



March 4, 2015

To: California Energy Commission

1516 Ninth Street

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From: Kristin Cooper Carter, Owner

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Subject: Response to Call for Comments EPIC Program California Energy Commission

Grant Management Associates (GMA)

GMA is a national grant writing firm headquartered in California. We have participated in grant development work with the CA Energy Commission for the last fifteen years. GMA has been a part of over \$68M in grant awards in just the last five years. Our clients represent large, well-known companies such as Bosch, Chevron and ChargePoint as well as small startup companies such as AltAir and Frontier Wind.

These comments are submitted in response to the following questions raised:

Discussion Topic #1: EPIC Implementation and Processes

- What is working well with the Energy Commission's implementation of EPIC and what opportunities are there to improve the implementation of EPIC?
- Please identify and describe ways that the Energy Commission can improve the solicitation process? Is the purpose of each Program Opportunity Notice clear? Are the instructions for completing the application templates (e.g. project narrative, scope of work, and budget) clear and easy to understand?

As you are aware the PON submission process requires significant resources, often in a short amount of time. Each application represents a major effort, often from companies that have few resources. This means that the day-today work of many of these applicants must come to a standstill, this can cause financial hardship on small businesses, discouraging them from applying for these funds.

On top of this only a small percentage of the proposals submitted are awarded with little feedback to the applicant why their proposal was not selected. The review processes, scores along with follow up suggestions should be a part of this process. While I realize that this would be a hard burden on the State staff, the applicant too has much invested in obtaining relevant and helpful feedback. I believe this would help to make the process more meaningful.

We also see tremendous value in the use of a pre-screening tool through the submission of concept papers. This helps the applicant to not invest time on concepts that the Commission is uninterested in. These steps would significantly increase the number of applications – especially from CA Small Businesses and the quality of the applications submitted to the EPIC program.



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We would also like to comment on the skill it takes to submit a PON application. Most of our clients are overwhelmed at the sheer volume of information required in the submittal process. Most have little to no experience or the ones that do have experience never want to do another application again – ever. Our firm specializes in breaking down the sections, rolling them out in a step-by-step process that make the application stronger and helps the applicant to understand how each of the components inter connect. Providing small businesses and disadvantaged communities with grant writing assistance through hands-on workshops that are geared towards the needs of your programs, would be most helpful.

We often find several errors in the budget spreadsheets of your PON guidelines. Templates that align to the Scope of Work should be standard. This will help the applicant to more accurately budget their activities and to manage the project once awarded. We have developed our own internal budget spreadsheets to help our clients with their budget forms. We are happy to share these templates with you.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the program,

Best regards,

Kristin Carter

Owner, Grant Management Associates