

2026-03-19 iCRS-D Informational Webinar Transcript

Christi Pezzone 0:49

All right, let us go ahead and get started. Good afternoon again, everyone, and welcome to our informational webinar for the Interconnection Cost Reduction Solutions for Distribution, or iCRS-D opportunity. My name is Christy Pezzone. I am the Deputy Director here at ENERGYWERX.

Wanted to go over a couple of notes before we get started. First of all, no AI bots. They will not be allowed in and if any do come in, we will have to remove them. That is just a DOE requirement that we have to follow. Go ahead and hit the next slide please.

This is an information session. There will be time to address some questions that we have already received after the briefing, and if you have any questions after listening to the briefing, you can go ahead and submit those in Slido. You can either scan the QR code or go to slido.com and enter the event code M19OH.

You also have the opportunity to see other questions that folks have asked and upvote them. If you have the same question, that just helps us not have a lot of repeat questions, so please use that. The link also is in the chat once DOE has time to review the Q&A. Sometime next week, we will go ahead and post the Q&A from this information session as well.

I wanted to go over a few upcoming key dates. The next informational webinar is scheduled for April 2nd at 3:00 PM Eastern Time. This will be another opportunity to hear just a little bit about the program and to ask some questions.

Another important date. [Applications close on Thursday, April 16th at 3:00 PM Eastern Time.](#) If you have any application issues, please reach out to info@energywerx.org. Next slide.

Moving on to the overview portion of the webinar, I am going to turn this over to Andrew and Ammar from the Interconnection Innovation Exchange Program.

Andrew Torma 2:52

Perfect. Thank you. My name is Andrew Torma. I am a tech advisor here in the

Integrated Energy Systems Office, which is the spirit, which spearheads the DOA initiative of Interconnection and Innovation Exchange or I2X, always under the Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation, and then my colleague is here. I will let him introduce himself.

Ammar Qusaibaty 3:13

Hi everyone. My name is Ammar Qusaibaty. I am a technology advisor with I2X. It is a pleasure to have you all.

Andrew Torma 3:21

Perfect. We are here to talk about the interconnection cost of our solutions for distribution. This is one of two office hours. [There will be another office hours on April 2nd.](#)

The presentation today mostly goes over a little bit of I2X program overview and then the overall timeline that opened up for Q&A. We had another informational session a couple weeks back that has more information on application process and [that's also on the website](#). You can always look there if you need more information. Cool. We can go to the next slide.

I2X, our mission is to enable simple, fast, and affordable interconnection while enhancing the reliability and security of our electric grid. Again, this is a multi-office or inter-office program within the DOE, spearheaded by the Integrated Energy Systems Office, but works amongst other offices within DOE and we have. The four main areas we work in to support this mission, strategic solutions, developing solutions, stakeholder engagement, working with the actors in space, data analytics and research and innovation. Next slide.

Within those four areas, just over the last year, 2025, we have some highlights. We have 60 plus real-world solutions for the transmission and distribution grid around four goals. Increase data access, transparency, improve process and timing, promote economic efficiency, interconnection and maintain a reliable, resilient, and secure grid. Within stakeholder engagement, we have had a couple of other things going on throughout the year. I2X Connect is a platform where interconnection actors in space can get together, collaborate, learn new information from the source, and hopefully

produce solutions for real life impact. We also have had lab.

Posted events like the solution exchanges which cover the distribution, energy, and interconnection solutions we have produced. Also, we have had other presentations and events. One is NASUCA midyear or RE+2025 for disseminating the other solutions we have produced in our strategic solution group.

Within data analytics, we have a couple of reports that come out this year from LBNL. One that comes out every year is called Queued Up. It is all about the interconnection queue and the timelines on the bulk power system. We have also had one on the cost of interconnection on the bulk power system.

For research innovation, we had a white paper come out from Sandia on the direct transfer trip. We have done EMT training and a boot camp for the bulk power system grid engineers through ORNL, ESIG and NERC. Right now, we have another PIA opportunity called iQMS where five utility projects are testing queue management solutions and improvements where Sandia and SEPA are helping lead. The peer learning of that is also open to other utilities that might find it useful. Next slide.

The program itself is iCRS-D. If you scan the top right QR code, [it will take you to the homepage](#) which shows below an example of what that looks like. This is where you can find all [the information on ENERGYWERX's website where you can apply](#).

There are FAQs answers to that we go through later from this webinar plus the last webinar. All the good information is there, and it is a good place to go to find what you need.

The purpose of the program is to reduce interconnection costs that are related to distribution grid upgrades. We are going to do that by funding organizations to lead local, state, or regional partnerships to demonstrate innovative solutions with Lighthouse projects. I will get into what that means a little more. This whole program is going to be four million in total for funding. Next slide.

As I said, Lighthouse projects, what this means is a pilot program that develops and demonstrates new technologies and effective solutions for interconnection. The goal is we want these efforts to deliver tested approaches to scalable interconnection innovations that improve the process, reduce overall cost, and maintain a reliable

grid.

We're going to find partnerships, but directly who we are funding is a lead partner or the main applicant who will represent this multi-stakeholder partnership composed of organizations such as distribution utilities, state regulators, state government developers that have the expertise and capabilities and authority to implement the proposed Lighthouse project. That is a key part is that we want the multi stakeholder group to be able and have authority implement the project as designed that you put forward. These Lighthouse projects, what we are going to find is implementing process and technology solutions in the distribution system that aim to improve interjection timelines and cost. Within three general ideas, maximizing economic efficiency, increasing data access and transparency, or by streamlining services. It is pretty broad. There is a lot of work you can do there, but these are the main three areas that we have put forward. Next slide.

How are we actually going to do this? These projects will be two years long. You can get up to one million in funding per lead organization per project. As I said, these multi-stakeholder partnerships that are at the local, state, or regional level will execute the Lighthouse projects.

They will do this by applying their distribution level interconnection expertise to prioritize and adapt practical solutions for both load and generation interconnection. Within the projects, partnerships will perform stakeholder engagement and facilitate cross-learning, conduct analytical research and modeling, provide subject matter expertise to support technical innovations and implementation of these projects, and then pilot the solutions in a local environment under real world conditions and scenarios. All this work that is done and all the results of the solution development, field demonstrations and lessons learned will be public, so others can learn from the great work that would be done in this project. Next slide.

As I said, there are three general areas we are putting forth economic efficiency, streamlining processes and services, and data transparency and access. There is a lot of work that can be done underneath that. Starting with maximizing economic efficiency or better accommodate growth and mitigate costly system upgrades, you can develop integrated grid planning practically. Upgrade feeder circuits, design

future ready industrial co-located energy intensive industries such as data centers or develop processes for flexible interconnection and co-located generation such as hybrid facilities or micro grids within data transparency and access or the idea to aid product development and cost estimations. You could increase public assets to aggregated and automatized grid data. Implement advanced hosting capacity analysis and services. Identify grid sections that host surplus interconnection services and capacity to avoid costly upgrades or integrate grid and enhancing technologies and under streamlining services or processes with the goal of facilitate efficient screening methods and remove undue burdens.

You can harmonize interconnection procedures across service territories, especially for affected system studies, automate management systems and technical screens, provide fast tracking and expedited services based on different aspects of the interconnection request, implement cluster studies or efficient permitting and grid upgrade cost mitigation. Increase energy project readiness requirements and incentivize streamlined processes. These are not the limit. It does not have to be within these. These are examples we produced, but it is not limited to these. These are just ones we put forth.

Next slide.

The program timeline submission opened February 19th, and [it will close on April 16th](#). We are in office hours once the third box on the top. [There will be a second office hour to ask more questions on April 2nd](#) two weeks before the deadline if there are any more that arise in that time period.

We hope to review and do selections about the end of spring, beginning of summer. Throughout the middle of summer, and end of summer, we are hoping to announce the selected projects and start negotiating contracting so they can kick off in September of 2026. Again, these are two-year projects, so they would end around September of 2028. Two years is the limit we are setting on it. It could end earlier if you have an expedited timeline that you can work within. Two years is the limit we are setting on it. Next slide.

If you have any more questions, go to [the website](#), e-mail info@energywerx.org, and look at the past informational webinars to see if any other questions that you had similar asking. A lot of information's on there. I will pass it back over to Christi.

Christi Pezzone 12:07

Perfect. Thank you so much. I am going to let Julia get the chat pulled up really quick. As a reminder, please ask your questions via Slido using the code M19OH. Also, a reminder that this session will be posted later today or first thing tomorrow. So, if you missed any of it for those of you who are just joining. now you will be able to go back and review the transcript and the recording from today. Now I will turn it over to Julia to go through the questions.

Andrew Torma 12:37

Excellent. Thank you, Christi.

Julia Prudhoe 12:41

The first question we have,

Do we need to be registered in the teaming list to apply? Do we need to pick at least one partner from the teaming list?

Ammar Qusaibaty 12:51

The answer is no. This is a voluntary list. People express their interests, but it is not required.

Julia Prudhoe 13:01

Thank you.

From Grid Edge Networks, **do we need a utility partner? Do we need a DOE lab partner?**

Ammar Qusaibaty 13:14

The announcement itself highlights evaluation criteria in order to maximize your application's probability of success. Based upon those criteria, there are some recommendations about who should be your partners to make that work successful.

Having partners increases the chances of being selected because it is how the evaluation criteria is designed. [I recommend reviewing the evaluation criteria in order to maximize your chances.](#) We certainly think in order to have a successful Lighthouse project you need to involve the organization that has decision-making to implement solutions and anything related to interconnection. A utility typically is a key player. National labs are not a requirement. There is no such requirement for any particular partner; there are some restrictions about the national labs as well. Christi can highlight that.

Christi Pezzone 14:31

Sure. Yes, there is a limit to how much work from the project the National Lab can do and that is limited to 10% of the total federal share of the project. That is the limit for national labs. As Ammar said, you do not need to have a lab partner.

Julia Prudhoe 14:50

Thank you.

Could you break down the cost share for investor-owned utilities? Would they only cost share 50% of what they are given?

Ammar Qusaibaty 15:04

The cost share works as dollar per dollar. That is how it works because it is the total. If we fund let us say a dollar, then, in this case, the investor-owned utility as the main performer would have to match that dollar. That is how the 50% cost share works.

Julia Prudhoe 15:34

Thank you.

Can investor-owned utilities buy grid enhancing devices with the award money if that is where our project focus lies?

Ammar Qusaibaty 15:49

We'll have to think about this question a little bit more and submit the answer in writing.

Julia Prudhoe 15:58

Thank you.

Is this funding of opportunity available on an annual cycle? If so, when does it normally open?

Ammar Qusaibaty 16:11

We have this funding opportunity based upon available appropriation from Congress. We do not know what the next fiscal year will look like and therefore we cannot really comment about future funding opportunities.

Julia Prudhoe 16:29

Thank you.

For projects that are not of interest, please share more details about projects that focus on one specific generation source or load type.

Ammar Qusaibaty 16:42

The example here is that we want solutions to be technology neutral, let us say for a generation. If the solution proposed only works if the generator is solar PV kind of generator and that is the only generator that the solution would work with, that makes it a generation specific solution. That is not what we are looking for.

Julia Prudhoe 17:11

Thank you.

The duration is for two years. Is there an option for a time extension if the project gets delayed?

Ammar Qusaibaty 17:22

I would defer to folks at ENERGYWERX given their experience with delays and things like that.

Christi Pezzone 17:30

That would be something that would be decided on a project-by-project basis. That is not something we can answer a blanket answer for all projects. It is going to depend on the circumstances surrounding the delays. I would recommend not anticipating delays and trying to get your project done within two years, but if something comes up, that is something that we will discuss after the project kicks off.

Julia Prudhoe 17:54

Thank you.

Is this structured as a prize or a grant? Similar accounting as SBIR or a prize?

Sara Harvey 18:10

I can answer this one. Neither. This is a business-to-business agreement with ENERGYWERX, which is a partnership intermediary of the Office of Technology Commercialization at DOE, and this is using other transactions authority.

Julia Prudhoe 18:30

Thank you.

Will you award up to four awards, or can you reduce the number based on the applications received?

Ammar Qusaibaty 18:43

I think the answer to this one is that we have \$4 million. The maximum amount we can give for an award is \$1,000,000. We can there could be awards are less than \$1,000,000. Therefore, we could have more than four, but it really depends on the applications that we receive and the portfolio of these ones that we think are meritorious. They can generate the maximum value. So, there could be more than four. That is the answer. The limiting factor is no more than one million per project.

Julia Prudhoe 19:24

Thank you.

Can an applicant submit one proposal as a prime and be listed on other proposals as a sub?

Ammar Qusaibaty 19:38

I will defer to the folks at ENERGYWERX, but that is allowed.

Christi Pezzone 19:43

That is fine. As long as the program office is fine with it, then we are fine with it.

Julia Prudhoe 19:54

How will DOE evaluate interconnection cost reduction avoided CAP X only or also schedule compression and reduced make ready labor lifecycle cost?

Ammar Qusaibaty 20:05

This is something the project itself and their proposal, they are going to have to explain. What is the sort of strategy or approach for the cost reduction for related to grid upgrades or related to interconnection? It could be a mix of these things, but we need to see the rationale. The most important part about this is that it can be scaled, and it can be repeated. It is not one time. It is not that you do this one project and you can reduce the cost, and there is no pathway of repeating that or scaling it in the future. That is really the way to think about it.

Julia Prudhoe 20:45

Thank you.

Will reduced time to interconnection be an explicit scoring criterion for ICRSD pilots?

Ammar Qusaibaty 20:59

I am not sure what this means exactly. The scoring criteria for the projects proposed. They are listed so you can read them. If this question is about as the projects advance and what do they need to demonstrate, then definitely time to interconnection is an important element of showing progress. That has an implication regarding costs. The evaluation criteria are very explicit. Please review them and this is [the evaluation criteria that we will use to make selections to review applications and make selections.](#)

Julia Prudhoe 21:44

Thank you.

How flexible is DOE on pilots near the distribution slash sub transmission boundary where upgrades can be avoided?

Ammar Qusaibaty 22:01

It depends on what you are going to submit. This is difficult to answer. Generally, it depends on what the project is or what the idea is, what the solution is going to look like. If it is more specific projects that have to be located in specific areas, then it may end up getting closer to these projects that are very unique that you cannot really replicate innovations when it comes to interconnection. It is that delicate balance. [I really recommend reviewing the criteria.](#)

Julia Prudhoe 22:41

Thank you.

How does the money actually flow? Does payment have to be made-up front by the awardee and then reimbursed, or is it a \$1 million deposit payment to the awardee up front?

Ammar Qusaibaty 22:56

This is a milestone-based payment, and I will let the experts elaborate on that one.

Christi Pezzone 23:10

I would love to take it. You will sign a fixed price agreement with DEFENSEWERX doing business as ENERGYWERX. All payments are results driven and paid upon successful completion of specific deliverables and milestones. Those will be outlined in your agreement, and the payments are in arrears. You submit your invoice and then up to 30 days after that you will receive payment. If you are an investor-owned utility and cost share is required, you will also need to submit documents.

Documentation that shows that that cost share was met, depending on what the milestone is, that's kind of what the payment is determined by, but it is not a lump sum.

Julia Prudhoe 23:59

Thank you.

Do you have specific deliverables required for this funding opportunity, or does the applicant determine the deliverables and feasible measures of progress?

Ammar Qusaibaty 24:16

The applicants have to define what sort of their projects and what deliverables they are planning to produce and what measures of success they are looking to evaluate or assess. All that will be scored according to the evaluation criteria.

That we have which we outlined. Please look at that and see. Our evaluation criteria are designed to match what we are looking for in these projects from a goal from a program perspective and from.

I2X perspective.

Julia Prudhoe 24:55

Thank you.

Is this federal funding? If so, what specific DOE federal grant requirements apply? IE Sam.gov registration, procurement, bid documents, if applicable.

Sara Harvey 25:12

I can take this one. These are non-FAR based contracting agreements and this is DOE federal funding, but they are not subject to the same requirements. Some of those documents outlined here, the required documents will be in your application. There may be a couple of extra documents as you are submitting your deliverables, but those will be negotiated at the time of award.

Julia Prudhoe 25:40

Thank you.

Are salary and fringe eligible expenses if the grantee executes the project house or completes the project through contractual services?

Christi Pezzone 25:58

Julia, can you go ahead and read the next question too and I will answer them both at the same time.

Julia Prudhoe 26:04

Yes. Then the next question is

What are ineligible expenses, for example travel, equipment, etc.?

Christi Pezzone 26:11

Perfect. Again, this is a firm fixed price agreement. We are not tracking salary infringe or anything like that. It is firm fixed price. We do not have ineligible expenses listed. That sums up the answer to both of those questions.

Julia Prudhoe 26:32

Thank you.

Is quarterly reporting required? If so, is this through an online platform or will awarded grantees have an assigned agency grant manager?

Christi Pezzone 26:52

This is not a grant. The requirements for reporting will be outlined in the business-to-business agreement that is signed with ENERGYWERX, and if you are selected, we will go over how milestones need to be submitted to ENERGYWERX. We have our own internal invoicing system, and that is something that we would go over if you were to be selected.

Julia Prudhoe 27:21

Thank you. I believe we have already answered this question.

Is this funding reimbursement based? If so, how will this work with the 50% match-requirement? Or is funding provided in a lump sum?

Do we want to provide any further details about the funding being reimbursement-based?

Ammar Qusaibaty 27:36

Maybe I will give an example. If the project's been selected and throughout the process of negotiation, there will be something called statement of effort. In that statement of effort, it will outline deliverables. Maybe there are four deliverables or four milestones. Let us say for the sake of it. As an example, the award is \$1,000,000 and we could make them equally the same, \$250,000 per milestone. When you deliver the milestone, you submit an invoice, show that you have delivered that milestone, you get that \$250,000. That is how it would work. You have four milestones, each one \$250,000 yet when you deliver them each time you get the amount that was negotiated in the statement of effort.

Julia Prudhoe 28:30

Thank you.

Is a budget narrative required for the application?

Ammar Qusaibaty 28:40

There is no narrative for the budget. We only ask to get a sense of how you plan to spend that money from a cost perspective. Why would it cost \$250,000 or \$750,000 or \$1,000,000? We need a sense of what the activity is going to be and where the resources will be dedicated. That is all.

Julia Prudhoe 29:05

Thank you.

Is this grant applicable to co-generators that burn biogas on wastewater for onsite demand offset? For us, the cogens are the primary heat source for digestion.

Ammar Qusaibaty 29:23

This opportunity is designed for challenges related to interconnection. We really cannot comment on this specific mix. It is really about challenges for interconnection.

Please review the opportunity. The goals of the opportunity, what we are looking for, in terms of these projects, what they are trying to achieve and look at the evaluation criteria and decide whether you want to apply or not. We cannot really comment on the specifics here.

Julia Prudhoe 29:59

Thank you. This was thanking us for answering their previous question. You are welcome.

Christi Pezzone 30:09

OK. We will give it a couple of minutes to see if any other questions come in and I will start my speech to wrap things up and see if any come in after I start that all questions to include any that were not answered here today will be provided to DOE after this webinar. They will have the opportunity to provide any additional helpful information before we post it on the opportunity page next week. [Please remember that the next informational webinar is scheduled for April 2nd at 3:00 PM Eastern Time. Submissions are due no later than Thursday, April 16th at 3:00 PM Eastern Time.](#) In the chat you will find the following the RSVP link, links to eligibility, evaluation criteria, and any required templates to complete. As a reminder, after we wrap up today, [we will place the recording of today's informational webinar on our website as well as the slides briefed and the transcript from today.](#) You could always reach out to info@energywerx.org. If you have any questions before the next upcoming webinar, we will work with DOE closely to get those answered. We do have two more questions that have come in.

Julia Prudhoe 31:33

Thank you.

Can IOUs match with time investment?

Ammar Qusaibaty 31:45

This question relates to cost share, and you cannot sorry.

Sara Harvey 31:49

Yes, I think we can follow up with more guidelines on the cost share, but generally it includes salary benefits, and equipment. Things like that can apply for cost share.

Julia Prudhoe 32:06

Thank you.

Are pilots on federal installations or military bases viewed favorably where interconnection delays materially affect mission readiness?

Ammar Qusaibaty 32:20

You really cannot comment on what is favorable or not. Please look at the evaluation criteria.

Julia Prudhoe 32:31

Thank you.

Christi Pezzone 32:37

[I will go ahead and post directly in the chat the link on our opportunity page to the eligibility and review criteria. Everybody has direct access to that.](#)

Julia Prudhoe 32:51

Is DOE equally receptive to applications where a systems integrator is prime and OEM's serve as core technology providers versus vertically integrated primes?

Ammar Qusaibaty 33:09

If this comment is in reference to the relationship or the partnership or how it is structured. We do not have any specific requirements regarding how the partnerships are structured.

Christi Pezzone 33:30

Perfect. It looks like we do not have any other questions. Just kidding.

Julia Prudhoe 33:39

Does DOE consider faster structure installation and reduced crew hours a

primary interconnection cost lever, or is the focus primarily on electrical upgrades?

Ammar Qusaibaty 33:54

It is really about the interconnection process itself and I think references to installations or speeding the construction part of the project are not related to interconnection as much.

Christi Pezzone 34:22

If you have any more questions, please enter them at [slido.com](https://www.slido.com). You can see the code up there or scan. Once again, a reminder that [the next informational webinar is scheduled for April 2nd at 3:00 PM Eastern Time. Submissions are due No later than Thursday, April 16th at 3:00 PM Eastern Time.](#) I recommend not waiting until the last minute to submit your application in case you have any issues. The ENERGYWERX team will be online and available to answer any questions or help with any issues submitting your application.

Please reach out to us at info@energywerx.org. If you have any issues with your application or if you have any questions that you think of after today for the upcoming webinar, we are happy to get those answered before the webinar you can get moving on to your application. I2X team, do you all have anything to add?

Ammar Qusaibaty 35:28

I do not have anything other than if you think of a question, please reach out. We are happy to answer as much as we can.