

Assistance in Target Setting and Strategic Planning for Renewable Energy Deployment at the State and Regional Level

DATE: December 17, 2015
SUBJECT: Request for Information (RFI)

Description

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to assess the level of interest among state and regional-level entities—including governmental, industrial, and academic organizations—in including renewable energy deployment into their energy strategies and in identifying specific challenge areas to address. For purposes of this RFI, renewable energy includes solar, wind, hydropower, and geothermal technologies. Renewable energy targets and strategic plans have been set at the state level for many years, sometimes including technology-specific plans and programs. As Renewable Portfolio Standards sunset in many states and as compliance requirements are launched for greenhouse gas reduction, states may wish either to establish or re-evaluate targets for renewable electricity deployment and/or consider the most beneficial paths for achieving those goals. This is solely a request for information and not a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA).

Background

Price declines in recent years have made renewable energy a cost effective solution for providing additional electricity, reducing environmental impacts from power generation, enhancing grid resiliency, and enhancing local economies and creating new jobs. New regulations on greenhouse gases, aging Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPSs), and falling prices are driving states to take a fresh look at renewable energy options.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Clean Power Plan creates a new regulatory impetus for affected states and utilities to consider renewable energy options as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector. Beginning in 2022, states will be responsible for complying with emissions reductions targets. Meeting electricity demand with solar, wind, or other renewable generation is one of the options eligible for Clean Power Plan compliance, and the EPA is giving states credit for early action for solar and wind projects brought on-line in 2020 and 2021 (<http://www2.epa.gov/cleanpowerplan/fact-sheet-clean-energy-incentive-program>). Under the Clean Energy Incentive Program, EPA will match allowances and Emissions Rate Credits (ERCs) for early solar and wind projects, up to as much as 300 million short tons of CO₂ emissions.

Renewable Portfolio Standards have proven to be an effective regulatory means of expanding clean energy, as evidenced by their successful track record throughout the United States (http://www.resource-solutions.org/images/events/rem/presentations/2015/Barbose_Galen.pdf).

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

Currently, 29 states, three territories, and Washington, D.C. have renewable portfolio standards (<https://www.dsireusa.org>), (http://www.nrel.gov/tech_deployment/state_local_governments/basics_portfolio_standards.html). More than half of the RPSs will sunset by 2020; this is driving states to update or create new renewable energy targets.

There are also market-based drivers for expanding renewable energy deployment. For example, the price of utility-scale solar has fallen by two-thirds since 2009 (<https://emp.lbl.gov/publications/utility-scale-solar-2014>).

Given these factors, states are incorporating renewable energy technologies into their energy and economic planning. Strategic planning and analysis can help states set targets and develop strategies to maximize the benefits of clean energy deployment (such as emissions reduction, hedging against fuel price volatility, job creation, energy access, grid resiliency, etc.)

Purpose

The purpose of this RFI is to solicit feedback from state-level entities, utilities, the solar industry (including analysts and consultants), energy companies, academia, research laboratories, and other stakeholders on issues related to the development of new renewable energy targets and deployment strategies at the state level. EERE is specifically interested in information on the types of analysis, planning, tools, processes, and other technical assistance that states and utilities need to plan for the expansion of renewable energy deployment (examples can be found in “Request for Information Categories and Questions – Category 3” in the section below).

Disclaimer and Important Notes

This RFI is not a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA); therefore, EERE is not accepting applications at this time. EERE may issue a FOA in the future based on or related to the content and responses to this RFI; however, EERE may also elect not to issue a FOA. There is no guarantee that a FOA will be issued as a result of this RFI. Responding to this RFI does not provide any advantage or disadvantage to potential applicants if EERE chooses to issue a FOA regarding the subject matter. Final details, including the anticipated award size, quantity, and timing of EERE funded awards, will be subject to Congressional appropriations and direction.

Any information obtained as a result of this RFI is intended to be used by the Government on a non-attribution basis for planning and strategy development; this RFI does not constitute a formal solicitation for proposals or abstracts. Your response to this notice will be treated as information only. EERE will review and consider all responses in its formulation of program strategies for the identified materials of interest that are the subject of this request. EERE will

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

not provide reimbursement for costs incurred in responding to this RFI. Respondents are advised that EERE is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information received or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted under this RFI. Responses to this RFI do not bind EERE to any further actions related to this topic.

Proprietary Information

Because information received in response to this RFI may be used to structure future programs and FOAs and/or otherwise be made available to the public, **respondents are strongly advised to NOT include any information in their responses that might be considered business sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential.** If, however, a respondent chooses to submit business sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information, it must be clearly and conspicuously marked as such in the response.

Responses containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be conspicuously marked as described below. Failure to comply with these marking requirements may result in the disclosure of the unmarked information under the Freedom of Information Act or otherwise. The U.S. Federal Government is not liable for the disclosure or use of unmarked information, and may use or disclose such information for any purpose.

If your response contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information, you must include a cover sheet marked as follows identifying the specific pages containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information:

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

Pages [List Applicable Pages] of this response may contain confidential, proprietary, or privileged information that is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for the purposes described in this RFI DE-FOA-0001464. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source.

In addition, (1) the header and footer of every page that contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be marked as follows: “Contains Confidential, Proprietary, or Privileged Information Exempt from Public Disclosure” and (2) every line and paragraph containing proprietary, privileged, or trade secret information must be clearly marked with double brackets or highlighting.

Evaluation and Administration by Federal and Non-Federal Personnel

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

Federal employees are subject to the non-disclosure requirements of a criminal statute, the Trade Secrets Act, 18 USC 1905. The Government may seek the advice of qualified non-Federal personnel. The Government may also use non-Federal personnel to conduct routine, nondiscretionary administrative activities. The respondents, by submitting their response, consent to EERE providing their response to non-Federal parties. Non-Federal parties given access to responses must be subject to an appropriate obligation of confidentiality prior to being given the access. Submissions may be reviewed by support contractors and private consultants.

Request for Information Categories and Questions

Category 1: Level of Interest in Renewable Electricity Expansion in the State

1. What level of renewable energy deployment has already occurred in your state (please specify MW of capacity by technology)? Describe the level of interest in your state in expanding grid-tied renewable energy deployment. If possible, please specify about the types of technologies of interest and potential scale (capacity). Who is driving this expansion?
2. What policies, initiatives, programs and/or processes (sponsored by state organizations, regional organizations or utilities) reflect this interest in expansion?

Category 2: Current and Upcoming Activities Related to Renewable Energy Expansion

1. Please describe any current projects, working groups or other initiatives that focus on energy planning that may include renewable energy deployment at the state or regional (multi-state) level. Please include only high level activities (scenario planning, grid impact analysis, etc.) as opposed to individual development projects or community-level projects. Please include:
 - Types of renewable technologies and planned capacity;
 - Program timeframe;
 - Factors motivating the work (i.e., changing policies, environmental and health considerations, infrastructure investment needs, grid resiliency, leveraging federal investments, etc.) and which technologies are being targeted to meet specific goals; and
 - The sector if relevant (residential, multifamily, commercial, utility-scale or shared/community projects).
2. Using the guidelines outlined in the prior question, please describe any plans or discussions for future renewable energy deployment planning activities and who (either type of stakeholder and/or the specific organization) is conducting those activities.

Category 3: Specific Technical Assistance Needs for Renewable Energy Expansion

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

1. Please describe the types of technical assistance most needed in your state and which types of renewable energy technologies this would support. Some examples include: site assessments; cost-benefit analysis of renewable energy technology options; development of demand side management programs with renewables; structuring shared/community programs; expanding access to renewable electricity; comprehensive scenario planning; integrated resources planning; assistance developing or using specialized modelling tools; integration of storage in project development; greenhouse gas reduction forecasting and measurement; clean energy trading tools/methodologies; increasing resiliency with distributed energy resources, etc. Please describe and elaborate on all topics of interest. Feel free to add topics that are not included in this list.

Category 4: Preferred Partners for Renewable Energy Strategic Planning

1. If DOE funding were available to support renewable energy strategic planning, would your preference be to identify your own partners or to have expertise identified and made available to you?
2. Please describe the types of partners you would like to work with on planning the expansion of renewable energy technologies (i.e., utilities, state organization(s), academia, non-profits, industry, national laboratories, etc.).

Request for Information Response Guidelines

Responses to this RFI must be submitted electronically to StateLevelSolar@ee.doe.gov no later than 5:00pm (ET) on January 13, 2016. Note that the Solar Energy Technologies Office is coordinating inputs on behalf of all of the included technologies. Responses must be provided as attachments to an email. It is recommended that attachments with file sizes exceeding 25MB be compressed (i.e., zipped) to ensure message delivery. Responses must be provided as a Microsoft Word (.docx) attachment to the email, and no more than 10 pages in length, 12 point font, 1 inch margins. Only electronic responses will be accepted.

Please identify your answers by responding to a specific question or topic if applicable. Respondents may answer as many or as few questions as they wish.

EERE will not respond to individual submissions or publish publicly a compendium of responses. A response to this RFI will not be viewed as a binding commitment to develop or pursue the project or ideas discussed.

Respondents are requested to provide the following information at the start of their response to this RFI:

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

- Company / institution name;
- Company / institution contact;
- Contact's address, phone number, and e-mail address.

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.