding Opportunity (\$400 million)

- August 22, 2024: Notice of Intent
- **October 3, 2024: Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Other ERA projects:

- August 2024: OCED began awarding projects under two separate funding opportunities

OCED Mission

Deliver clean energy technology **demonstration projects at scale** in partnership with the **private sector** to **accelerate deployment, market adoption**, and the **equitable transition** to a decarbonized energy system.”

OCED Mandate



SCALE EQUITABLE, CLEAN ENERGY

Help enable 100% clean electricity by 2035 & net-zero emissions by 2050 through an equitable energy transition



UNLOCK NEW INVESTMENT

Unlock and scale trillion-dollar clean energy follow on investment from the private sector and other sources of capital



DE-RISK TECHNOLOGY

Maintain risk-based, balanced, and defensible portfolio of investments



PROVIDE PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Serve as primary DOE office to deliver full scale clean energy demonstration projects and project management oversight excellence



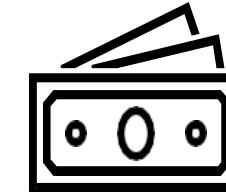
ENGAGE & COLLABORATE

Leverage private sector and broader energy ecosystem to inform OCED and DOE technology commercialization efforts



ERA Program Overview

Current ERA Projects*



\$444M

to be distributed among

36 community-driven
energy projects across

23
States and
Territories



40+
Tribal
Nations

11 types of
clean energy



*Does not include an additional \$15M distributed to ERA Prize recipients.

Scope of ERA Program

Energizing Rural Communities Prizes



\$15 million in federal funding [\$100K for Phase 1 and an additional \$200K for Phase 2 selectees.]



67 projects selected for Phase 1
33 projects selected for Phase 2



31 states, **1** territory, and **19** tribal nations



No cost share

Phase 1 Selections announced Jul 2023
Phase 2 Selections announced Sept 2024

Cooperative Agreements



\$366 million in federal funding



17 projects selected



20 states and **30** tribal nations



20-50% federal cost share

Selections announced Feb 2024

Fixed Award Grants



\$78 million in federal funding



19 projects selected



12 states and **13** tribal nations



No cost share

Selections announced Apr 2024

ERA Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary

Total DOE Funding: Approximately \$400 million

Number of Anticipated Projects: 20-50 projects

Project Funding: \$2M–\$50M federal awards (5% to 50% non-federal cost share)



Eligible Activities: (projects must support at least one)

- Improving overall cost-effectiveness of energy generation, transmission, or distribution systems
- Siting or upgrading transmission and distribution lines
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from energy generation in rural or remote areas
- Providing or modernizing electric generation facilities
- Developing microgrids
- Increasing energy efficiency



Eligible Applicants:

- Indian Tribes
- State and local government entities
- Nonprofit organizations
- For-profit organizations
- Tribal organizations
- Rural electric cooperatives
- Farming associations and cooperatives
- Labor unions
- Institutions of higher education
- Incorporated consortia
- Unincorporated consortia

Addressing Barriers to Adoption

OCED seeks projects that demonstrate how to address **at least one** of the following items:

- ***Community perception:*** Working with community members to choose appropriate technologies, locations, and ownership structures can help create positive perceptions of and relationships with projects.
- ***Permitting & siting:*** Some rural and remote communities are not able to build more renewable energy projects, or will soon face limits to new projects, due to challenges with interconnecting to the **local electrical grid**. Additionally, some rural and remote residents are wary of projects and technologies that may conflict with other uses of land or water, including agriculture.
- ***Downstream value chain:*** Ensuring that a clean energy project provides direct benefits to the people who pay the financial, environmental, and social costs of that project can help make the project more successful.

Prioritizing Community Benefits in OCED Projects

OCED **requires** applicants to include a Community Benefits Plan to help ensure broadly shared prosperity in the clean energy transition.

By **prioritizing community benefits**, we can ensure the next chapter in America's energy story is marked by greater justice, equity, security, and resilience.

Community & Labor Engagement



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility



Investing in the American Workforce



Justice40 Initiative





ERA Notice of Funding Opportunity Topic Areas

ERA Notice of Funding Opportunity Topic Areas

Topic Area	Award Size per Project	Total Expected Award Amount for Topic Area	Cost Share from Applicant	Cost Share from Applicant: Eligible for Lower Amount*
1. Open category	\$10M–\$50M	\$150M	50%	20%
2. Dual use and co-location	\$10M–\$50M	\$175M	50%	20%
3. Smaller-scale community-centered	\$2M–\$10M	\$50M	20%	5%
4. Isolated microgrids & unelectrified buildings	\$2M–\$10M	\$25M	20%	5%

**Indian Tribes, state and local governments, institutions of higher education, and nonprofit primary applicants are eligible for the lower cost share amount.*

Funding Opportunity Topic Area 1: Open Category

Objective	Offer a path to funding rural or remote clean energy infrastructure for many different project types, demonstrating approaches to addressing one or more relevant adoption barriers.
Eligible Technologies and Activities	Applicants may propose any project type that best serves the community's needs and that reduces environmental impacts, within the program's six eligible activities.
Priority Technologies and Project Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solar• Battery energy storage systems• Wind• Water power (marine energy and hydropower)• Geothermal (heating and cooling or power generation)• Biomass/biofuels• Microgrids• Distribution• Converting fossil fuel-powered equipment to electric• Repowering existing renewable energy systems

Funding Opportunity Topic Area 2: Dual Use and Co-location

Objective	<p>Provide funding for clean energy demonstration projects in rural and remote communities that either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow for using land or water for both energy supply and other activities; or• Are co-located with other activities and result in other benefits beyond energy supply and reduced pollution. <p>Demonstrations could help to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Address potential conflicts between clean energy and other land and water uses in rural or remote areas;2. Maximize tangible, measurable co-benefits of clean energy projects beyond supplying energy and reducing pollution—including but not limited to economic, workforce, and environmental benefits; and3. Increase equitable access to clean energy through new business models and financing structures.
Eligible Project Types	<p>Applicants may propose projects that provide co-benefits to communities beyond supplying energy and reducing pollution.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reducing land use conflicts• Conserving water• Diversifying incomes• Enhancing partnerships

Funding Opportunity Topic Area 3: Smaller-scale Community-centered

<p>Objective</p>	<p>Fund smaller-scale clean energy projects that are initiated, driven, and/or broadly supported by residents of the host community(ies).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects should increase long-term local capacity for future clean energy projects in the applying community and/or in nearby or peer communities. This could include increasing the availability of technical expertise to plan and develop projects, or improved community perception. • We encourage applicants to collaborate with relevant partners, particularly tribal governments and community-based organizations that are familiar with the local community, and/or entities (e.g., nonprofits or extension schools) that have experience with developing renewable energy projects in similar areas.
<p>Eligible Project Types</p>	<p>Applicants may propose any project type that best serves the community’s needs and that reduces environmental impacts, within the program’s six eligible activities.</p>
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Funding Opportunity Topic Area 4: Isolated Microgrids & Unelectrified Buildings

Objective	<p>Build clean energy projects for either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolated microgrids (often located in ultra-remote areas and served primarily by diesel generators); or• Unelectrified homes or community buildings not currently served by an electrical grid. <p>Projects should demonstrate approaches to addressing one or more relevant adoption barriers.</p>
Eligible Technologies and Activities	<p>Applicants may propose any project type that best serves the community's needs and that reduces environmental impacts, within the program's six eligible activities.</p>

Projects Not of Interest

- Large transmission projects (i.e., projects >69kV, or proposals of lines >30 miles)
- Single-campus projects that serve only the regular operation of that facility (e.g., solar on individual hospitals or schools)
 - For Topic Areas 3 and 4, applicants may propose single-campus projects that include backup power from emission-free sources for critical community-serving buildings.
- Electric vehicles (EVs)
- Projects solely focused on EV charging
 - EV charging infrastructure may be a component of a broader, otherwise eligible project.
- Projects including only weatherization



Next Steps & Resources

ERA Technical Assistance for Potential Applicants to this Funding Opportunity

National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) Technical Assistance (TA)

- Technical assistance will be available **in October** for concept papers and application development
- Includes up to 12 hours of no-cost telephone conversations with each potential applicant
- Example TA Topics include:
 - Describing the technology and/or systems to be developed, construction activities, and infrastructure development
 - Describing a preliminary development plan and timeline
 - Detailing the qualifications, experience, and capabilities of the proposed project team
 - Developing a Community Benefits Plan

Applicants are responsible for completing and submitting their own applications.

For more information, please visit <https://www.nrel.gov/state-local-tribal/era-technical-assistance.html>, or email ERA@nrel.gov

Additional Technical Assistance for Potential Applicants

Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers (EJ TCTACs)

- Partnership between EPA and DOE
- 16 technical assistance centers to help remove barriers and improve accessibility for communities to reliable and safe clean energy
- EJ TCTACs provide:
 - Direct technical assistance
 - Training
 - Capacity building support
 - Guidance on community engagement and meeting facilitation
 - Translation and interpretation services

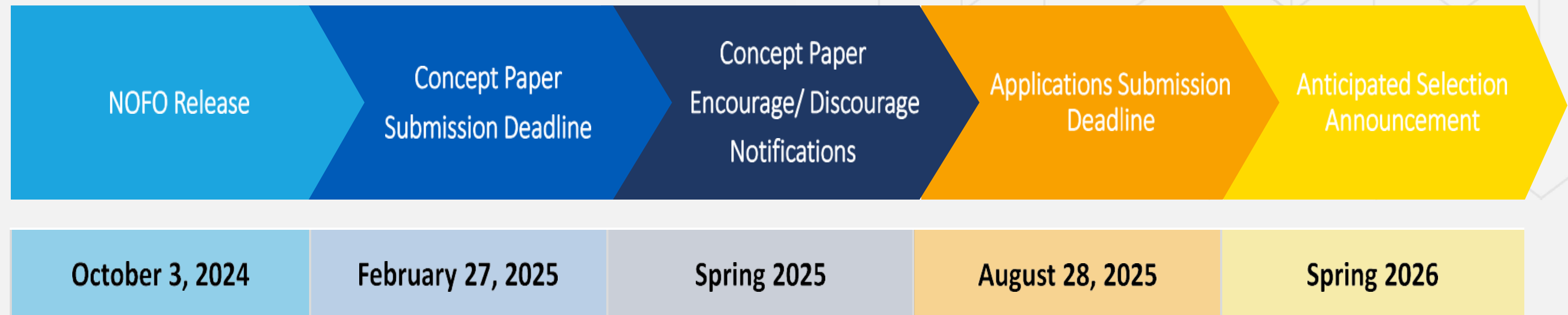
[Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers Program](#)

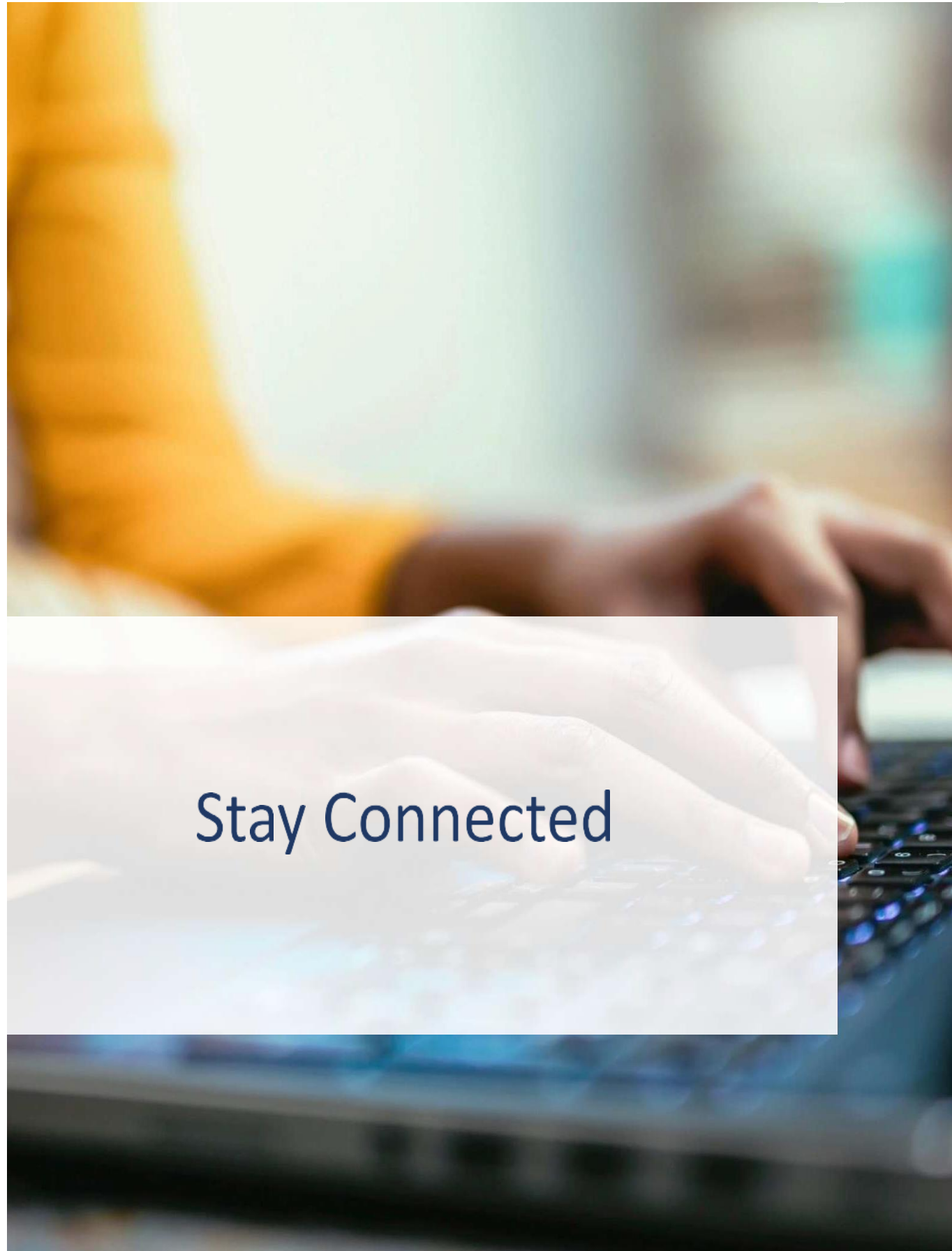
Federal Energy Funding For Rural or Remote Areas: A Guide For Communities

- A guide for communities planning or building local clean energy projects
- Publicly available resource that highlights:
 - Technical Assistance Programs
 - Renewables Energy and Efficiency Programs
 - Transmission and Distribution Programs
 - Funding Programs that Target Specific Communities

[OCED's Federal Energy Funding for Rural and Remote Areas: A Guide for Communities | Department of Energy](#)

Application Process Timeline





Stay Connected

- For questions regarding this ERA funding opportunity: email ERA2024@hq.doe.gov
 - OCED Website & Newsletter Sign-up energy.gov/oced
Scroll to bottom to sign up here:
- Sign Up for OCED News & Alerts**
Subscribe and stay up-to-date on all upcoming funding opportunities, news announcements, upcoming events, and more.
- OCED Exchange (RFIs, NOIs, and FOAs) oced-exchange.energy.gov
 - Follow us on LinkedIn linkedin.com/company/doe-oced/

I Was an OCED Reviewer

- **DWEA is one 1 of 32 Phase 1 and Phase 2 HeroX OCED Awards – AgWind**
- MB was a reviewer of full applications for both the \$50M and \$500M rounds
- Strict Conflict of Interest Rules - If I know you I didn't review your application
- There were 2 DOE Internal Reviews after the Outside Reviews – we did not pick the winners

Observations from an OCED Reviewer

- Review Instructions did not Perfectly Align with Published Program Goals
- Surprising Lack of Innovation or “First of a Kind” Projects
- Community Development Plans given High Importance
- Most Reviewers were not Technical Experts
- Some Applications that were “Encouraged” were Scams, Some Didn’t Really Need OCED Funding, and Others Didn’t Mention the Significant Tax Credits they would Receive
- The “Discouraged” proposal the BWC was involved in was a better project than many of the projects I reviewed

Recommendations from an OCED Reviewer

- If your Concept Paper is “Discouraged”, but you believe it’s a strong project, you should submit a full proposal.
- Show a plan to use any tax credits earned.
- Wind energy was underrepresented in prior awards, so theoretically wind projects will be given preference at the upper level, internal, reviews. But it might not happen.
- New DOE Secretary and/or DOGE may cancel this solicitation and even shutter OCED



Sec. Chris Wright