**Questions and Answers Document**

# **Disclaimer**

The following answers are based on California Energy Commission (CEC) staff’s interpretation of the questions received. The applicant is responsible for reviewing the Solicitation Manual and determining whether its proposed project is eligible for funding by reviewing the Eligibility Requirements within the solicitation. The CEC cannot give definitive advice as to whether a particular project is eligible for funding because not all proposal details are known.

**Table of Contents**

[**Disclaimer** 1](#_Toc84945575)

[**General/Administrative** 1](#_Toc84945576)

[**Technical** 4](#_Toc84945577)

# **General/Administrative**

1. **Will the slides, recording, and attendee list be shared?**

Yes. The workshop slides and attendee list can be found on the GFO-22-401 solicitation webpage: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/solicitations/2022-08/gfo-22-401-advancing-environmental-monitoring-technologies-floating-offshore>. The recording can be found on the workshop event webpage: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/event/funding-workshop/2022-09/pre-application-workshop-gfo-22-401-advancing-environmental>.

1. **Are only California-based organizations eligible for funding? May researchers, universities, or companies from outside California apply for grants?**

This solicitation “is open to all public and private entities with the exception of local publicly owned electric utilities,” as stated in Section II.A.1. Eligibility of the Solicitation Manual. Researchers, universities, or companies from outside of California are eligible to apply.

Also note, per Section II.A.3. California Secretary of State Registration of the Solicitation Manual, “All corporations, limited liability companies (LLCs), limited partnerships (LPs) and limited liability partnerships (LLPs) that conduct intrastate business in California are required to be registered and in good standing with the California Secretary of State prior to its project being recommended for approval at a CEC Business Meeting. For further information about registering with the California Secretary of State, refer to the California Secretary of State’s website at <https://sos.ca.gov>. If not currently registered with the California Secretary of State, applicants should contact the Secretary of State’s Office as soon as possible to avoid potential delays in beginning the proposed project(s) (should the application be successful).”

Please also see Section IV.F. Stage Two: Application Scoring Criterion 6 “CEC Funds Spent in California” of the solicitation manual, which assigns scoring points for spending CEC (i.e., grant) funds in California. The definition of what constitutes funds spent in California is described in Section I.L. Funds Spent in California of the Solicitation Manual. Note that applications will be incorporated by reference into any resulting grant agreement. Therefore, an applicant's commitment to spend a certain amount of CEC funds in California will be binding on the applicant, and failure to spend the committed amount could result in a decrease in grant amount.

1. **Can international entities apply?**

This solicitation “is open to all public and private entities with the exception of local publicly owned electric utilities,” as stated in Section II.A.1. Eligibility of the Solicitation Manual. Therefore, international entities are eligible.

However, international entities seeking to participate in this solicitation may be impacted by restrictions. For example, Section III.C.7. Budget Forms of the Solicitation Manual states, “The budget must NOT identify that EPIC grant funds will be spent outside of the United States or for out-of-country travel. However, match funds may cover these costs if there are no legal restrictions.” Thus, grant funds cannot be used for work performed outside of the United States. Some international entities have U.S. based branches or subsidiaries that may be better positioned to act as an applicant. International entities may also consider becoming match fund partners to a U.S.-based applicant to the solicitation. Prospective applicants looking for partnering opportunities for this funding opportunity should register on the CEC’s Empower Innovation website at <https://www.empowerinnovation.net/>.

Other possible restrictions include U.S. federal laws, including federal export control laws that prohibit certain activities between U.S. and foreign companies. These examples are not meant to be an exhaustive list of possible restrictions on a foreign company trying to obtain a CEC grant.

Please also see the response to Q.2 regarding scoring points for CEC funds spent in California.

1. **Are only the funds spent in California reimbursable?**

No. Reimbursable funds may be spent outside of California.

Please also see the response to Q.2 regarding scoring points for CEC funds spent in California.

1. **Can we hire consultants or experts outside of California? Any equipment?**

Yes. Expenses are reimbursable to support team members and equipment purchases from outside of California provided those expenses are allowable under the terms of the grant agreement. Please see Section III.C.7. Budget Forms of the Solicitation Manual and the instructions shown in each tab of the Budget, which is Attachment 7 of the solicitation. Please also see the terms and conditions regarding allowable expenses. Private entity applicants should see section 8 of the EPIC Standard Grant Terms and Conditions, available at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/research/contractors.html>

Please also see the response to Q.2 regarding scoring points for CEC funds spent in California.

1. **Do you have a list of people who I can collaborate with?**

Applicants are encouraged to sign up to the CEC’s Empower Innovation network, which can be found at <https://www.empowerinnovation.net/>, to connect with entrepreneurs, developers, investors, and local communities to partner with on their projects.

1. **Will the projects be subject to Assembly Bill (AB) 525 and be performed under project labor agreements?**

CEC staff does not anticipate that the projects funded under this solicitation will be subject to future AB 525 labor agreements. AB 525 directs the CEC to provide recommendations for workforce standards for offshore wind energy facilities and associated infrastructure, which CEC staff doesn't currently interpret as extending to work surrounding the lab-scale development of environmental monitoring technologies. However, this may change in the future depending upon the outcome of the AB 525 reports and potential future legislation, so CEC staff cannot guarantee that future activities under the solicitation will be exempt from any such requirements.

1. **Will prevailing wage be paid?**

Only the California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) and courts of competent jurisdiction may issue legally binding determinations that a particular project is or is not a “public work” subject to prevailing wage requirements. If an applicant is unsure whether its project is a “public work” as defined in the California Labor Code, it may be advisable to seek legal consultation and/or seek a timely determination from DIR or an appropriate court. For more information, please refer to Section 10. Prevailing Wage of the EPIC Standard Grant Terms and Conditions, which can be found on the CEC’s Funding Resources webpage here: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/funding-opportunities/funding-resources>.

# **Technical**

1. **Would the Cal Poly pier (a research and education facility without public access) be considered a lab? It extends 1 km offshore (into state waters). Thus, would research on top of the pier platform (above water level) be considered in state waters and off limits for this solicitation?**

For this solicitation, projects must aim to advance from technology readiness level (TRL) 3 to TRL 4 or 5 by the end of the project term. Table 1 of the Technology Readiness Assessment Guide (<https://www2.lbl.gov/dir/assets/docs/TRL%20guide.pdf>) states that TRL 4 and 5 are laboratory-scale technology development. At TRL 5, the system tested is almost prototypical. The work funded under this solicitation should be laboratory scale, not engineering scale. For example, within a traditional laboratory, experimental tank or tunnel tests can be used to simulate Wind Energy Area (WEA) conditions. Although the CEC cannot give definitive advice as to whether a particular project is eligible for funding because not all proposal details are known, testing at the pier could better represent the actual operating environment than a traditional laboratory, which would fall under TRL 6 and therefore be outside the scope of the solicitation. In addition, with the requirement to incorporate a minimum of two complementary monitoring technologies to cross-validate data or enhance the usefulness of data from either one alone, the system’s starting TRL would be lowered to TRL 3.

1. **The solicitation calls for technologies durable in the WEAs yet is limiting technologies only to lab scales. It is next to impossible to simulate the WEA conditions in the lab. Can you elaborate how the durability requirement can be achieved?**

Applicants must describe how they will use best available science to test and validate a system in a simulated laboratory environment representing the WEA(s). For example, to test durability in laboratory environments, testing can use fatigue, tensile, or degradation testing machines, with simulated conditions.

1. **If permits can be/are already secured for ocean testing, could that be included in the scope?**

No. Although the CEC cannot give definitive advice as to whether a particular project is eligible for funding because not all proposal details are known, ocean testing could better represent the actual operating environment than a traditional laboratory, thus falling under TRL 6 and outside the scope of the solicitation. In addition, proposed project activities cannot be tested in state waters, federal waters, or any other ocean or lake environments per Section I.C. Project Focus of the Solicitation Manual.

Please see the response to Q.9 regarding TRL targets for this solicitation.

1. **It could be more costly to simulate the environment than to inhabit it. Can testing be conducted in federal waters, outside of WEAs? Is there any possibility of conducting testing in state waters?**

No. Testing cannot occur in state waters, federal waters, or any other ocean or lake environments. Testing done under this solicitation must result in component validation in laboratory environments.

1. **If we are designing a monitoring technology, would you consider the platform for carrying the sensors, or is that not in the scope of this solicitation? This maneuverable, submersible, and self-rechargeable vehicle can provide more continuous data collection, reduce biases in data collection periods, and extend the range, duration, and depth coverage beyond the capabilities of stationary buoys.**

Projects funded through this solicitation must develop an integrated monitoring system for observing interactions between floating offshore wind (FOSW) structures and marine life or ecosystem processes to assess environmental risks and monitor impacts. Components that are integral to the system, such as housing components, can be considered depending on the technical merit and approach.

1. **Is the participation of a technology provider a requirement for a proposal?**

Participation of a technology provider is not a requirement under this solicitation; however, the lack of a technology provider might impact the application's score. Project proposals must demonstrate the project team’s expertise that will enable them to accomplish the solicitation’s objectives as described in Section I.C. Project Focus of the Solicitation Manual. Applications are scored based on several factors, including the team qualifications. Please also see Section IV.F. Stage Two: Application Scoring Criterion 4 “Team Qualifications, Capabilities, and Resources” of the Solicitation Manual. Competitive proposals will have team members secured and should include technology developers, scientists, and engineers with experience in environmental impacts, monitoring, and/or mitigation. In Attachment 4 Project Team Form, the applicant must identify by name all key personnel assigned to the project and clearly describe their individual areas of responsibility. Please see Section III.C. Application Content of the Solicitation Manual for more information.

1. **Would a monitoring system concentrated on just a component such as mooring system fall within the scope, or does it have to be for the whole floating offshore wind turbine?**

The monitoring system must be focused on environmental monitoring of marine life or ecosystem processes as a result of FOSW deployments. Projects can focus on specific components, such as mooring lines. The environmental monitoring system does not have to cover an entire floating offshore wind installation. However, this solicitation does not address monitoring components for their structural integrity (e.g., wear and tear). If the environmental monitoring system attaches to a FOSW component, such as the mooring lines, to detect environmental impacts, that would fall within the scope of the solicitation.

Please see Section I.C. Project Focus of the Solicitation Manual for the requirements related to describing the technical specifications, such as where the system will be mounted or installed on a FOSW installation when operational.

1. **TRL 5 relates to validation in relevant environment. Why would ocean testing not be included in TRL 5?**

Ocean testing is not included in TRL 5 because TRL 5 is described as technology development at the laboratory scale, specifically system validation in a laboratory environment.

This solicitation funds projects at TRL 3 that incorporate a minimum of two complementary monitoring technologies to cross-validate data or enhance the usefulness of data from either one alone. Additionally, these integrated technologies need to undergo preliminary testing in a simulated laboratory environment representing conditions in California’s WEAs, such as severe wind speeds, high pressure at depth, and low water temperatures.

1. **Will we be penalized for proposing a solution that has the possibility of advancing past TRL 5?**

As stated in Section I.C. Project Focus of the Solicitation Manual, projects must aim to advance the TRL from TRL 3 to TRL 4 or 5 by the end of the project term. Testing done under this solicitation must result in component validation in laboratory environments. This solicitation can fund the technology advancement through TRL 5, which is laboratory-scale technology development. Further TRL advancements beyond TRL 5 will not be funded under this solicitation.

Please also see Section IV.F. Stage Two: Application Scoring Criterion 1 “Technical Merit” of the Solicitation Manual, which assigns scoring points for providing the information described in Section I.C. Project Focus.

1. **Would this solicitation be relevant for a software solution as well (i.e., a software platform that sensor data is inputted into and then using AI to identify birds and marine wildlife)?**

Without more project details, CEC staff cannot determine whether the proposed software solution is eligible for this solicitation. CEC staff will review and evaluate project proposals based on the purpose and requirements of the solicitation. For example, eligible innovations must incorporate a minimum of two complementary monitoring technologies to cross-validate data collected during the project term or enhance the usefulness of data from either one alone.

1. **For the species detection example “Species detection and identification technologies to evaluate marine animal and bird species prevalence and estimate risk of impacts, can you provide further details regarding the requirement to “estimate risk of impacts”? Are we to provide an estimation of the risk to the marine life or to the installed structure?**

This solicitation will fund applied research and development projects to estimate risk to marine life (such as marine mammal entanglement or bird and bat collisions).

1. **Under “technology demonstration and deployment” in the solicitation manual, what determines if a project is “sufficiently large” or whether the conditions are “sufficiently reflective”?**

This solicitation will fund applied research and development projects, not technology demonstration and deployment projects. Please see Section II.B.1. Applied Research and Development Stage of the Solicitation Manual for more information.