

STEP Webinar

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Hello and thank you for attending the Solar Training and Education for Professionals (STEP) Webinar. We're excited to speak with you all today about this funding opportunity. My name is Odette Mucha, and I'm a technology manager in the SunShot office here at the Department of Energy. Later, you'll hear from my colleagues Chris Nichols and Dave Rench McCauley. We plan to provide you all a brief overview of this funding opportunity and review the application process.

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Please bear in mind that the content included in the webinar is only intended to summarize the contents of the funding opportunity announcement (FOA). Therefore, please note that any content within this presentation that appears to conflict with the FOA language is superseded by the FOA language. All Applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully read the FOA and adhere to it.

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As we go through the webinar, feel free to enter any questions you may have in the question bar on your webinar dashboard. We will not provide live answers today, but we will post answers on the FAQ page of EERE Exchange. We will also post a recording of this webinar on that website as well.

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Today we will discuss the content of the FOA, the application process, and hit on a few important details. You'll be hearing from myself, Chris Nichols and Dave Rench McCauley.

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Content Overview

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For those of you who are not familiar with the SunShot Initiative, it's an effort launched in 2011 to drive innovation to make solar energy fully cost-competitive with traditional energy sources before the end of the decade.

- Thanks in large part to DOE's investments and the work of its partners, we're over 60% of the way to that 6cents per kilowatt hour goal.
- However, despite this progress, while the cost of solar energy system hardware (i.e., panels, inverters, etc.) has dropped significantly, persistent market barriers and non-hardware "soft" costs of solar remain a major barrier to greater deployment nationwide. These costs include permitting, installation, interconnection, and maintenance fees, and can account for up to 68 percent, or over TWO THIRDS of total system cost.
- [click] Soft costs is the focus of this FOA.

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To address soft costs, this FOA focuses on workforce and training.

In recent years, the solar industry has been booming, with an impressive growth in solar employment. However, there are gaps in workforce training that can slow expansion of the solar industry.

This FOA attempts to address some of those education and training gaps.

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We're building on earlier work from SunShot in training and professional programming, including the Solar Instructor Training Network, The Solar ready Vets program, and the GEARED network, which focuses on power systems engineering education.

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The STEP FOA takes a comprehensive look at solar training and education needs both within the solar workforce and in professions related to the solar industry.

This FOA reaches several audiences:

- The primary solar network through credentialing, training, and higher education
- The auxiliary solar network, which includes professionals that play a key part in solar transactions
- And state policy makers and regulators, with solar 101s

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The three topic areas are:

1. Solar workforce training
2. Solar education and training for related professionals
3. Expansion of the GEARED network

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Topic area 1 will cover the solar workforce. We have a total of \$5 million for this topic.

2-3 awards will be given to awardees to conduct the following activities:

1. Coordinate the solar training network. This builds on the Solar Instructor Training Network. And takes it to the next level, by examining the market's training needs, and expanding and strengthening the network as appropriate.
2. Facilitate solar jobs skills training for military personnel and veterans
3. Establish new personnel credentials in O&M and commercial scale solar

The projects will be for two years, and cost sharing is encouraged – and we will go into more details about that towards the end of the webinar.

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Topic Area 2 also has a total of \$5 million, which will be divided amongst the awardees. These projects will also last for two years, and cost sharing is encouraged.

Topic 2 focuses on developing and disseminating solar information, reference materials and training to two types of audiences:

1. Professionals in fields related to solar and
2. State regulators and policy makers

The image provides examples of professionals that need information about solar to do their jobs. E.g. Utility providers, real estate professionals, fire and code officials, etc.

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Topic Area 3 looks at the GEARED network, and offers current awardees an opportunity to expand their efforts in new markets. These projects are therefore limited to existing GEARED awardees. 20% cost share is required, and these projects will be for 3 years.

We're looking for applicants to expand their consortia to additional partners to achieve nationwide impacts, and to provide training and resources in areas where there is currently unmet demand.

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The FOA calls out areas that are specifically not of interest.

- SITN institutions or trainers that are seeking funds to continue their training activities
- GEARED proposals that reflect work already underway under current awards
- Applications that seek funding to support existing programs. however, applicants may propose innovative and novel iterations of programs.
- Please see section I.B of the FOA for more information

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A few more areas not of interest:

- Topics that are not about solar
- Proposals that promote technology or products
- Applications that have a primary focus on software or websites

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Here is some more information about the awards. I mentioned most of this already.

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So, are you eligible to apply?

For topics 1 and 2, you can see here that many entities are eligible:

1. Individuals

2. Domestic entities
3. Foreign entities
4. Incorporated consortia
5. Unincorporated consortia

501c4 lobbying organizations are not eligible.

Topic 3 is restricted to only current GEARED FOA Topic 1 awardees.

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Application Process

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The key application process steps are listed here with their due dates.

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Concept Papers are required for this FOA. Concept Papers are brief descriptions of the proposed project. It allows applicants to submit their ideas with minimal time and expense. EERE will provide feedback on the proposed project so the Applicant can make an informed decision whether to expend additional resources to prepare a full application.

If an applicant fails to submit an eligible Concept Paper, the applicant is not eligible to submit a Full Application.

Concept Papers must be submitted by June 26th at 5pm EST, through EERE Exchange.

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Concept Papers will be reviewed based on the following review criteria. See section V. of the FOA for full details.

Criterion 1: Mission, Innovation, Impact - this counts towards 50% of the score

- This criterion involves consideration of the following factors:
- **Mission** – Extent to which the proposed project will enable the achievement of SunShot goals as pertains to reduction of soft costs and market barriers.

- **Innovation** - Extent to which the proposed project represents a significant improvement with respect to existing solutions.
- **Market Impact** – Extent to which the proposed project will result in quantifiable and measurably enhanced local solar markets.

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The other 50% of the score is based on criterion 2: project feasibility and team.

This includes:

Team - The extent to which the capability of the Principal Investigator(s) and the proposed team, including sub-recipients and partnerships, can address all aspects of the proposed project with a good chance of success, including, but not limited to, qualifications, relevant expertise, and time commitment of the individuals on the team.

Plan - Adequacy, value, and reasonableness of the schedule and quality of the plan to achieve stated project outcomes, while identifying and addressing the expected barriers and risks.

Measurable goals - Extent to which the proposed activities in the proposal are validated through explicitly stated and measurable goals.

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EERE will provide applicants with (1) either an “encouraged” or “discouraged” notification, and (2) the reviewer comments.

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After the Concept Papers are submitted, applicants must submit a full application. These are due Aug 14th.

The Full Application includes:

- **Technical Volume**- The key technical submission - info relating to the technical content, project team members, etc.

- **SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance:** The formal application signed by the authorized representative of the applicant. Includes cost share amounts and Federal certifications and assurances.
- **EERE 159:** Budget documents that asks applicants to submit a detailed budget and spend plan for the project.
- **Summary for Public Release:** Applicants must provide a 1 page summary of their technology appropriate for public release.
- **Summary Slide:** Powerpoint slide that provides quick facts about the technology. Slide content requirements are provided in the FOA.
- **Administrative Documents:** E.g., U.S. Manufacturing Plan, FFRDC Authorization (if applicable), Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, etc.

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The Technical Volume provides information regarding what the project is, how the project tasks will be accomplished, and the project timetable.

It is comprised of a cover page, project overview, technical description, innovation, and impact, workplan, technical qualifications and resources. Please note that the percentages listed here are suggested and are not mandatory.

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Applicants must submit full applications by Aug 14, 2015 at 5pm ET. EERE will conduct an eligibility review, and full application will be deemed eligible if the meet the criteria listed here.

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After receiving the full applications, EERE will conduct a merit review of the proposals as part of the selection process.

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Applications will be evaluated against the following merit review criteria.

Criteria #1 considers Knowledge, Innovation and Impact, and that counts towards 40% of the score.

Here we've pasted language from the FOA explaining what we're looking for in terms of market knowledge, innovation and impact.

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The next criterion looks at the workplan, risk identification and deliverables, and that counts for 30%. Here we've listed more details.

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Finally, criterion 3 will consider the team capabilities, contributions and resources, and that accounts for 30% of the score.

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The Full Applications are reviewed by experts in the FOA topic area(s). After those experts review the applications, EERE will provide applicants with reviewer comments. Applicants will have a brief opportunity to review the comments if they choose to do so.

Please see Sections IV.F. and V.A.3 for additional information regarding Replies to Reviewer Comments

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As part of the merit review process, EERE may invite certain applicants to participate in Pre-Selection Interviews in order to get clarification on the applications.

You can see additional information about that process listed [here](#).

And with that, I'll turn it over to Dave for the remainder of the presentation.

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Additional details

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In order to apply to this FOA, you will need to register on EERE Exchange.

There are several one-time actions before submitting an application in response to this FOA, and it is vital that applicants address these items as soon as possible. Some may take several weeks, and failure to complete them could interfere with an applicant's ability to apply to this FOA, or to meet the negotiation deadlines and receive an award if the application is selected.

DUNS Number- Obtain a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.

System for Award Management- Register with the System for Award Management (SAM). Designating an Electronic Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) and obtaining a special password called an MPIN are important steps in SAM registration. Please update your SAM registration annually.

Fedconnect- Register in FedConnect. To create an organization account, your organization's SAM MPIN is required. For more information about the SAM MPIN or other registration requirements, review the FedConnect Ready, Set, Go! Guide at the FedConnect site.

Grants.gov- Register in Grants.gov to receive automatic updates when Amendments to this FOA are posted.

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All required submissions must come through EERE Exchange. EERE will not review or consider applications submitted through any other means.

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Under cooperative agreements, there will be what is known as “substantial involvement” between EERE and the Recipient during the performance of the project. This means that EERE will be involved in the direction and redirection of the technical aspects of the project as a whole. The slide provides examples.

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As Odette mentioned, cost share is required for Topic 3 in this FOA, and encouraged for Topics 1 and 2. Please review the appropriate section in the FOA text to understand the requirements for cost share.

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Cost share can be provided as cash and/or in-kind.

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Be aware that there are items that are considered unallowable cost share. If a cost is considered unallowable, it cannot be counted as cost share. This slide provides some examples of cost share that is unallowable.

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That’s all we have for today! Please submit your questions to STEP@ee.doe.gov, and we look forward to reviewing your applications!

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Thank you!