

## R-STEP Question and Answer

*Updated from Round 1*

**1. Can proposed project just focus on solar as opposed to all technologies (wind, geothermal) if that is biggest issue in jurisdiction?**

Applications should primarily focus on activities that expand the planning and evaluation capacity of state and local decision makers regarding the siting of large-scale wind, solar, and battery energy storage infrastructure. Where there is appreciable need within a state, proposals may include activities related to other clean energy technologies, such as geothermal power, agrivoltaics, offshore wind, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Applicants must provide sufficient detail and reasoning to justify the technologies included in the scope of activities. Projects that focus on energy efficiency programs, distributed energy sources, or transmission infrastructure are not of interest.

**2. Will organizations providing Technical Assistance be compensated?**

Yes. ENERGYWERX will host another Objective Strategic Session (OSS) webinar and Opportunity to solicit applications from Technical Assistance Providers based on stated Collaborative needs. Technical Assistance Providers awarded through this separate process will negotiate scopes of work and compensation specific to the TA being provided.

**3. What is your website address?**

[www.energywerx.org](http://www.energywerx.org) is the main ENERGYWERX website. The website with information specific to the R-STEP application process [Renewable Energy Siting through Technical Engagement and Planning \(R-STEP\) Round 2 Opportunity \(energywerx.org\)](#).

**4. Are regulated electric utilities eligible to lead/submit an application to the pending R-STEP solicitation?**

DOE will not consider applications led by for-profit organizations, developers of renewable energy facilities, or national laboratories. For-profit regulated utilities may not therefore be the lead submitter of an application. Regulated utilities may participate as a team member in a Collaborative.

**5. What role can large scale developers play in engaging in this program? Can they be a partner in a collaborative?**

While DOE will not consider applications led by for-profit organizations, developers of renewable energy facilities, or national laboratories, these organizations are not

prohibited or discouraged from partnering in Collaboratives. Successful applications will clearly demonstrate an understanding of how large-scale renewable energy facilities are sited and permitted. To achieve this, a Collaborative could include developers or organizations familiar with the challenges associated with large-scale renewable energy siting.

**6. It is unclear whether collaborative would be led by states or developers/consultants?**

DOE will not consider applications led by renewable energy developers or other for-profit entities. DOE recommends that Collaboratives include organizations familiar with the needs of local communities and with experience providing local communities with technical information. DOE particularly encourages state agencies or university extension offices to lead or participate in Collaboratives but recognizes that the organizations best suited to perform these activities will vary from state to state. Other organizations that could play key roles could include, but are not limited to, Tribal governments, universities, non-governmental organizations, and community-based organizations.

**7. My rural community college is outside of city limits. Do we qualify as a "local government"? We have grants and contracts with LANL.**

Colleges and universities can participate in R-STEP Collaboratives as technical experts. Local governments benefit from activities performed by the R-STEP Collaboratives, but they do not need to be recipients or members of the Collaboratives themselves. Organizations interested in finding other Collaborative team members can add their information to the [Teaming Partner List](#).

**8. What activities will DOE consider technical assistance?**

Awards under R-STEP should seek to improve state and local community decision-making capacity related to large-scale renewable energy development. The technical topics and associated activities performed by awardees will depend on the needs of the communities within each state. [Learn more about large-scale renewable energy siting topics by visiting this website](#). DOE and ENERGYWERX will provide additional guidance regarding the types of TA activities to be performed by Technical Assistance Providers during the upcoming Opportunity in early 2024.

**9. Can you provide the link to the TA form. Can't click a presentation slide.**

Entities interested in providing technical assistance to R-STEP awardees should sign up via this form: [R-STEP TA Provider Expression of Interest \(wufoo.com\)](#).

**10. What is difference between the independent Technical Assistance Providers vs. individuals/organizations an applicant would include as part of Collaborative?**

Applicants are encouraged to include organizations with technical expertise large-scale renewable energy planning, siting, and permitting as a part of the project team. Funding for these organizations should be included within the overall project budget in the application.

Collaboratives awarded will also be eligible to receive additional Technical Assistance (TA) from other leading experts. This additional TA will be provided using funds separate from the Collaborative budgets. Applicants should highlight topic areas where additional TA will be necessary because expertise is lacking as part of the project team. DOE has a limited amount of additional funding to provide additional TA to awardees and all additional TA requests may not be fulfilled.

**11. Does DOE anticipate future funding for this program beyond these initial 5-7 awards? Long-term funding of such collaboratives will be an issue.**

Round 1 of R-STEP awarded approximately \$10 million to 6 state-based collaboratives, and Round 2 of R-STEP was announced in April of 2024 and will award up to \$12 million to additional state collaboratives. As part of the Project Selection Criteria outlined in the R-STEP Submission Guidance, DOE will evaluate the applicants plans for the long-term maintenance of the initiative and resources developed through R-STEP funding.

**12. Are there requirements for which organizations have to be in the collaborative? Could you give an example of each of the three types of organizations for a team?**

There are no specific requirements for what types of organizations must be in a Collaborative. DOE recommends teams include organizations familiar with the needs of local communities in the state (e.g., state agencies, local governments, community-based organizations), that have experience providing assistance to local communities on technical subjects (e.g., university extension offices), and that have technical expertise in renewable energy siting topics (e.g., state energy offices, universities). DOE recognizes that the organizations best suited to lead or participate in a Collaborative will vary from state to state.

**13. Is the Teaming List exclusive to TA providers, or can/should it include entities interested in forming a partnership?**

Any organization interested in partnering with other organizations to establish a Collaborative should provide their information in the Teaming List for consideration.

There are no restrictions on which kinds of organizations can submit their information to the list.

**14. Who would own the IP for newly developed resources, processes, products, etc.?**

DOE does not envision patentable IP being developed under R-STEP. In general, awardees may assert ownership or copyright for data, software, and other copyrightable materials developed under R-STEP, but DOE and the U.S. government will retain unlimited rights to use, reproduce, and distribute that data or software to the public.

**15. Why is there prohibition against policy work with this award? Can awardees recommend improvements to state and local government regulatory/approval processes for renewable energy projects?**

Federal law (18 USC 1913) prohibits the use of federal funds for lobbying government officials at all levels of government about any legislation, law, policy or appropriation, unless expressly authorized by Congress. In addition, policy work is inherently governmental. Collaboratives funded through R-STEP therefore cannot use DOE funds to advance or advocate for specific policy changes. Collaboratives can, however, use DOE funds to develop general best practices, or work with authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) to evaluate the potential effects of current or potential future policies related to renewable energy planning, siting and permitting, provided they do not recommend or otherwise advocate for specific policy changes with those AHJs.

**16. I reviewed the materials posted for any information technology specific requirements, specifically looking for data security requirements. I don't see any, which feels odd for a DoE grant. Can you please tell me if you are aware of any IT or data specific requirements necessary for an applicant to meet?**

DOE encourages all applicants to adhere to cybersecurity best practices and coordinate within their collaborative on how to implement these in their proposed work, but there are no specific data security requirements associated with R-STEP awards. That said, DOE may require an awardee to submit a cybersecurity plan for projects involving information technology, if any. Please note that ENERGYWERX administers R-STEP under a Partnership Intermediary Agreement (PIA) with DOE. Like the PIA, the intent is for awards (from ENERGYWERX, i.e., subawards) made to collaboratives under R-STEP to be transactions authorized under 15 U.S.C. 3715, which are not a procurement, grant, cooperative agreement or loan. DOE's interim pilot guide on PIAs is available here: [DOE Partnership Intermediary Agreement | Department of Energy](#). However, as phase 4 states, "after potential discussions with DOE, successfully negotiated awards may fall under (but are not limited to) alternate mechanism[s] of awards/interactions," such as contracts and cooperative research and development agreements (CRADAs).

**17. Can a list of interested entities be made available? (to assist in the collaborative development)**

To facilitate the formation of teams, R-STEP is establishing an online [Teaming Partner List](#) (password: TEAMING) where organizations can express interest in partnering with others and share contact information. If you are interested in being added to the teaming partner list and having your information shared with respondents, please [click here to complete this form](#).

**18. Can state agencies submit a proposal?**

Yes. State agencies are encouraged to lead or participate in applications. However, DOE recognizes that the organization best suited to lead an application may vary from state to state.

**19. Is this proposal restricted to just land-based sites? How about offshore sites (e.g., offshore wind or ocean wave projects)?**

DOE does not prohibit applications that include capacity building efforts related to offshore energy. However, the processes for siting offshore facilities have considerably more federal regulatory involvement. The goal of R-STEP is to build siting and permitting decision making capacity for permitting authorities (e.g., state, local, or tribal governments).

**20. Is there a dedicated email address for questions outside this info session?**

The email address is [info@energyworks.org](mailto:info@energyworks.org).

**21. Are there hard "deliverables" with respect to what would need to materialize from leveraging DOE award funds under this program?**

Deliverables should be based on the needs of the communities and therefore may differ for each award. Deliverables will be negotiated with awardees of each selected project.

**22. Can a group of university faculty submit a proposal without collaboration with local state government agency or local utility company?**

Yes, there are no requirements for the number of organizations in a Collaborative. However, as detailed in the Eligibility, Evaluation criteria, and How to apply documentation (see link below), successful Collaboratives will be cross-disciplinary and have experience facilitating stakeholder engagement and providing technical assistance on technical issues to local communities. DOE recognizes that the organizations best

suited to lead or participate in a Collaborative will vary from state to state. Applicants should justify why their Collaborative is best suited to meet the stated R-STEP goals. Documentation link: [661de2eff2a4ecd555142d03\\_Submission\\_Guidance\\_-\\_Round\\_2.pdf \(website-files.com\)](#)

**23. Is it permissible for a university to submit an application independently, or do they need to partner with these equivalent state agencies?**

There are no requirements for the number of organizations in a Collaborative. However, as detailed in the Eligibility, Evaluation criteria, and How to apply documentation (see link below), successful Collaboratives will be cross-disciplinary and have experience facilitating stakeholder engagement and providing technical assistance on technical issues to local communities. DOE recognizes that the organizations best suited to lead or participate in a Collaborative will vary from state to state. Applicants should justify why their Collaborative is best suited to meet the stated R-STEP goals. Documentation link: [661de2eff2a4ecd555142d03\\_Submission\\_Guidance\\_-\\_Round\\_2.pdf \(website-files.com\)](#)

**24. Can multiple entities across state jurisdictions submit a single proposal?**

There are no restrictions on regional or multi-state Collaboratives. However, applicants should explain why working across states would meet the stated R-STEP goal and how variability in permitting processes, community needs, and deployment targets between the states will be addressed.

**25. How does this program relate to DOE Grid Deployment Office (GDO's) program for funding states and tribes for routing, permitting and economic development?**

The GDO program is primarily focused on the construction and operation of interstate or offshore transmission projects. R-STEP is focused on improving state and local community decision-making capacity related to the planning, siting, and permitting of large-scale renewable energy projects.

**26. How will you handle receiving multiple applications from a single state?**

DOE will evaluate all applications equally, based on the evaluation criteria outlined in the Eligibility, Evaluation criteria, and How to apply documentation (see link below). However, DOE will only select one awardee in a state. Documentation link: [661de2eff2a4ecd555142d03\\_Submission\\_Guidance\\_-\\_Round\\_2.pdf \(website-files.com\)](#)

**27. Is there any national project that will be providing guidance for best practice zoning, ordinance, and permitting processes?**

Given that siting and permitting considerations, laws, and policies vary substantially between states and local governments, DOE will not fund any awards under R-STEP seeking to develop best practices, zoning ordinance, or permitting at a national scale.

**28. Is a sovereign Native American tribe considered separate from the state in which it is located for purposes of applications? They have different needs.**

Tribes are independent sovereign nations and Tribal-led applications will be considered separate from the state in which they are located. All R-STEP applications must describe how the questions and priorities of host communities will be assessed and addressed, including specific considerations for the needs of Tribes, and how their perspectives will be represented on the project team.

**29. Are you able to be part of a proposal and be available in a pool of Technical Assistance support?**

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to include organizations with technical expertise on large-scale renewable energy planning, siting, and permitting as part of their project team. Collaborators on those teams will also be eligible to apply as Technical Assistance Providers. The application process for Technical Assistance Providers will not commence until mid-to-late 2024.

**30. Can a technical assistance provider be part of more than one collaborative?**

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to include organizations with technical expertise on large-scale renewable energy planning, siting, and permitting as part of their project team. An organization may apply to be a part of more than one Collaborative.

**31. Is the teaming partner list meant to represent individuals? What if you have a large group with a variety of expertise?**

Yes. Individuals can submit their information to the [teaming partner list](#). DOE encourages interested parties to coordinate with other individuals in their organization before submitting to avoid duplicative submissions.

**32. Do you have examples of what you are looking for to demonstrate a "credible plan" for long-term maintenance. Would state commitment of SEP funding suffice?**

DOE recognizes that the organizations leading applications under R-STEP will vary and may have access to different funding mechanisms to support long-term program maintenance. State Energy Program (SEP) funding can be utilized to support siting and permitting activities within a state.

**33. Can an agency be part of the collaborative for two separate proposals? Or would this not be allowed?**

There is no explicit limitation on how many applications an organization can be a partner to. DOE will evaluate all applications equally, based on the evaluation criteria outlined in the Eligibility, Evaluation criteria, and How to apply documentation (see link below). However, DOE will only select one awardee per state.

**34. Your statement “no rooftop” is curious since entities like Google & others are only looking at large +1 MW because large ground mounted projects are stalled?**

Awards under R-STEP should seek to improve state and local community decision-making capacity related to large-scale, ground-mounted renewable energy development.

**35. Is there a separate funding stream for TA providers?**

Yes. ENERGYWERX will host another Objective Strategic Session (OSS) webinar and Opportunity to solicit applications from Technical Assistance Providers based on stated Collaborative needs. Technical Assistance Providers awarded through this separate process will negotiate scopes of work and compensation specific to the TA being provided.

**36. Will an effort be made to give awards so they represent different regions of the country?**

DOE will make selections based on the evaluation criteria outlined in the Eligibility, Evaluation criteria, and How to apply documentation (see link below) and will consider variation in geographical location among award selections. Documentation link: [661de2eff2a4ecd555142d03\\_Submission Guidance - Round 2.pdf \(website-files.com\)](https://www.energywerx.org/661de2eff2a4ecd555142d03_Submission%20Guidance%20-%20Round%202.pdf)

**37. Any further details on how this application process differs from the typical FOA, concept paper, full application?**

This application process is more streamlined than a typical FOA process. The application materials are significantly simplified (no concept paper, overall length of application materials, forms and templates, and budget documentation). ENERGYWERX – through the Partnership Intermediary Agreement (PIA) between the Department of Energy and DEFENSEWERX – facilitates external engagements and manages the operations as well as the invoicing process, and program reporting. All the information needed to submit an application can be found on the [www.energywerx.org](https://www.energywerx.org/opportunities/renewable-energy-siting-through-technical-engagement-and-planning-r-step-round-2-opportunity) website, at <https://www.energywerx.org/opportunities/renewable-energy-siting-through-technical-engagement-and-planning-r-step-round-2-opportunity>.

**38. Re existing national level guidance for best practice, are you going to work with the existing APA / NACO work that was done, Solar@Scale?**

DOE is encouraging applicants and awardees to leverage siting and permitting resources that have already been developed and apply them within the state of interest. DOE encourages all organizations with relevant experience to participate as project partners and/or Technical Assistance Providers.