



**Wisconsin Office of Energy Innovation
2023 Rural Energy Start Up Program (EECBG)**

Grant Application Instructions

[9714-FG-2023](#)



Wisconsin Office of Energy Innovation

Agenda

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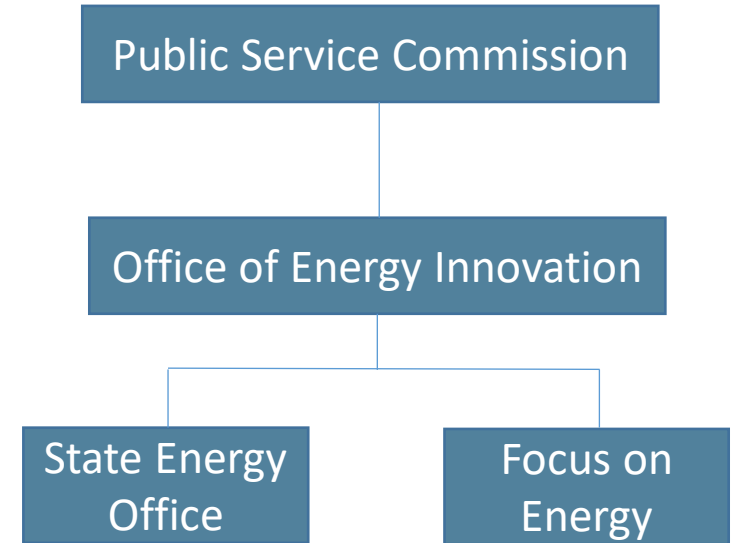
OEI Mission:

Developing Wisconsin's energy landscape to be secure, reliable, environmentally responsible, and growing the state's economy for all.

OEI Programs:

- [State Energy Office](#)
 - **Federally-funded:** Grants, Technical Assistance, Energy Statistics & Data, Energy Security
- [Focus on Energy](#)
 - **Utility ratepayer-funded:** Incentives, Technical Assistance, Training, Trade Ally Support

Contact OEI: OEI@Wisconsin.gov



State Energy Office

- Implements the U.S. Department of Energy's State Energy Program
 - Federal formula and competitive energy grant funding
 - Energy-related planning
 - Technical assistance
- Implements the requirements of [Wis. Stat. § 196.025\(7\)\(a\)3](#)
 - State agency energy planning
 - Administer federal energy grants and programs
 - Maintain contingency plans for response to energy shortages
 - Provide energy efficiency and renewable technical assistance to local government
 - As needed, request public school utility data for technical assistance purposes

Background

- Federally Funded through U.S. Department of Energy by the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA), section 40552, to support communities taking initial steps to reduce energy use, reduce fossil fuel emissions, and improve energy efficiency. IIJA also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).
- Commission order dated November 29, 2023([PSC REF# 485930](#)) established the program design and budget.

Program Objectives

Objective One: Investing in the adoption of innovative energy technologies and processes

Objective Two: Expanding access to clean energy, efficiency, and preparedness to Wisconsin communities that are otherwise unable to adopt these and for whom these are innovative approaches

Quick Facts

- Docket 9714-FG-2023
- \$2.3 million in grant funds available
- Application Instructions, Program Metrics workbook on: [PSC Rural Energy Startup Program \(wi.gov\)](#)
 - Issued November 30, 2023
- Submit application through online [PSC Grants System](#)
 - Phase One applications **due January 31, 1:30 CT.**
 - Late applications will not be accepted
- 12-month project performance period/single grant round

Timeline

DATE	EVENT
November 30, 2023	Applications available, Program Application Instructions posted
January 31, 2024	Applications due by <u>1:30 pm CT on January 31, 2024</u>
February 2024	Review Panel evaluation PSC determination of 2023 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program Awards
March 2024	Onboarding, grant agreement/contract negotiations and fiscal forms required
April 2024	Contract negotiations and applicable next steps related to NEPA review, etc.
March 2024- June 2025	Project performance period

Program Questions?

Rural Energy Startup Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Submit questions to OEI@wisconsin.gov
 - Subject line: Rural Energy Start Up Program Application Question
- FAQ document on [PSC Rural Energy Startup Program \(wi.gov\)](#)
 - Check back for updates
- Significant errors or deficiencies will result in reissuing the Program Application Instructions on ERF
 - Subscribe to Docket 9714-FG-2023 for automatic ERF updates



This FAQ provides answers to common questions regarding the Rural Energy Startup Program (RESP). This document is intended to complement the application instructions and application issued on November 30, 2023.

Note: The responses below to FAQs are intended to provide useful information to individuals applying for the RESP. The responses below do not and cannot limit the discretion of the Commission when it meets to decide which RESP applications should receive funds. To the extent that the responses below suggest policy choices different from the course of action the Commission ultimately adopts, the Commission's grant decision is controlling in all circumstances. The Commission has the discretion to prioritize certain applications over others in order to best distribute the available funds among the eligible grant applicants.

Most recent update	Content updated
12.2023	v. 1 published

Overall Requirements

- In-State Project: projects must be located exclusively within the state of Wisconsin
- Cost Match: Not required
- Compliance with other IJA and applicable Federal Requirements, including
 - Justice 40 Initiatives and Benefit Rural Communities
 - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
 - Buy American Requirements for Infrastructure Projects
 - Davis-Bacon Act and Related Acts

Eligible Applicants

- A unit of local government (city, village, town, county) that was not eligible to receive a direct allocation from the DOE
- Considered rural for the purposes of this program
 - Rural municipal zip codes are identified as those within “any area of a State not in a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants, not in the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants and excluding certain populations pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(H) and (I).” OEI has aligned its definition of rural with that use in USDA’s Rural Energy for America Program and the Focus on Energy program’s rural bonus incentives.
 - Rural counties: U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) uses census data to establish a range of rural and urban classifications known as Rural-Urban Continuum (RUC) codes, with RUC of 4 to 9 considered rural. USDA’s Economic Research Service presents this information visually for Wisconsin by county.
- To be given priority, applicants may:
 - Be within a Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool-defined Disadvantaged Community, or have DAC located within project area [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool-defined Disadvantaged Community \(DAC\)](#)

RESP Eligible Activities and Funds

Activity	Maximum Grant Request	Available Funds per Activity
1. Comprehensive Energy Planning	\$75,000	
2. Renewable Resource Planning	\$75,000	
3. Energy Audits and Building Implementations	\$75,000	
		Total: \$2.3 million

Activity 1: Comprehensive Energy Planning

Funds technical consultant services to assist the eligible applicant in the development of Comprehensive Energy Planning to include:

- ▶ Evaluation of current energy use and sources
- ▶ Determination of the entity's potential for generating energy locally
- ▶ Creation of goals for energy savings and generation

Max request: \$75,000

[Blueprint 1: Energy Planning | Department of Energy](#)

Activity 2: Renewable Resource Planning

Funds technical consultant services to assist the eligible applicant in the development of Renewable Resource Planning to include:

- ▶ Assessing renewable resource potential with a focus on the greatest value and job opportunities for the area
- ▶ Setting a collective vision with stakeholders for optimal renewable energy deployment, and creating an action plan for formal adoption and implementation

Max request: \$75,000

[Blueprint 3D: Renewable Resource Planning for Rural and Tribal Communities | Department of Energy](#)

Activity 3: Energy Audits and Building Upgrades

- ▶ Identifying potential energy saving opportunities in building and provide the technical and financial information (such as upfront costs, ongoing costs, projected energy savings, return on investment) needed to evaluate and approve energy efficiency, electrification, and grid interactivity retrofits.
- ▶ Explore energy audit results including retrofitting existing buildings, presenting an opportunity to improve the energy performance and operational costs of building assets including heating, cooling, and ventilation systems and equipment, lighting and control systems, and the building envelope while improving occupant control (such as grid-interactive technologies)

Max request: \$75,000

[Blueprint 2A: Energy Efficiency: Energy Audits, Building Upgrades | Department of Energy](#)

Accounts – Set up now

PSC Grants System and Electronic Records Filing (ERF) System Accounts

- Applicants must create an account with the **PSC Grants System**, where the electronic application is completed. (PSC Grants System Login page: [Online Grant System Login PSC Grants \(wi.gov\)](#))
- The PSC Grants System is connected to the **ERF system**; an account is required for both.
 - If you have an ERF account, from the PSC Grants System Login page, follow the link to validate your ERF Account.
 - If you do not have an ERF account, from the PSC Grants Login page, follow the link to create an ERF Account, then return to the login page and follow the link to validate your ERF Account.

Accounts – Set up now

System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Registration

- Applicants must register with SAM.gov and obtain a Universal Entity Identifier (UEID) prior to receiving a grant award and are encouraged to do so as soon as possible, to provide the UEID number with the application.
- A UEID number is a unique twelve-character alphanumeric ID used to identify your organization.
- SAM is a web-based, government-wide application that collects, validates, stores, and disseminates business information about intended federal grant recipients and other partners. Instructions for registering with SAM and obtaining a UEID are available here:

[SAM.gov](https://sam.gov)

Application Content Overview

- Reference documents: [Application Instructions](#) and [PSC Grants System User's Guide](#)
 - All key information and narrative questions go into [PSC Grants System](#)
 - Upload documents into PSC Grants System
 - [9714-FG-2023 Applicant Metrics.xlsx Document](#) (required)
 - Other supplemental materials (recommended)
 - Blueprints
 - Maps (OEI and CEJST)
- *links found on website: [PSC Rural Energy Startup Program \(wi.gov\)](#)

Application Content Uploads

Required documents to upload in PSC Grants System

[9714-FG-2023 Applicant Metrics.xlsx Document](#)

[CEJST Map](#). It is recommended that applicants provide a visual, mapped representation of the project location, such as a screen image from the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) and/or OEI maps highlighting the areas that will benefit from the project. Applicants may also use the CEJST map as a resource for identifying census tracts benefitting from project implementation.

[OEI Map](#). OEI has developed a map to support applicants' analysis of project location and benefits, including rural designation and other beneficial items. Please refer to CEJST map for specific indicators for each community designation. It is recommended that applicants provide a visual, mapped representation of the project location, such as a PDF image from the CEJST and /or OEI maps, highlighting the areas that will benefit from the project.

OEI Map Layer Sources

- **Disadvantaged Communities, including Tribal communities**, are identified from the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#) datasets. CEJST determines disadvantaged communities by census tract using the following indicators: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.
- **Wisconsin Rural Regions**
 - Rural zip codes are identified as those within “any area of a State not in a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants, not in the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants, and excluding certain populations pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(H) and (I).” OEI has aligned its definition of rural with that use in USDA’s Rural Energy for America Program and the [Focus on Energy program’s rural bonus incentives](#).
 - Rural counties: U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) uses census data to establish a range of rural and urban classifications known as Rural-Urban Continuum (RUC) codes, with RUC of 4 to 9 considered rural. [USDA’s Economic Research Service](#) presents this information visually for Wisconsin by county.
- **FEMA National Risk Index**: this layer is based on FEMA’s All Natural Hazards dataset. See the [FEMA National Risk Index](#) mapping tool for hazard-specific data such as extreme cold (Cold Wave), Ice Storm, or Riverine Flooding. See the [Wisconsin Risk Profile](#) developed by the U.S. DOE’s Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response, which assessed the state’s energy use and infrastructure risk landscape and identified flooding and other severe weather incidents to have the highest frequency and property damage costs for the state.
- [PSC- Electric Service Territories](#): Service territory boundaries are approximate and based on information supplied by the utilities and companies. For utilities/companies without defined service territories, a rough boundary was drawn around their facilities and the properties they serve. Portions of the map in white represent areas where no electric service or service territory may have been extended. This map should be viewed as approximate and contains no guarantee of accuracy.
- **County and Municipal Boundaries**: The boundaries should be viewed as approximate and are no guarantee of accuracy.

Application Content - Details

Application Details

- Project Name: Identify the name of applicant project with the following: Applicant Legal Name, Activity Type, Project Site or Area (example: example: Jefferson County_ Comprehensive Energy Plan_Jefferson)
- Project Description field: Provide a brief (500 characters) description of the proposed project activities and outcomes.
- Activity Type: Identify the applicant's activity
- Grant Amount Requested and Total Project Costs

Applicant Details

- Primary Contact Information will go here.
- Fields with * are required. If you are not able to obtain a UEID in time, use zeros

Application Content - Contacts

- Internal:
 - Primary: project lead, access to PSC Grants System
 - Secondary: backup to primary
 - Financial Manager: reimbursement requests and financial reporting
 - Grants Manager: progress reports (Primary if omitted)
 - Authorized Representative: other support staff
- External:
 - Contractor: prospective installation contractor or consultant
 - Partner: stakeholder or other outside organization providing project input

Application Content - Budget

Order as shown in PSC Grants System

- Equipment: project component or item (DOE guidance: *with an acquisition cost greater than \$5,000 and a useful life expectancy of more than one year*).
- Labor (Salary): internal project labor
- Labor (Fringe): internal fringe benefits
- Other: Any direct cost items required for the project which do not fit clearly into other categories (e.g., printing costs); must not be duplicated in 'Indirect Charges' row.
- Supplies: consumables (DOE guidance: *Generally defined as an item with an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or less and a useful life expectancy of less than one year; generally consumed during the project performance*).
- Travel: travel costs necessary for meeting performance objectives (e.g., recipient/subrecipient site visits, DOE meetings, project management meetings).
- Indirect: costs that cannot be charged directly to the award (e.g., overhead costs).
- Contractual:

Application Content - Communities

- Provide the site location in which project will be placed. (See [User's Guide page 7](#))
 - If county-wide, select the county option in both the “County” and “Municipality” dropdown menus
- This tab will not be reviewed for merit
- Applicants are also required to provide a complete list of all **zip codes and census tracts** benefitting from the project in the Excel document *9714-FG-2023 Applicant Metrics.xlsx*

Project Example:

Grant Application Communities Served

County	Municipality
La Crosse	La Crosse (City)

Application Content - Narrative

- Grants System Note:
 - Responses are limited to 3000 characters (about 1 page)
 - All questions require a response in order to move forward in system
 - Save your work before advancing to the next page of the Narrative
- Executive Summary
 - These appear in questions 1-3 of the Grants Narrative questions and provide an additional overview of the proposed project.
- Merit Review Criteria:
 - These appear in questions 4-14 of the Grants Narrative section and provide the basis for the merit review evaluation.

Application Review

- Supplemental information may be provided during application window to OEI@wisconsin.gov and may be requested by the commission during review panel for additional details.
- All applications are public unless otherwise specified.
- Application may be withdrawn at anytime.
- Merit criteria incorporated into the Narrative Questions will be used to guide the review panel in evaluating applications

RESP Merit Review



Screening Criteria	Determination	Possible Points, If Needed (Activities 1 & 2)	Possible Points, If Needed (Activity 3)
Rural Refer to Section 5.5.3 for question detail.	Location is rural.	N/A. Required	N/A. Required
Equity, Energy Justice – Justice40 Refer to Section 5.5.4 for question detail.	Project is in a DAC or its' benefits will flow down to a DAC.	20	20
New or Existing Plans and Opportunities Refer to Section 5.5.5 for question detail.	Proposal type is selected. If updating an existing plan, an explanation is provided.	10	10
Ability and Preparedness to Achieve Objectives Refer to Section 5.5.6 for question detail.	Acknowledgement of following a blueprint for their proposal.	10	10
Budget Justification and Contributions Refer to Section 5.5.7 for question detail.	Questions are answered, and costs are provided in the budget tab.	10	10
Cost Savings and Payback, Economic Impacts Refer to Section 5.5.8 for question detail.	Audit/assessment guidelines acknowledged. Savings of the cost are described.	10	10
Energy savings and Environmental Impact (kilowatt, kilowatt hour, therms, gallons of gasoline, emissions) Refer to Section 5.5.9 for question detail.	Energy saved by the indicated measures are provided.	10	10
TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE		70	70

Rural – Required

- Rural municipal zip codes are identified as those within “any area of a State not in a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants, not in the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants and excluding certain populations pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(H) and (I).” OEI has aligned its definition of rural with that use in USDA’s Rural Energy for America Program and the [Focus on Energy program’s rural bonus incentives](#).
- Rural counties: U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) uses census data to establish a range of rural and urban classifications known as Rural-Urban Continuum (RUC) codes, with RUC of 4 to 9 considered rural. [USDA’s Economic Research Service](#) presents this information visually for Wisconsin by county.
- [Rural](#)
- [Rural-Urban Continuum \(RUC\) codes 4-9](#)
- [OEI Map](#)

Equity, Energy Justice (Justice 40) – 20 points

- The 9714-FG-2023 Applicant Metrics.xlsx document, which is a required document that is submitted through PSC Grants System Upload tab, requests a complete list of all census tracts that would be benefitting from the project, regardless of whether the tract is identified as a DAC.
- Identify the extent to which the benefits of the proposed project fall within a disadvantaged community or communities.
- Applicants encouraged to use the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool ([CEJST](#)) map in their analysis, or other tools or data as appropriate. [OEI map](#) is additional resource that includes CEJST-defined Disadvantaged Community (DAC) identification, rural designations
 - Use tools to create narrative and visual representation of the project

Measuring Reliability and Community Benefits

To provide and track measurable direct or indirect investments or positive project outcomes that achieve or contribute to the following in DACs:

INCREASE

- Access to low-cost capital
- Job Creation
- Clean Energy Pipeline
- Job Training for Individuals
- Clean Energy Enterprise Creation/ Contracting
- Energy Democracy
- Parity in Clean Energy Technology Access/ Adoption
- Energy Resilience

DECREASE

- Energy Burden
- Environmental Exposure and Burdens

New or Existing Plans/Opportunities – 10 points

- Please identify whether the proposed project will result in a new, or an update to an existing, Comprehensive Energy or Renewable Resource Plan, or audit.
- If updating an existing plan, please describe how it is different from the original plan, including previous endeavors (e.g. ISO 50001 Audit, Energy Independent Communities), and identify the reason(s) for the update.
- Upload reference documents or provide excerpts as needed.

Ability and Preparedness to Achieve Objectives – 10 points

- Applicant understands and affirms they will use and implement a DOE blueprint (Blueprint 1: Energy Planning, Blueprint 2A: Energy Efficiency: Energy Audits and Building Upgrades, Blueprint 3D: Renewable Resource Planning for Rural and Tribal Communities).
- Demonstrate how the Applicant's organization, staff, stakeholders, and any known subcontractors' experience will assist them to achieve the objectives.

Budget Justification/ Contributions – 10 Points

- Provide detail on who will be implementing the project. Describe the project team or lead, such as in-house individual or team, third party consultant, or undecided, that will create the plan, audit, and/or upgrade. If undecided, describe what methods have you considered and whether there are outstanding questions or needs for technical assistance.
- Describe the engagement level with internal stakeholders and the applicant's understanding of possible costs associated with the project.
- Provide a cost basis for each line item on which costs were entered on the Budget Tab. Applicants should describe the extent to which a cost share may be required if the total project cost exceeds the maximum grant request of \$75,000. If a building upgrade is proposed under Activity 3, provide a distinct cost basis between an audit or assessment and the upgrade.

Cost Savings and Payback, Economic Impacts— 10 Points

- Describe the project's potential for cost savings to the community based on affected community population, building stock, and energy type usage and costs. Identify the immediate or future potential for stimulating local and/or state economy and workforce as a result of this project.
- If you are conducting an audit or assessment under Activity 3, or have one previously completed and are proposing a building upgrade under Activity 3, please acknowledge that it will/has met the minimum requirements.

Cost Savings and Payback, Economic Impacts— 10 Points

Assessment Requirements:

- The work to be performed
 - A clear statement of what is being assessed and why
 - A summary of findings (including a statement of project feasibility)
 - Energy saving estimates and supporting calculations
 - Project cost estimates
 - Any data collected and used in the assessment
 - Detailed report containing the deliverables defined in the assessment proposal
- If an audit or assessment is already completed and applicant proposes a building upgrade under Activity 3, describe any expected payback from the project activities, the methodology used to calculate it, and the likelihood of the project to move forward with or without funding. Include any expected savings associated with operations and maintenance and its impact on financial outcomes, labor, or other resources.

Environmental Impact – 10 points

- Describe the effectiveness or desired results of the plan, audit, or assessment project in setting baseline information and preparation for, or the effectiveness of the upgrade project in, saving or producing clean energy in terms of kilowatts, kilowatt hours, therms, gallons of gasoline, etc.
- Applicants may access the EPA Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Equivalencies Calculator here: <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator> to quantify emissions reductions (carbon, other GHGs, etc.) associated with estimated project energy savings. At minimum, applicants should provide the type of energy currently used in the community (electric, natural gas, propane, other) that the project could affect.

Buy American Provisions

None of the funds provided under this award (federal share or recipient cost-share) may be used for a project for infrastructure unless:

- All iron and steel used in the project is produced in the United States—this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States;
- All manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and
- All construction materials are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States.

Davis-Bacon Act and Related Acts

The Davis-Bacon provisions of IIJA includes language requiring prevailing wage requirements, including:

- All laborers and mechanics employed by the recipient, subrecipients, contractors or subcontractors in the performance of construction, alteration, or repair work in excess of \$2,000 on an award funded directly by or assisted in whole or in part by funds made available under this award shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on similar projects in the locality, as determined by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with subchapter IV of chapter 31 of title 40, United States Code commonly referred to as the “Davis-Bacon Act” (DBA).
- The Federal government determines and sets the prevailing wage rates on SAM.gov. Wages for specific wage rates by county and construction type can be found on <https://sam.gov/content/wage-determinations>

For additional guidance on how to comply with the Davis-Bacon provisions and clauses, see:

- <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/government-contracts/construction>
- <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/government-contracts/protections-for-workers-in-construction>

NEPA

- Sub awardees will complete and submit as part of the Federal subaward process an [Environmental Questionnaire](#) (EQ) for NEPA review and approval by the U.S. DOE.
- Applicants are encouraged to review the EQ in advance
- See Appendix B in the Application Instructions for further details.

Historic Preservation Requirement

- For project activities that involve **historical, archeological or cultural resources** (includes listed and eligible resources over 50 years old or of cultural significance), a review of the undertaking may be required. However, a number of energy related activities have been previously identified that do not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, even when historic properties may be present. They are covered by an existing programmatic agreement between the U.S. Department of Energy, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office and certain State agencies.

https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f7/state_historic_preservation_programmatic_agreement_wi.pdf

Resources

- DOE Activity 1 Energy Planning Blueprint: [Blueprint 1: Energy Planning | Department of Energy](#)
- DOE Activity 2 Renewable Planning Blueprint: [Blueprint 3D: Renewable Resource Planning for Rural and Tribal Communities | Department of Energy](#)
- DOE Activity 3 Audits and Building Implementation Blueprint: [Blueprint 2A: Energy Efficiency: Energy Audits, Building Upgrades | Department of Energy](#)
- CEJST Map: [Explore the map - Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool \(geoplatform.gov\)](#)
- OEI Map: [OEI Map](#)
- Applicant Metrics Excel Worksheet: [Excel Worksheet](#)
- Application Instructions: [Instructions](#)

Q&A