

## SETO FY 2019 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY – Topic Area 3 – SOFT COSTS

Here is the transcript of the Topic 1 webinar for the Solar Energy Technologies Office FY2019 Funding Opportunity Announcement. View the webinar here with the password Setofoa2019: <https://doe.webex.com/mw3300/mywebex/nbrshared.do>. See more about this FOA, including the slides that accompany this webinar, at the EERE Exchange site: <https://eere-exchange.energy.gov/#Foald45eda43a-e826-4481-ae7a-cc6e8ed4fdae>.

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### *Presentation cover slide:*

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our webinar. Thank you for your interest in the U.S. Department of Energy's efforts on renewable energy and energy efficiency. You are joining us for the Informational Webinar for Applicants and other interested parties for the Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) Fiscal Year 2019 Funding Opportunity Announcement, or FY19 SETO FOA, which was issued on March 26th, 2019. This webinar is specifically focused on those interested in applying to Topic 3: Balance of Systems Soft Cost Reduction; though much of the content is relevant to all FOA applicants.

Before we begin, I'd like to draw your attention to the email address on the lower left hand side on this cover page. This is the official mailbox to direct all of your questions during the entire FOA process. Please do not contact EERE individuals directly with questions, including myself. All questions received at this mailbox will be posted publicly at the Q&A section of the FOA page on EERE Exchange in an anonymous way. The official answers to your questions will also be posted typically within 3 business days. Please be careful not to submit any language that might be business sensitive, proprietary or confidential.

In addition to emailing this inbox, you may type in the chat bar any questions you have as they come up. Again, please be careful not to submit any language that might be business sensitive, proprietary or confidential. We will be posting answers to these questions in EERE Exchange; note that we will not be able to answer and questions live during the webinar today.

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Just to be clear, no new information other than that - that is already provide in the FOA – will be discussed in this webinar. There are no particular advantages or disadvantages to participating in this webinar. Your participation is completely voluntary.

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All applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully read the entire FOA and adhere to stated submission requirements.

This presentation summarizes the contents of FOA. If there are any inconsistencies between the FOA and this presentation or any statements made by myself, the FOA is the controlling document and applicants should rely on the FOA language and seek clarification from EERE at SETO.FOA@ee.doe.gov

### *Next slide:*

This slide shows the anticipated schedule for the FOA. The FOA has already been posted, and we have conducted Informational Webinars for each of the topics this week. This is the final one. The most

important date at this point is May 7th, when MANDATORY Letters of Intent are due. If not submitted by that date, the applicant is ineligible to apply to the FOA.

We'll talk about each of these steps in the process in more detail later in the webinar.

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The agenda for the webinar is as follows:

- We'll discuss the Overview of the FOA,
- We'll talk more about Topic Area 3 and our subtopics within Topic Area 3
- Provide an overview of the Award Information
- We'll talk about Substantial Involvement
- Eligibility
- Cost Sharing

And then each of the steps involved in the FOA application process:

- Letters of Intent
- Concept Papers
- Full Applications
- Merit Review and Selection
- Registration Requirements

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At a high level, achieving SETO's priorities across the solar energy technology landscape requires sustained, multifaceted innovation. For our FY19 Funding Program, the office intends to support high-impact, early-stage research in the following areas:

- Topic 1: Photovoltaics Research and Development
- Topic 2: Concentrating Solar-Thermal Power Research and Development
- Topic 3: Balance of Systems Soft Costs Reduction, which is as mentioned the primary focus of this webinar
- Topic 4: Innovations in Manufacturing: Hardware Incubator
- Topic 5: Advanced Solar Systems Integration Technologies

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Now we'll discuss more about Topic 3 and our balance of systems soft cost reduction portfolio.

The balance of systems soft costs program works to reduce the costs associated with the non-hardware components of a solar system, which include costs associated with:

- Siting
- Permitting
- Contracts
- Capital costs
- Grid interconnection
- Compliance with local codes, rules and regulations
- Installation labor; and

- Operations and maintenance.

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The chart on this slide underscores the reason why this work is important.

Although soft costs declined by 40 – 75 percent over the past 8 or 9 years across all sectors of the solar systems, hardware costs have declined even faster.

This has resulted in soft costs accounting for an increasing share of total system costs.

(Talking from a listener)

Please make sure everyone has their phone muted. Thank you.

(Talking from a listener continues)

We are just pausing momentarily as we wait for people to mute their phone.

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To address these challenges, this topics intends to support projects that fall under the following topic areas:

- Topic Area 3.1: Collaborative Partnerships to Address Regulatory Burdens
- Topic Area 3.2: Data Collection Methods to Assess Avian Impacts
- Topic Area 3.3: Increasing Solar Affordability through Innovative Solar Finance
- Topic Area 3.4: Rapid Solar Software Development

*Next slide:*

First we'll discuss a little bit more about Topic Area 3.1: Collaborative Partnerships to Address Regulatory Burdens

This topic area encourages collaborative work between various jurisdictions and private-sector facilitators to develop comprehensive, sustainable solutions that enable the country's new and developing solar markets to tackle financing and permitting issues and implement best practices and lessons learned. Approaches may involve the development and validation of innovative public-private partnership models, accelerator concepts, or other mechanisms.

Areas of Interest Include:

- Rooftop solar and solar-plus-energy-storage permitting, inspection and interconnection challenges.
- Large-scale ground-mounted solar PV and CSP siting, permitting, and environmental impact.
- Addressing solar cybersecurity challenges through strategic plans, road maps, best practices, and other decision-making tools.
- Other soft cost drivers for challenging market segments and opportunities to leverage public-private partnerships.
- Partnerships involving multiple stakeholders are specifically encouraged.

Areas of NOT of Interest Include:

- Applications that include the use of award funds for lobbying activities at the federal, state, or local level.

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Next, we'll discuss Topic Area 3.2: Data Collection Methods to Assess Avian Impacts

Projects in this topic will develop and validate innovative methods or technologies that can reduce the cost of collecting and sharing data necessary for assessing avian-solar interactions or mitigation strategies at utility-scale PV and/or CSP plants.

Areas of Interest Include:

- Projects that develop and validate novel data collection methods or technologies that can cost-effectively assess avian-solar interactions
- Projects that develop and validate novel data collection methods or technologies that can cost-effectively assess the effectiveness of avian impact mitigation technologies and techniques
- Projects that establish a data-sharing mechanism for avian data collected at utility-scale solar PV or CSP plants

Areas Specifically of NOT of Interest for This Topic Include:

- Projects that use a method or technology commonly used at solar plants to collect avian data, such as surveying transects for carcasses or feather spots

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Next: Topic 3.3: Increasing Solar Affordability through Innovative Solar Finance

This topic will support stakeholder and analytical approaches to increase solar affordability and expand solar access by developing new financing tools and/or mechanisms to help develop and deploy capital toward solar energy projects.

Areas of Interest Include:

- Projects that support stakeholder and analytical approaches to increase solar affordability and expand solar access by developing new financing tools and/or mechanisms to help local financial institutions deploy their capital toward solar energy projects in their communities.
- Projects that involve the development of collaborative public-private partnership models and may address topics such as community solar design, community economic development and reinvestment, revolving infrastructure fund development, or incentive program design.
- Include a description of a new financial mechanism, the relevant stakeholders, a plan for a pilot study, and its evaluation. Solutions should be replicable and scalable, and recipients should include a dissemination strategy for translating these solutions to similar entities and peers during the award period.

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Finally, Topic 3.4: Rapid Solar Software Development

This topic provides seed funding needed to research, develop, and validate new software products or tools that address critical challenges associated with solar soft costs for residential, commercial, and industrial solar-energy customers.

Areas of Interest Include:

- Projects that have a clear and compelling case for how it will help drive down solar soft costs using new technological and data-driven pathways.
- Projects that clearly identify the soft costs to be reduced and show an understanding of how that soft cost impacts overall system costs.

Areas Specifically of NOT of Interest Include:

- Concepts proposing standard tools relating to conventional lead generation and customer acquisition
- Concepts proposing end-to-end platform development for system design and sales
- Concepts proposing products and solutions that are not significantly different from those already established in the market

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This slide provides an overview of some of the Award Information for Topic 3. EERE expects to make approximately \$17 million of Federal funding available for new awards under this FOA topic, subject, of course, to the availability of appropriated funds.

The Maximum Award Amount for this FOA topic is \$2 million per award and most projects will be up to 3 years. You can see more information about each individual topic area on the next slide. Again, all of these slides and this presentation deck will be available on EERE Exchange all at the conclusion of this webinar.

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To provide a little bit more information here, we expect to make 15-21 awards under Topic Area 3. And we expect that awards will be funded through cooperative agreements under this FOA Topic. A minimum of 20% cost share is required for projects under Topic Area 3.

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Next, a little bit about what cooperative agreements involves and substantial involvement.

Under cooperative agreements, we have what is known as “substantial involvement” and that means that we are involved in the work performed under award made following the FOA. EERE does not limit its involvement to the administrative requirements of the award. Instead, EERE has substantial involvement in the direction and redirection of the technical aspects of the project. Such as:

- EERE shares responsibility with the Recipient for the management, control, direction, and performance of the Project.
- EERE may intervene in the conduct or performance of work under this award for programmatic reasons. This intervention could include the interruption or modification of the conduct or performance of project activities.

- EERE may redirect or discontinue funding the Project based on the outcome of EERE's evaluation of the Project at the Go/No Go decision point.
- EERE participates in major project decision-making decisions.

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Next, we'll discuss eligibility. Eligible applicants for Topic Area 3 include:

- U.S. citizens and lawful U.S. permanent residents
- For-profit entities
- Educational institutions
- Nonprofits
- State, local, and tribal government entities
- And DOE/National Nuclear Security Administration/Federally Funded Research and Development Centers or FFRDCs

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For this FOA, we're putting together a Teaming List. And that's to facilitate the formation of new project teams for the FOA. The Teaming List is available on EERE Exchange.

Any organization that would like to be included on this list should submit the below information to the email address listed here. It's important to note, that by submitting this information, you are consenting to the publication of the above reference information. EERE expects to update the Teaming List at least every week.

Also important to underscore, is that by facilitating this Teaming Partner List, EERE does not endorse or otherwise evaluate the qualifications of the entities that self-identify themselves for placement on the Teaming List.

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A little bit more about Cost Share. Cost Share Requirements are 20% of the total allowable costs for R&D projects and 50% of the total allowable costs for demonstration projects. They must come from non-federal sources unless otherwise allowed by law.

Importantly, for Topic Area 3, all projects must have 20% cost share.

A little bit more about some of the places where you can get contributions to the cost share. And it's important to keep in mind if you are selected for award negotiations every cost share contribution will be reviewed and approved in advance by the Contracting Officer and incorporated into the project budget before expenditures are incurred.

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Now we'll talk a little bit more about the timeline and all the different steps in the FOA application process. Here is shown the full evaluation selection process. We'll discuss each of these steps in more detail.

First, Letters of Intent which are due May 7<sup>th</sup>.

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Letters of Intent are required to be submitted in EERE Exchange by May 7<sup>th</sup> in order to be eligible to submit a Concept Paper and Full Application.

To be considered:

- The LOI must comply with the content and form requirements of the FOA in this section here, and
- The applicant must enter all required information and click the “Create Submission” button in EERE Exchange by the deadline stated in the FOA. Important to note, the Letter of Intent is not actually a letter, but it is rather submitted through EERE Exchange as described here
- The LOIs should not contain any proprietary or sensitive business information.
- EERE will not provide notification of acceptance for Letters of Intent.

So again, if you plan to submit a concept paper or full application, for this FOA, you must first submit a Letter of Intent by May 7<sup>th</sup> through EERE Exchange.

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Next, we’ll discuss Concept Papers.

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Concept Papers are due May 14<sup>th</sup>, through EERE Exchange.

All applicants must submit a Concept Paper. Each Concept Paper must be limited to a single concept or technology. You can find more information about exactly what a concept paper should include in section IV.D in the FOA. Failure to include the required content could result in the Concept Paper receiving a “discouraged” determination or the Concept Paper could be found to be ineligible.

Again, May 14<sup>th</sup> is the deadline to submit Concept Papers.

EERE provides applicants with an “encouraged” or “discouraged” notification along with the reviewer comments.

Please note that regardless of the date applicants receive the Encourage/Discourage notification, the submission deadline for the Full Application remains the date stated on the FOA cover page.

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Concept Papers are evaluated based on consideration of this factor. Overall FOA Responsiveness and Viability of the Project. And that is the extent to which:

- The applicant clearly describes the proposed technology, describes how the technology is unique and innovative, and how the technology will advance the state-of-the-art
- The applicant has identified risks and challenges, including possible mitigation strategies, and has shown the impact that EERE funding and the proposed project would have on the relevant field
- The applicant has the qualifications, experience, capabilities and other resources necessary to complete this proposed project
- And the proposed work, if successfully accomplished, would clearly meet the objectives as stated in the FOA

So again, Concept Papers are evaluated based on this criteria.

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Next, we'll discuss Full Applications.

Full Application are due July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The Full Application includes:

- Technical Volume
- Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A Budget & Budget Justification
- A Summary for Public Release
- A Summary Slide
- And other administrative documents shown here
- As well as a U.S. Manufacturing Plan except for Topic 3.

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Applicants must submit a Full Application by July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

- Full Applications are eligible for review if:
- The Applicant is an eligible entity as discussed earlier
- The Applicant submitted an eligible Concept Paper
- The Cost Share requirement is satisfied as described in this section of the FOA
- The Full Application is compliant with the FOA as described in this section
- The proposed project is responsive to the FOA as described in Section III.D
- And the Full Application meets any other eligibility requirements as listed in Section III of the FOA.

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A note about Multiple Applications. It's important to realize that an entity may submit more than one Letter of Intent, Concept Paper, and Full Application to this FOA, provided that each application describes a unique, scientifically distinct project and provided that an eligible LOI and Concept Paper was submitted for each Full Application.

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Next, we'll discuss a little bit more about the Merit Review and Selection Process.

The Merit Review process consists of multiple phases that each include an eligibility review and a thorough technical review.

Rigorous technical reviews are conducted by reviewers that are experts in the subject matter of the FOA.

Ultimately, the Selection Official considers the recommendations of the reviewers, along with other considerations such as program policy factors, to make the selection decisions.

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Full Applications will be evaluated based on these 3 criterion:



- **Criterion 1: Innovation and Impact (50% weight)**  
This project is innovative and impactful, assuming the stated outcomes can be achieved as written. The project is differentiated with respect to existing commercial products, solutions, or technologies. If successful, the project is scalable to have a broader impact and maintained at a sufficiently large scale after project completion.
- **Criterion 2: Quality and Likelihood of Completion of Stated Goals (30% weight)**  
So this extends to the extent which the application demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of project risks and challenges of the proposed work and incorporates reasonable assumptions related to the execution of the project. The information included for the project is validated through customer trials, data from prior work, report references, technical business baselines, etc. The stated goals of the project are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely) and likely to be accomplished within the scope of this project. The proposed budget is reasonable to achieve the objectives proposed.
- **And Lastly, Criterion 3: Capability and Resources of the Applicant/Project Team (20% weight)**  
The extent to which the team is determined to be well qualified and has the capability and resources necessary to successfully complete the project. The team (including proposed subrecipients) have the training and experience to achieve the final results on time and to specification. The project team is fully assembled and committed to the project (verified through letters of support) and has a demonstrated record of successful past performance.

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Ultimately, the Selection Official may consider the merit review recommendations, program policy factors, and the amount of funds available in arriving at selections for this FOA.

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Lastly, we'll talk a little bit more about Registration Requirements.

To apply to this FOA, Applicants must register with and submit application materials through EERE Exchange at this website.

Applicants must obtain a "control number" at least 24 hours before the first submission deadline also at this website.

Although not required to submit an application, the following registrations must be completed to receive an award under this FOA:

- **DUNS Number:** You must obtain a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) at that website there.
- **SAM:** System for Award Management. You must register with the System for Award Management and designating an Electronic Business Point of Contact and obtaining a special password. You must update your registration annually.
- **Fedconnect:** You can register at the website located there to create your organization's account.

Applicants are also welcome to register at Grants.gov to receive automatic updates about the FOA.

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Again, Letters of Intent, Concept Papers, Full Applications, and Replies to Reviewer Comments must be submitted through EERE Exchange at this website. EERE will not review or consider applications submitted outside of this website through other means.

The user's Guide for Applying to the Department of Energy EERE Funding Opportunities can be found here.

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It is important to check entries in EERE Exchange. Submissions could be deemed ineligible due to an incorrect entry. EERE strongly encourages Applicants to submit all application materials 1-2 days prior to the deadline to allow for full upload of application documents and to avoid any potential technical glitches with EERE Exchange.

Just note to make sure you hit the submit button. Any changes made after you hit submit will un-submit your application and you will need to hit the submit button again. For your records, it is a good idea to print out the EERE Exchange Confirmation page at each step, which contains the application's Control Number.

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Application Point-of-Contact:

All Applicants must designate primary and backup points-of-contact in EERE Exchange with whom EERE will communicate to conduct award negotiations. It is imperative that the Applicant/Selectee be responsive during award negotiations and meet negotiation deadlines. Failure to do so may result in cancellation of further award negotiations and rescission of the Selection.

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Again, please submit all questions electronically during this presentation to EERE Exchange. All questions submitted to the chat feature, will also be answered on EERE Exchange.

You can email, for any other questions about the FOA at the email address here: SETO.FOA@ee.doe.gov. When you send questions to this email address, please make sure you select the specific FOA number in order to be assured that we'll be available to answer your questions. We'll attempt to respond to a question within 3 business days, unless a similar question is already posted on the website.

If you have any problems logging into EERE Exchange or uploading and submitting application documents? You should email this email address here. And again, make sure you include the FOA name and number in subject line.

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That concludes our presentation on Topic Area 3 of Solar Energy Technologies Office FY19 Funding Program. Thank you for participating in this webinar. Again, please contact the FOA email address for any other questions and find all information on EERE Exchange at the address that was provided.

Thank you.