Energy Research and Development Division

**Questions and Answers**

**GFO-21-304**

RAMP 2022: Realizing Accelerated Manufacturing and Production for Clean Energy Technologies

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# Technology Eligibility

1. **QUESTION:** Would building a geothermal powerplant fall under this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** No, this solicitation is intended to support development of initial pilot production lines of innovative clean energy technologies, not develop large scale power generation facilities.

1. **QUESTION:** Is the only wind related technology allowed in this solicitation offshore wind technology?

**ANSWER:** No, as stated in the Solicitation Manual, technologies that fall within an eligible technology category but not explicitly listed as an example are still allowed. Wind related generation technologies regardless of offshore or onshore applications qualify under the Zero- and Negative Carbon Emissions Electric Generation (Renewable Generation) technology category.

1. **QUESTION:** Do technologies that primarily offset the use of natural gas qualify under this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Technologies that electrify an end-use that previously used natural gas are eligible under this solicitation. Technologies that only improve the efficiency or reduce the use of natural gas are not eligible.

1. **QUESTION:** Could innovative design of new hydropower turbines possibly fall under the "Zero- and Negative Carbon Emissions Electric Generation (Renewable Generation)” category?

**ANSWER:** Yes, this would be eligible under the "Zero- and Negative Carbon Emissions Electric Generation (Renewable Generation)” category.

1. **QUESTION:** Does advanced battery diagnostics for energy storage fall under this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Yes, battery diagnostics technologies are eligible for this solicitation under the “Energy Storage” category.

1. **QUESTION:** Does a technology that deploys automated machinery into the field to build a solar array from a stack of modules qualify under this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Yes, this would be eligible under the “Zero- and Negative Carbon Emissions Electric Generation (Renewable Generation)” category.

1. **QUESTION:** Does a technology that creates green hydrogen from biogas or renewable natural gas qualify under this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Yes, these technologies would potentially be eligible under the “Zero- and Negative Carbon Emissions Electric Generation (Renewable Generation)” category.

1. **QUESTION:** Is wastewater treatment technology of interest for this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Yes, wastewater treatment technology would be eligible under the “Energy Efficiency” category

1. **QUESTION:** Is the scaling of manufacturing of medium - and heavy-duty electric vehicles considered an eligible technology category?

**ANSWER:** Yes, this would be eligible under the “End-use Electrification” category. Applicants should describe in detail if the innovative technology that is being scaled is a vehicle component (for example, electric drive systems or advanced lithium-ion batteries) or if it is the entire vehicle.

1. **QUESTION:** Do combustion engines that burn clean biofuels qualify under this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** This technology would potentially be eligible under the “Zero- and Negative Carbon Emissions Electric Generation (Renewable Generation)” if the applicant is able to describe in detail how the technology results in either zero or negative emissions energy generation.

1. **QUESTION:** If an applicant has a technology that may qualify under multiple eligible technology categories, how should the applicant decide which category to apply under?

**ANSWER:** CEC staff cannot advise individual applicants as to which technology category they should apply under; applicants will need to determine which eligible technology category best fits their technology. Applications will not be viewed negatively if a proposal contains elements of multiple technology categories as long as they are all eligible technology categories.

Further, applications do not compete only against other applications in the same eligible technology category. Instead, all applications compete against each other regardless of technology category.

1. **QUESTION:** Our company is developing, manufacturing, and building a testing prototype for California of manufactured green living eco-home residential units, integrated with smart-home technology, and customized solar off-grid energy systems with advanced lithium batteries, energy storage, inverters, and remote management systems. We are considering applying with the complete residential system, for which we are building a first prototype unit in working context in Lancaster, CA under the category of energy efficiency. Would it make more sense to apply with the entire manufactured or modular residential unit or to focus on one of the smaller components we will manufacture? If one of the components, can you specify which one(s) and whether it would be in the energy efficiency category or energy storage?

**ANSWER:** Projects that involve scaling-up manufacturing of complete systems or components of systems are both allowed. It is up to the applicant to decide the scope of the project they wish to propose given the available funding they are requesting. Similarly, it is up to the applicant to decide which eligible technology category best fits their technology. Applications will not be viewed negatively if a proposal contains elements of multiple technology categories as long as they are all eligible technology categories.

1. **QUESTION:** Does the proposed technology need to have been previously developed in California or funded by the CEC?

**ANSWER:** No, the proposed technology does not need to have been previously developed in California or funded by the CEC.

# Applicant Eligibility

1. **QUESTION:** Can an applicant be considered as a potential RAMP program awardee if they are the current recipient of BRIDGE award?

**ANSWER:** Yes, current recipients of BRIDGE awards, or any other CEC awards, are eligible to apply to this solicitation and receive an award.

1. **QUESTION:** If an applicant is developing a pilot production line, can they apply to this solicitation to support development of a parallel project?

**ANSWER:** As stated in Section I. A. of the Solicitation Manual – companies with established production lines for their proposed emerging technology are not eligible for this solicitation.

1. **QUESTION:** If a company has an ongoing CEC RAMP award, are they eligible for another if they are proposing a different project?

**ANSWER:** Yes, applicants that have an ongoing CEC RAMP award are eligible to apply for this solicitation. Applicants in this situation must describe in their application how the new project differs from their current one. Applicants may not propose a project that has any tasks that overlap with the existing CEC funded project.

1. **QUESTION:** Can two separate companies with non-competing products submit a single RAMP grant application to develop their pilot production lines in the same facility?

**ANSWER:** Yes, however only one entity may serve as the applicant for the award. The second entity may consider acting as a subcontractor or a project partner in the proposed project. A project partner is an entity or individual that contributes financially or otherwise to the project (e.g., match funding, provision of a test, demonstration or deployment site), and does not receive CEC funds.

In this situation, CEC staff encourages the applicant to clearly describe the innovative technology being proposed, and the relationship between the different companies and any intellectual property rights and relationships between the technologies and companies.

# Technology Maturity

1. **QUESTION:** At what stage of technology maturity should a technology reach in order to qualify for this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** There is not a specific required level of technology maturity an applicant must meet in order to be eligible for this solicitation. However, applicants’ technologies should be sufficiently mature so that applicants can advance their technologies to the low-rate initial production stage by the end of the project. The technology must also be sufficiently mature to be able to sufficiently respond to the questions identified in Section I. C. of the solicitation manual.

Proposals should not include significant amounts of funding or time for conducting pilot demonstrations. Technologies should be mature enough and have already completed real world demonstrations with results that warrant proceeding to manufacturing scale-up. RAMP proposals may include tasks related to validating the developed manufacturing process or similar quality assurance related tasks.

1. **QUESTION:** Would projects that are ready for more concrete costs like refurbishing a facility to build a production line or purchase manufacturing equipment eligible for this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Yes, applications for this solicitation should focus on activities that can transition a technology from pilot production to low-rate initial production. This may include refurbishing facilities or purchasing manufacturing equipment.

1. **QUESTION:** What is the target TRL level for applicants?

**ANSWER:** There is no specific TRL requirement for applicants. Please see response to Question 17.

# Allowable Costs/Activities

1. **QUESTION:** Are there examples of allowable activities/costs for projects? Are there limits on what funds can be used for?

**ANSWER:** There is no comprehensive list of allowable costs included as part of this solicitation. Generally, costs must be associated with a budget category and be directly related to the performance of the work identified in the Scope of Work.

Further guidance on allowable and unallowable costs is also available in section 8 j. of the EPIC standard terms and conditions available at: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-02/EPIC_Standard_Grant_Terms_and_Conditions_ada.pdf>

Please also note, Section I. K. of the Solicitation Manual states that using CEC funds for purchasing items such as laptops, notebooks and/or personal tablets is not allowed.

1. **QUESTION:** Does automation of manufacturing to increase capacity fit within this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** As stated in Section I. A. of the Solicitation Manual, companies with established production lines for their proposed emerging technology are not eligible for this solicitation. A proposal that only seeks to expand capacity of an existing manufacturing line is not eligible for this solicitation.

1. **QUESTION:** Can a pilot production line for only one of the components of a technology qualify under this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Yes, manufacturing key components of eligible clean energy technologies is acceptable as long as the technology is one of the eligible technology topics or energy applications. Applicants should describe in their proposal if they are selling the component to an OEM or Tier 1 supplier or if the component will be used in their own product. Please refer to Section I.C. “Project Focus” for the complete list of eligible technology topics or energy applications.

1. **QUESTION:** Are there limitations on where manufacturing can take place for this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Any direct manufacturing activities and any pilot production lines that are established as a result of activities funded under this solicitation must be located in California. Please refer to Section 1.C. “Project Focus” in the solicitation manual.

1. **QUESTION:** Are applicants required to do their own manufacturing or is contract manufacturing an option?

**ANSWER:** Either is acceptable. Final assembly, including the pilot production line, needs to be located in California.

# Match Funding

1. **QUESTION:** Under what circumstances can the cost share requirement be waived?

**ANSWER:** Applicants are required to provide at least 50 percent of the requested CEC funds as match. This requirement cannot be waived.

1. **QUESTION:** Can match funds be used for out of state spending?

**ANSWER:** Yes – CEC staff encourages applicants to use match funds for out of state spending.

1. **QUESTION:** Can applicants use existing equipment already purchased to count towards match expenditures?

**ANSWER:** Yes, as stated in Section I. K. of the Solicitation Manual – “In-Kind” match can include, “equipment, facilities, and other property as long as the value of the contribution is based on documented market values or book values, prorated for its use in the project, and depreciated or amortized over the term of the project using generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).”

1. **QUESTION:** Could Amazon Web Service Cloud credits count towards match funds?

**ANSWER:** Yes, Amazon Web Service Cloud credits may count as match funds under the “Materials and Miscellaneous” category. The applicant will need to show the dollar value of the credits in their commitment letter and budget. Additionally, the credits must be used in direct support of the project for it to count as match funds.

1. **QUESTION:** Can applicants choose which budget categories to commit match funds to or are they required to apply a consistent ratio of match funds for all budget categories?

**ANSWER:** Applicants may choose which budget categories to commit match funds to. Applicants are not required to apply a consistent ratio of match funds across the different budget categories.

# General Administrative

1. **QUESTION:** Are there requirements for how long the project should last?

**ANSWER:** Each project can vary and have different timeframes to achieve the goals of the solicitation and the individual project. Typically, a project can be anywhere from 18 months to 4 years. Please see Section I.E. “Key Activities Schedule” of the solicitation manual for the *anticipated* start and end dates for agreements resulting from these solicitations.

1. **QUESTION:** Will applications be evaluated more favorably if they are submitted early?

**ANSWER:** Applications submitted early will not be evaluated more favorably. All applications will be screened and evaluated the same way, based on the criteria in Section IV of the solicitation. CEC staff will not review any applications until after the submission deadline.

1. **QUESTION:** This solicitation includes two rounds of funding, is Round 2 funding only available to Round 1 recipients as follow-on funding? Or is Round 2 funding available to new applicants?

**ANSWER:** There is no special relationship between the two rounds of funding. Both rounds of funding are open to all applicants that meet the eligibility criteria. Round 2 funding **is not** only available to Round 1 funding recipients.

1. **QUESTION:** What is the earliest date that a submitted proposal would be publicly visible?

**ANSWER:** After all proposals are evaluated and scored, CEC staff will issue a Notice of Proposed Award (NOPA). Once the NOPA is released, individuals may request to view any of the proposals submitted. All requests should be directed to the Commission Agreement Officer listed in Section I.G. of the solicitation.

1. **QUESTION:** Can an application receive awards in both rounds of the solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Yes, however applicants that receive an award in Round 1 may not propose a project in Round 2 that has any tasks that overlap with the Round 1 project, or any other CEC funded project.

1. **QUESTION:** There are many technology categories eligible for funding that span different sectors – how does the CEC prioritize funding of the different technology categories?

**ANSWER:** This solicitation does not prioritize any single technology category over another. All proposals will be screened and evaluated based on the criteria identified in Section IV of the solicitation manual.

1. **QUESTION:** How does Empower Innovation provide and support partnerships?

**ANSWER:** Empower Innovation provides an online platform for potential applicants to funding opportunities to express interest in a particular funding opportunity and form partnerships. This is a link to this solicitation’s page on the Empower Innovation website: <https://www.empowerinnovation.net/en/custom/funding/view/30245>

1. **QUESTION:** The solicitation mentions a target of low-rate initial production – is there a definition of “low-rate” that the CEC is using?

**ANSWER:** For purposes of this solicitation, low-rate initial production is defined as, “the first step in making the transition from highly customized hand-built prototypes, which are used for performance testing and vetting the production process, to the final mass-produced end product produced in the Full-Rate Production phase.” That said, the rate and volume of production can vary greatly depending on the technology. Applicants are encouraged to define low-rate production targets within their application, and contrast it with their current production capacity, if any exists.

1. **QUESTION:** Does the CEC provide assistance or guidance on permitting and regulatory approvals?

**ANSWER:** The CEC and its staff does not provide direct assistance or guidance for applicants to obtain permitting and/or regulatory approvals. Applicants should factor these processes into their project timelines if they are required for the proposed project.

1. **QUESTION:** Who will determine whether MRL 8 has been reached during the project term?

**ANSWER:** TheCEC does not, at this time, intend to make a strict determination whether MRL 8 has been achieved by the end of each funded project. However, MRL 8 is a target for award recipients to reach by the of the project and to that end, depending on project circumstances, CEC may seek to evaluate and determine whether the target has been met on a particular project.

1. **QUESTION:** Is there any other requirement related to plant size or quantity of hired people?

**ANSWER:** There are no requirements related to plant size, manufacturing capacity, or number of people hired as part of this solicitation.

1. **QUESTION:** Can an applicant apply as a prime/applicant for one project and as a sub-contractor for another project? Is there a prohibition of a single entity receiving multiple awards through this manner?

**ANSWER:** Yes, a company can apply as a Prime/applicant for one project and serve as a sub-contractor on a separate project. There is no restriction on an entity receiving funding on multiple projects in this manner.

# California Based Entities/Funds Spent in California

1. **QUESTION:** Does a company need to be incorporated in California to be eligible for this solicitation?

**ANSWER:** Companies are not required to be incorporated in California to be eligible for this solicitation. However, all corporations, limited liability companies (LLCs), limited partnerships (LPs) and limited liability partnerships (LLPs) that conduct intrastate business in California must be registered with the California Secretary of State and be in good standing prior to an awarded project being recommended for approval at a CEC Business Meeting.

Note, one scoring criterion in the solicitation takes into consideration the amount of CEC funding spent in California. The less funding spent in California, the lower the proposal will score under this criterion. Please see the Section IV.F. “Stage Two: Application Scoring” scoring criterion 6 for more information.

1. **QUESTION:** If equipment is supplied from out of state, but purchased through a local California distributed does that count as funds spent in California?

**ANSWER:** Yes, if equipment purchases are made through a California based distributor, that purchase counts as funds spent in California.

1. **QUESTION:** Are there any restrictions in having partners from out of state?

**ANSWER:** There are no restrictions on having partners from out of state. However, if CEC funds are budgeted for out of state entities, those funds may reduce an application’s evaluation score. Please see response to Question 43.

1. **QUESTION:** Does all equipment purchase need to be from companies in California?

**ANSWER:** No, equipment purchases can be made from companies outside of California. However, CEC funds spent outside of California may reduce an application’s evaluation score. Please see response to Question 43.

1. **QUESTION:** Can a project be located outside an IOU service territory within California, but still show proof of providing benefits to IOU ratepayers?

**ANSWER:** Projects are not required to be located in an IOU service territory. Note that any direct manufacturing activities and any pilot production lines that are established as a result of activities funded under this solicitation must be located in California, and are not required to be in an IOU service territory.