

Response Date: 01/31/2024

#	Question	Response	Date Response Posted
SECTION I. Introduction			
1.	<i>Is this grant only for those schools outside of Xcel Energy territory?</i>	See RFP Section I. Introduction and Section I.A. Background. Xcel schools will be eligible starting in the January 2024 funding round.	01/10/2024
2.	<i>For colleges and universities, please explain the total funding availability and any separation in fiscal years.</i>	See RFP Section I. Introduction	07/01/2022
SECTION II. Eligibility			
3.	<i>Is there a preference between fixed or tracking Systems?</i>	No	01/05/2022
4.	<i>This program appears to be fully separate from the state master contract for solar installations, is that correct? Would it be allowed by the statute for schools to use the master contract?</i>	It is separate from the master contract, but you may use the master contract if it fits your needs.	01/05/2022
5.	<i>Does eligibility for the Minnesota Solar for Schools Program Application include private schools?</i>	See RFP Section II. Eligibility And Section I.A. Schools.	01/12/2022
6.	<i>If a school has two facilities in one building, with one address but separate electric meters (i.e., High school and elementary school), are both eligible?</i>	See RFP Section II. Eligibility And Section I.A. Schools.	01/12/2022
7.	<i>Could you clarify if tribal schools, charter schools, type 6 schools, or coops are eligible for the grant?</i>	A full list of MDE type (1) and type (3) schools and districts have been posted to the Department's website at https://www.mn.gov/solar4schools/ under <i>About the Grant</i> . Tribal Contract and cooperative school districts will be eligible starting in the January 2024 program year.	01/10/2024
8.	<i>Are school buildings such as office buildings or athletic centers eligible?</i>	See RFP Section II. Eligibility And Section I.A. Schools.	01/24/2022
9.	<i>Can a university or college campus location apply for more than one grant?</i>	See RFP Section II. Eligibility And Section I.A. Schools.	01/24/2022

Questions and Answers
Minnesota Solar for Schools Grant Application
RFP Reference Number: COMM-SFS05-20240110

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10.	<i>Must Applicants solicit only third-party financed proposals, or should Applicants entertain all possible scenarios?</i>	Applicants may entertain all on-site financial and ownership scenarios including third-party financing options and direct ownership. Applicants are strongly encouraged to receive multiple proposals with priority given to applicants meeting solar procurement best practices. See RFP Section VI. Evaluation and Priority and RFP Section VI.B. Readiness Assessment Priority	01/24/2022
11.	<i>Is a single college/university eligible to apply for funds across two biennia?</i>	A single school district or college/university is eligible to apply for more than one grant across the biennia. A Project ID remains with the project, even if you requested one in one year and applied in a different year. See RFP Section VI. Evaluation and Priority, Subsection B. Readiness Assessment Priority for additional details.	07/01/2022
12.	<i>What if we cannot complete the grant obligations within the 18-month timeframe?</i>	Extensions may be granted to the Grantee by the Department upon written request. See Section X. Timeline.	07/01/2022
13.	<i>If a school district has schools that are both inside and outside of Xcel service territory, is the district able to use both sources of funding?</i>	For districts that have schools both inside and outside of Xcel service territory, they will be capped at \$675,000. Districts outside of Xcel service territory, may petition the Department to increase their cap to \$675,000, if their utility allows for projects larger than 40kW	01/10/2024
14.	<i>How does a district petition the Department for an increase to their cap if they are outside Xcel service territory?</i>	To petition the Department it must be led and submitted by the school district and be for systems over 40 kW. Petitions will not be considered if they are for system sizes smaller than 40 kW. The petition will be sent to the solar for schools email and maybe only be done once the readiness assessment period is closed to ensure that funding is available. The petition must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A signed letter from the utility for the school the system(s) will be on, allowing for a system over the size of 40 kW. • A signed letter from the schools authorized representative outlining the benefits a larger system would have for the school and impact it will bring to students. <p>The petition will be considered and if approved the school may move forward with a readiness assessment with the extra funds.</p>	01/29/2024
15.	<i>Could you explain how the new grant chart works?</i>	With the increase of the system size to up to a megawatt, the grant chart now includes the system size as a component. The maximum grant that a schools could receive is up to	01/10/2024

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		\$500,000 outside of Xcel and \$675,000 within. This cap is for one system and for the district. So, the district can either put one system in or multiple up to their cap level.	
16.	<i>What is the maximum size a project can be now?</i>	During the 2023 legislative session, the maximum size of a project was increased to up to 120% of load or 1 MW, though for schools outside of Xcel service territory, a school would need upfront consent of the interconnecting electric utility prior to application.	01/10/2024
17.	<i>Which MNSCU schools are eligible?</i>	For the upcoming January 2024 round of funding, that Department is still assessing how much funding is available. All MNSCU schools will be eligible.	01/10/2024
18.	<i>How does a district apply for more than one school?</i>	To apply for more than one school, email the Solar for Schools email requesting an ID for each school you wish to apply for. Then you will submit a readiness assessment for each school that you have a unique ID for.	01/29/2024
SECTION III. Application Overview			
19.	<i>Will a signed letter from the customer also be sufficient for us to obtain a Project ID# for them? What about a phone call?</i>	See RFP Section III. Application Overview. Prior to completing the Assessment, Applicants must first obtain a unique project ID number (“ID”) from the Department by emailing the Department at SolarForSchools@state.mn.us to request an ID and must do so for each school/building .	01/12/2022
SECTION IV. Grant Application			
20.	<i>Please advise on what a new construction school should do if they don’t have 24 months of energy use data that is required as part of the Assessment?</i>	With a school building that does not have 24 months of electric energy use data, Applicants should provide an estimate of energy use to the best of their ability, such looking at similar schools/sizes and utilizing estimates provided by the developer working on the new construction. The Applicant must demonstrate that the proposed System will provide no more than 120% of the estimated annual energy consumption of the building to meet requirements stipulated in Minn. Stat. 216C.375 .	01/12/2022
21.	<i>Do we need actual bills for 24 months or will a summary of the 24 months plus the most current bill suffice?</i>	Applicants do not need to submit 24 individual electric bills but must submit two years of monthly electricity use that may be in spreadsheet or PDF form. Applicants must provide at least one actual recent electrical bill. See RFP Section IV.C. Energy.	01/12/2022
22.	<i>Can you expand upon the curriculum requirements for the application? Does it need to be specific to an individual school, or can it be district-wide?</i>	The grant requirements towards curriculum have been designed to encourage schools to utilize resources and plans that meet their instructional needs. Curriculum may be developed at a district-level but is encouraged to be specified to a particular audience.	01/24/2022
23.	<i>The RFP asks for a copy of the proposed system contract agreement that must list the System’s total lifecycle cost; costs pertaining to the end-of-life removal and</i>	The information required in the application complies with state law. Minnesota Statutes § 216C.375 requires Commerce to develop administrative procedures governing the application and grant award process. It also mandates that applications contain certain information, including lifecycle costs, and any other information Commerce deems relevant.	04/15/2022

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	<i>disposal; fair market provisions; and responsibility for the System’s operations and maintenance. However, the Statute specifies that these items must only be required in the application, not the system contract agreement. As a result, the application is in conflict with the Statute.</i>	The information required on page 11 is relevant and helps the commissioner ensure transparency between the Applicant and Developer.	
24.	<i>The RFP asks for provisions about fair market value in the proposed System contract agreement. Can you expand upon this requirement?</i>	<p>If the agreement between the Applicant and the Developer is a third-party ownership or power purchase agreement, a fair market value (FMV) methodology must be included in the contract between the Developer and Applicant. Developers should include a detailed breakdown and explanation of the rationale behind the method by which the FMV of the System would be calculated.</p> <p>The IRS generally defines fair market value (FMV) as “the price at which property would change hands between a buyer and a seller, neither having to buy or sell, and both having reasonable knowledge of all necessary facts.” For solar PV systems generally, FMV = [Remaining Production x Electricity Rate] – [Cost of Removal]. Remaining Production refers to an estimate of the System’s remaining electricity production in kWh beyond the contract end date. Electricity Rate refers to the Applicant’s expected applicable utility or retail electricity rate beyond the contract end date. Cost of Removal refers to estimated labor and other costs to remove the System, disposal costs, and any costs to return the roof or installation site to a satisfactory condition.</p>	04/15/2022
25.	<i>The RFP asks for provisions about lifecycle cost in the proposed System contract agreement. Can you expand upon this requirement?</i>	Lifecycle cost is defined as the expected total cost of ownership during the life of the System, including the total cost to purchase and install the System as well as an estimate of removal and disposal costs. Developers should include a detailed breakdown of the expected lifecycle cost for the System in the contract between the Developer and Applicant, regardless of System ownership method utilized. Developers should base the lifecycle cost off the warranty period of the PV modules and must include cost estimates pertaining to inverter replacement. If the Developer uses an alternate lifecycle length, a detailed explanation of the rationale behind the method must be included.	04/15/2022
26.	<i>The RFP asks for provisions about operating and maintenance (O&M) of the System in the proposed system contract</i>	Regardless of System ownership method utilized, the Developer should explicitly address within the contract between the Developer and Applicant the responsibility of the System’s	04/15/2022

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	<i>agreement. Do you have any guidance about specifically what the Developer should include in the contract?</i>	O&M, both during and after the contract period. Any relevant associated costs (known or estimated) should be detailed.	
26.	<i>Does the school have to have the funds secured prior to completing the readiness assessment?</i>	No, but the school must be prepared to fulfill that commitment once installation has begun. And is responsible for covering expensive outlined in the grantee budget.	01/29/24
27.	<i>Does the school have to make a final decision on the size of the system during the readiness assessment step?</i>	it is important for the schools to make a size determination before submitting a readiness application. The Department doesn't want to encumber funds for a larger array to learn that the district wants a smaller array, as those funds could be used for other projects.	01/31/24
SECTION V. Application Submission Instructions			
28.	<i>Will this be an online process?</i>	Schools must first email the Department requesting a project ID number. <i>See Section III. Application Overview.</i> The Readiness Assessment and Full Grant Application must be completed online. <i>See Section V. Application Submission Instructions.</i> Once entered into a grant agreement with the Department, project milestones must be met, including online form submissions. <i>See Section VII. Notification and Next Steps, Subsection C. Installation Milestones.</i> A full list of Grantee Duties and Invoicing, Reporting, and Project Administration Instructions will be provided to all Grantees detailing all communications instructions.	01/05/2022
SECTION VI. Evaluation and Priority			
29.	<i>In a cycle in which requested funding exceeds funds available, what criteria will be used to prioritize applications?</i>	<i>See Section VI. Evaluation and Priority</i>	01/05/2022
30.	<i>If our school already has solar, are we still eligible?</i>	<i>See Section VI. Evaluation and Priority, Subsection B. Readiness Assessment Priority.</i>	01/05/2022
31.	<i>Do we have to formally go out to bid to receive a grant?</i>	The Department requires schools to follow all applicable local and state procurement process requirements, which may include a formal RFP process or receiving multiple bids. In general, it is recommended to, at minimum, receive multiple bids for any solar installation. <i>See Section VI. Evaluation and Priority, Subsection B. Readiness Assessment Priority.</i>	01/05/2022
SECTION VII. Notifications and Next Steps			
32.	<i>Are there going to be deadlines or milestones that are required to meet in order to keep the grant dollars reserved?</i>	Yes. <i>See Section VII. Notifications and Next Steps Subsection C. Installation Milestones</i> for details and deadlines. See also <i>Section X. Timeline</i> pertaining to overall grant deadlines and discussions of extensions. From stakeholder feedback, the timeline has been extended to 18 months.	01/10/2024
SECTION VIII. Questions & Technical Assistance			

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33.	<i>Is there a list of qualified installers you can post?</i>	No, neither Commerce nor CERTs are able to recommend a specific installer or help you choose one. CERTs is, however, able to provide you with information and best practices on what to look for and what questions to ask. The Department also maintains a Solar Business Directory at Solar Business Directory / Minnesota.gov (mn.gov) .	01/05/2022
34.	<i>Will there be any support or training of teachers as part of this program? It is very hard to implement new material without support. Can funds from grants be used to do this?</i>	CERT's can provide an array of curriculum material, some of it is free and some is for a fee. They can also connect schools to resources, including other schools and teachers, to help you develop or find existing curriculum. The program funds cannot be used to train staff.	01/05/2022
SECTION VIII. Exhibits and Attachments			
35.	<i>If we are approved for the grant would we have to pay for the installation and then the grant would pay us or is it a direct pay to the installer?</i>	The State requires payment on a reimbursement basis. Applicants will pay the Developer and send the Department either a receipt or copy of the invoice marked paid, and the Department will submit for reimbursements. See Clause 4 in the Sample Grant Agreement.	01/24/2022
36.	<i>Upon submission of complete grant and project details, is it possible grant dollars might be allocated to Applicant at the time of full contract execution (avoiding potential Statute 16A violation) instead of at project completion?</i>	<i>See question (18), above. Additionally, as the Grantee, you may negotiate terms and conditions to the grant contract agreement, as presented in the sample grant contract agreement, subject to the discretion of the State. As a subcontractor, your Developer will be bound to the terms and conditions in your grant contract agreement.</i>	07/01/2022
SECTION X. Timeline			
37.	<i>If we request a project ID and end up not submitting an application this round, do we need to submit for another ID later on?</i>	No. All project IDs will carry over with an Applicant and can be requested at any time.	01/24/2022
38.	<i>Will extensions be granted for delays that are beyond the control of the school or the installer, like supply chain issues?</i>	Yes, extensions may be granted. See <i>Section X. Timeline</i> for details.	01/05/2022
39.	<i>If a school has a project ID but doesn't submit a Readiness Assessment, is deemed not ready, fails to complete or submit a Full Grant Application, will they be eligible to apply in future rounds?</i>	Yes. Project IDs remain with a school once assigned, across RFP funding rounds. All schools that fail to complete applications or are denied, are encouraged to improve their applications, and reapply in future funding rounds.	01/05/2022

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SECTION XI. General Requirements			
SECTION XII. Exhibits and Attachments			
40.	<i>“Grantee” is the school, regardless of financing (cash funded, PPA, etc.), even though the Developer completes the Full Grant Application, correct?</i>	Yes, the grant contract is only between the State and the school in all financing situations. Should the State request clarifications to the application after initial submittal, the school, as Grantee, is free to meet those requests by modifying any portion of the Full Grant Application, including changes to General Information, System Information, or Developer Information.	08/01/2022
41.	<i>Does use of the Department of Administration’s Solar Master Contract S-1049(5) fulfil the State’s grant contract formal bidding requirement in part 4.3?</i>	The State’s grant contract allows Grantees to self-identify by choosing between 4.3 and 4.4 for contract and bidding requirements. Grantees must follow all applicable laws. If use of a State Master Contract is a legal supplemental option under Minn. Stat. §471.345 , authorized by use, through Minn. Stat. §§136F.581 , then this would fulfill the bidding requirement under 4.4. To fulfill bidding requirements under 4.3, any legal supplemental options must also meet the competitive bidding requirements as outlined in 4.3.1, 4.3.2, and 4.3.3.	08/01/2022
42.	<i>Does the retainage noted (95%) relate specifically to the State’s grant, and not to any % retainage that may be outlined within the Master Contract for design/build?</i>	Yes, this is correct.	08/01/2022

