

**Financial Assistance
Notice of Funding Opportunity
Part 1**



**U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
Office of Electricity (OE)
Blue-Sky Training Program for Grid Scale Energy Storage
Systems
Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: DE-FOA-0003497
Application due: February 2, 2025**

Modifications to this NOFO will be posted on Grants.gov and the FedConnect portal. Grants.gov and FedConnect will automatically notify applicants when a NOFO modification is processed. Applicants must be registered to this NOFO in Grants.gov to receive email notifications. Register in FedConnect as an interested party to this NOFO for announcement messages. It is recommended that you register as soon after release of the NOFO as possible to ensure you receive timely notice of any modifications or other announcements. See Registration Requirements in Part 2 of this NOFO.

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Before You Begin

Navigating the Notice of Funding Opportunity

The [OMB Memorandum M-24-11](#) directs federal agencies to reduce the burden on applicants in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process and limit the length of the NOFO information requests. With Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 NOFOs, DOE has separated the NOFO into two parts.

The NOFO Part 1 describes the specific DOE programmatic goals and evaluation criteria, eligibility, and other components that are specific to each funding opportunity. The NOFO Part 2 includes the fixed DOE requirements that generally do not change from NOFO to NOFO, including standard information for the application phase, expectations for award negotiations, and post-award requirements. Applicants must review both the NOFO Part 1 and the NOFO Part 2 prior to applying. To facilitate navigation, you will find links throughout this document to additional information found in Part 2.

There are several required one-time actions applicants must take before applying to this NOFO. Some of these actions may take several weeks, so it is vital applicants build in enough time to complete them. Failure to complete these actions could interfere with application or negotiation deadlines or the ability to receive an award if selected. If you have previously completed the necessary registrations, make sure your registration is active and up to date. All registrations are free. Please refer to [NOFO Part 2, Get Registered](#), for additional information.

This announcement is published in conjunction with NOFO Part 2 Version 1.0.

I. Basic Information

A. Key Facts

Issuing Agency	Department of Energy, Office of Electricity (OE)
Funding Opportunity Title	Blue-Sky Training Program for Grid Scale Energy Storage Systems
Announcement Type	Initial
Funding Opportunity Number	DE-FOA-0003497
Funding Instrument	Cooperative Agreement
Assistance Listing Number	No.: 81.122 Electricity Research Development and Analysis
Funding Opportunity Description	Development of education and training programs for emergency response to unanticipated energy storage system (ESS) failure.
Program Goals & Objective(s)	This NOFO aligns with the Administration’s priority to protect our nation’s energy infrastructure from cyber threats, physical attack, and natural disaster.
Topic Area(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of ESS Emergency Response Plan & Training and Safety Validation Report
Eligible Applicants	<p>Eligibility will be restricted to prime applicants that, as of the closing date for this NOFO, are one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Owners/Operators of a utility scale ESS or a facility sited ESS that is 100 kW or greater in size, such as those used to support commercial, industrial, and public service facilities, (2) a host site entity with access to a utility scale or facility sited ESS that is 100 kW or greater in size, (3) an entity with an agreement that grants an appropriate level of access a utility scale or facility sited ESS that is 100 kW or greater in size needed to conduct in person site visits and exercises described in this NOFO <p>The following types of entities are eligible to participate as sub applicants:</p>

KEY DATES

Notice of Funding Opportunity Issue Date:
December 6, 2024

Application Deadline:
February 2, 2025

Anticipated Selection Notification Date:
June 17, 2025

Anticipated Award Date:
September 15, 2025

Estimated Period of Performance:
September 15, 2025 – September 14, 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions of higher education; • For-profit organization; • Nonprofit organization; • State and local governmental entities; and • Indian Tribes, as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 25 U.S.C. § 5304
FedConnect URL and Helpdesk	FedConnect NOFO URL FedConnect Helpdesk
Grants.gov URL and Helpdesk	Grants.gov URL Grants.gov Support

1. Funding Details

- Approximate total available funding: \$4,125,000
- Approximate number of awards: 15
- Approximate dollar amount of individual awards: \$275,000
- Minimum cost share required: Cost share is not required for this NOFO
- Approximate award project period: 12 months
- Anticipated length of budget periods: 12 months

2. Period of Performance

DOE anticipates making awards comprised of one budget period. Project continuation will be contingent upon several elements, including satisfactory performance and DOE’s Go/No-Go decision. For a complete list and more information on the Go/No-Go review, see the [NOFO Part 2, Award Administration Information](#).

B. Executive Summary

The Office of Electricity provides leadership to ensure that the Nation’s energy delivery system provides reliable, resilient, secure, and affordable electricity. Maintaining a robust electricity grid is critical as the nation experiences rapid transformation in how electricity is both generated and consumed due to trends in how the generation mix is changing, the amount and location of electricity demand, and increasing number of threats to infrastructure security and reliability. In OE, The Energy Storage program accelerates development of bi-directional electrical energy storage technologies to serve as a key component of a reliable, resilient, and affordable future-ready grid. The program’s Storage Validation portfolio is focused on supporting activities that reduce commercialization and deployment barriers for emerging energy storage technologies to facilitate safe and effective use of these systems.

The energy industry has experienced a number of high-profile threats to infrastructure including multiple extreme weather/climate events, intentional attacks on electric grid infrastructure, and a ransomware attack on a major oil and gas pipeline. As more ESS continues to be deployed in the field, stakeholders must consider how to properly plan and prepare for threats that may have similar

potentially negative impacts as described in these other energy sector emergency events. Recent ESS fires demonstrate the serious consequences that can arise from an ESS emergency event. It also highlights the risk of not having clearly defined emergency response and prevention measures for those involved in managing and responding to such events.

C. Agency Contact Information

Office of Electricity
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Questions regarding this NOFO must be submitted through the FedConnect portal.

DISCLAIMER: Applicants are discouraged from submitting information considered proprietary unless it is deemed essential for proper evaluation of the application. If the application contains information that the applicant organization considers to be trade secrets, information that is commercial or financial, or information that is privileged or confidential, the pages containing that information must be identified as specified in the application instructions. When such information is included in the application, it will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act, with the understanding that the information will be used or disclosed only for evaluation of the application. The information contained in the application will be protected by DOE from unauthorized disclosure, consistent with the need for merit review of applications of financial assistance awards to assure the integrity of the competitive process and the accuracy and completeness of the information. If a federal financial assistance award is made as a result of or in connection with an application, the federal government has the right to use or disclose the information to the extent authorized by law. This restriction does not limit the federal government's right to use the information if it is obtained without restriction from another source.

II. Eligibility

To be considered for substantive evaluation, an applicant's submission must meet the criteria set forth below. If the application does not meet these eligibility requirements, it will be considered ineligible and removed from further evaluation and ineligible for any award. DOE will not make eligibility determinations for potential applicants prior to the date on which applications to this NOFO must be submitted. The decision whether to apply in response to this NOFO lies solely with the applicant. The information included here is specific to eligibility requirements for this NOFO. For eligibility requirements applicable to all NOFOs, please consult the [NOFO Part 2, Eligibility](#).

A. Eligible Applicants

To be considered for substantive evaluation, an applicant's submission must meet the criteria set forth below. If the application does not meet these eligibility requirements, it will be considered ineligible and removed from further evaluation.

1. Restricted Eligibility

In accordance with 2 CFR 910.126, Competition, eligibility will be restricted to prime applicants that, as of the closing date for this NOFO, are one of the following:

- (1) Owners/Operators of a utility scale ESS or a facility sited ESS that is 100 kW or greater in size, such as those used to support commercial, industrial, and public service facilities,
- (2) a host site entity with access to a utility scale or facility sited ESS that is 100 kW or greater in size,
- (3) an entity with an agreement that grants an appropriate level of access a utility scale or facility sited ESS that is 100 kW or greater in size needed to conduct in person site visits and exercises described in this NOFO.

2. Domestic Entities

Domestic entities are eligible to apply as prime applicants if they meet the eligibility restrictions described above, or sub applicants.

The following types of domestic entities are eligible to participate as sub applicants of this NOFO:

- Institutions of higher education;
- For-profit organization;
- Nonprofit organization;
- State and local governmental entities; and
- Indian Tribes, as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 25 U.S.C. § 5304¹

¹ "Indian Tribe," for the purposes of this NOFO and as defined in in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act ([25 U.S.C. § 5304](#)), means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act ([85 Stat. 688](#)) [[43 U.S.C. § 1601, et seq.](#)], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians. Federally Recognized Indian Tribes are also considered disadvantaged communities for the purposes of Justice40 requirements in this NOFO per https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/M-23-09_Signed_CEQ_CPO.pdf.

To qualify as a domestic entity, the entity must be organized, chartered, or incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of a particular state or territory of the United States or under the laws of the United States; have majority domestic ownership and control; and have a physical place of business in the United States.

3. Foreign Entity Participation

In general, foreign entities are not eligible to apply as either a recipient or subrecipient. In limited circumstances, DOE may approve a waiver to allow a foreign entity to participate as a recipient or subrecipient.

A foreign entity may submit an application to this NOFO, but the application must be accompanied by an explicit written waiver request. Likewise, if the applicant seeks to include a foreign entity as a subrecipient, the applicant must submit a separate explicit written waiver request in the application for each proposed foreign subrecipient. Please see *NOFO Part 2, Application Content Requirements* for the requirements for submission of a foreign entity waiver request. The applicant does not have the right to appeal DOE's decision concerning a waiver request.

Prime recipients and subrecipients must be legally formed in the United States, have majority domestic ownership and control, and have a physical location for business operations in the United States.

Entities that are organized, chartered, or incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of the United States or a particular state or territory of the United States and have a physical location for business operations in the United States are eligible to apply for funding as a recipient or subrecipient.

Foreign Entity Participation

A foreign entity is eligible to apply for funding as a recipient if it designates in the application a subsidiary or affiliate incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of a state or territory of the United States to be the recipient. The application must state the nature of the corporate relationship between the foreign entity and domestic subsidiary or affiliate.

Foreign entities may request a waiver of the requirement to designate a subsidiary in the United States as the recipient in the application (i.e., a foreign entity may request that it be the recipient). To do so, the applicant must submit an explicit written waiver request in the application.

NOFO Part 2, Application Content Requirements lists the information that must be included in a request to waive this requirement. The applicant does not have the right to appeal DOE's decision concerning a waiver request.

Participant Limitations

Participation of the following entities are limited as follows.

- DOE FFRDCs² are eligible to apply for funding as a subrecipient but are not eligible to apply as a recipient.

² FFRDCs are public-private partnerships that conduct research for the U.S. government. A listing of FFRDCs can be found at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/ffrdclist/>.

- Non-DOE FFRDCs are eligible to participate as a subrecipient but are not eligible to apply as a recipient.
- Federal agencies and instrumentalities (other than DOE) are eligible to participate as a subrecipient but are typically not eligible to apply as a recipient.
- NETL is not eligible for award under this announcement and may not be proposed as a subrecipient on another entity's application. An application that includes NETL as a recipient or subrecipient will be considered non-responsive.

Performance of Work in the United States

All work for the awards under this NOFO must be performed in the United States. To request a waiver of this requirement, the applicant must submit an explicit waiver request in the application. Absent an approved waiver, such costs will not be allowable under the award. The [NOFO Part 2, Application Content Requirements](#) lists the requirements for submission of a foreign work waiver request.

Ineligible Participants

The following entities are ineligible for participation in this NOFO as a recipient, subrecipient, or subcontractor.

- In accordance with 2 CFR 200.214, entities banned from doing business with the U.S. government such as entities debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in federal programs.
- Entities identified on Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control Treasury's Sanctions Program Specially Designated Nationals list are prohibited from doing business with the United States government and are not eligible. See [OFAC - Sanctions List Service \(treas.gov\)](https://www.treas.gov).
- Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that engaged in lobbying activities after December 31, 1995, are not eligible to apply for funding.

Entity of Concern Prohibition

Entities of Concern are prohibited from participating in projects selected under this NOFO (see [NOFO Part 2, Eligibility, Other Eligibility Information, Entity of Concern Prohibition](#) section for details and definitions).

B. Limitation on Number of Applications Eligible for Review

An entity may submit multiple applications for each topic area of this NOFO as long as each application describes a unique, scientifically distinct project. If an entity submits duplicate applications, the DOE will only review the last submission. This limitation does not prohibit an applicant from collaborating on other applications (e.g., as a potential sub applicant).

C. Cost Sharing

Applicants are expected to follow through on estimated cost share commitments proposed in their applications if selected for award negotiations. Please refer to the [NOFO Part 2, Eligibility](#) for more information on Cost Sharing.

1. Cost Share Requirements

Cost sharing is not required under this NOFO.

D. FFRDC Eligibility Criteria

1. DOE and Non-DOE FFRDCs as a Subrecipient

As long as they have no conflict, DOE and non-DOE FFRDCs may be proposed as a subrecipient on another entity's application subject to the following guidelines:

Authorization for non-DOE FFRDCs

The federal agency sponsoring the FFRDC must authorize in writing the use of the FFRDC on the proposed project and this authorization must be submitted with the application. The use of a FFRDC must be consistent with its authority under its award.

Authorization for DOE FFRDCs

The cognizant Contracting Officer for the FFRDC must authorize in writing the use of the FFRDC on the proposed project and this authorization must be submitted with the application. The following wording is acceptable for this authorization:

Authorization is granted for the Laboratory to participate in the proposed project. The work proposed for the Laboratory is consistent with or complementary to the missions of the Laboratory and will not adversely impact execution of the DOE assigned programs at the Laboratory.

Funding, Cost Share, and Subaward with FFRDCs

The recipient and FFRDC are responsible for entering into an appropriate subaward that will govern, among other things, the funding of the FFRDC portion of the work from the recipient under its DOE award. Such an agreement must be fully executed prior to the FFRDC starting work directly allocable to the FA award. The DOE funding office will provide funding for the DOE FFRDC or non-DOE FFRDC, participating as a sub awardee through the DOE financial assistance award to the recipient.

The applicant should prepare the budgets using rates appropriate for funding the FFRDCs through subawards. The applicant's cost share requirement will be based on the total cost of the project, including the applicant's, the subrecipient's, and the FFRDC's portions of the project.

The recipient will be the responsible authority regarding the settlement and satisfaction of all contractual and administrative issues, including but not limited to disputes and claims arising out of any agreement between the recipient and the FFRDC.

Limit on FFRDC Effort

The FFRDC effort, in aggregate, shall not exceed 25% of the total project cost.³

³ Total project cost is the sum of the government share, including FFRDC costs if applicable, and the recipient share of project costs.

III. Program Description

A. Program Purpose

The Blue-Sky Training Program (BSTP) aims to enhance community safety for utilities with ESS. As storage technologies continue to be deployed, it is critical that communities are “storage ready” and that necessary stakeholders are brought to the table to ensure a new or existing ESS will operate safely and reliably. In localities across the country, uncertainty over proper response procedures to cyber or physical security threats and unanticipated failures of ESS can delay or even prevent deployment. As identified in the 2024 DOE Energy Storage Safety Strategic Plan⁴, gaps in this area include increasing knowledge about ESS safety prior to an incident, increasing situational awareness during an incident, and managing the aftermath of an incident.

B. Program Goals and Objectives

The BSTP will educate and train first responders, law enforcement agencies, local communities, utilities, authorities having jurisdictions (AHJs), and others on how to respond to unanticipated ESS failures including those caused by cyber threats, physical threats, and other unanticipated operational failures.

Detailed technical descriptions of the specific Topic Areas are provided in the sections that follow.

C. Expected Performance Goals

Anticipated major objectives and outcomes include but are not limited to:

1. Provide resources to bring community stakeholders to the table that may traditionally not be involved in decision making around ESS deployment, operation, and safety planning.
2. Development of emergency response plans and trainings that participating community stakeholders, including first responders and AHJs, will walkthrough at an ESS site.
3. Development of a safety validation report which describes site-wide criteria that will need to be met to verify that the needed safety measures/functions are incorporated into the ESS site.
4. Conduct tabletop exercise and on-site boots-on-the-ground drills that is anticipated to bring stakeholders together to address safety, emergency response, and security concerns in deploying and operating energy storage technologies.

D. Topic Area

This NOFO contains one Topic Area:

Development of ESS Emergency Response Plan and Training and Safety Validation Report:

The topic area is focused on the development two main deliverables: a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan and Training (ERPT) program and Safety Validation Report (SVR). These deliverables will involve a specific ESS deployment to address and mitigate threats, manage risk, and outline roles and responsibilities to ensure the safety of the hosting community, personnel, and utility assets.

⁴ [Energy Storage Safety Strategic Plan](#)

A pre-established Statement of Project Objectives (SOPs) has been developed for this NOFO, provided in Attachment 1. Applicant selection will be contingent on the use and adherence to the SOPO.

E. Applications Specifically Not of Interest

The following types of applications will be deemed nonresponsive and will not be reviewed or considered (Please also refer to the [Responsiveness Review](#) section below):

- Applications that fall outside the technical parameters specified in the [Topic Areas](#) section above.
- Demonstration of new or developing technology.
- Fundamental or laboratory Research and Development.

F. Statement of Substantial Involvement

DOE anticipates awarding cooperative agreements under this NOFO, which include a statement of DOE's "substantial involvement" in the work performed under the resulting awards. For cooperative agreements, DOE does not limit its involvement to the administrative requirements of the award. Instead, DOE has substantial involvement in the direction and redirection of the technical aspects of the project. DOE's substantial involvement in resulting awards may include the following:

- A. DOE shares responsibility with the recipient for the management, control, direction, and performance of the project.
- B. DOE may intervene in the conduct or performance of work under this award for programmatic reasons. Intervention includes the interruption or modification of the conduct or performance of project activities.
- C. DOE may redirect or discontinue funding the project based on the outcome of DOE's evaluation of the project at the Go/No-Go decision point(s).
- D. DOE participates in major project decision-making processes.
- E. DOE may review project plans, including as required: project management, testing, cybersecurity, interoperability, data management, and technology transfer/commercialization plan in a timely manner and then recommend alternate approaches if the plans do not address critical programmatic objectives.
- F. DOE will conduct periodic reviews to ensure adequate progress and that the work accomplishes the program and project objectives. DOE may recommend alternate approaches or shifting work emphasis, if needed.
- G. DOE may review scientific/technical reports to ensure programmatic needs and the requirements of the Financial Assistance award instrument, including intellectual property rights, are satisfied. If necessary, DOE will provide comments to the Recipient in a timely manner.
- H. DOE may promote and facilitate technology transfer activities, including disseminating program results through presentations and publications.
- I. DOE will serve as scientific/technical liaison between recipients and other DOE programs.

G. Statutory Authority

The programmatic authorizing statute is:

- Public Law (PL) 95-91, DOE Organization Act
- Energy Act of 2020 Pub. L. 116–260, div. Z, title III, §3201, 42 U.S.C. § 17232

Awards made under this announcement will fall under the purview of 2 CFR Part 200 (rev. date 10/01/2024) as adopted and supplemented by 2 CFR Part 910.

IV. Application Content and Form

This section includes application information specific to this NOFO Part 1. Refer to the [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#) for standard information that applies to all DOE NOFOs such as formatting and content requirements, and funding restrictions.

A. Summary

The application process includes:

Application Submission Phase	Eligibility for Submission
Application	Must be submitted by the specified due date and time to be eligible for comprehensive merit review.

B. Application Content Requirements

Each application must be limited to a single concept. Applications must conform to the following requirements and must not exceed the stated page limits. Please refer to the [NOFO Part 2, Application Content and Form](#) for a complete list of application requirements. Detailed guidance on the content and form of NOFO-specific requirements is provided following the [Summary of Application Requirements](#) table below.

1. Covered Individual Definition, Designation, and Responsibility

Several of the Application Content Requirements listed below and in the NOFO Part 2 are required of covered individuals.

For the purposes of this NOFO, a Covered Individual means:

Covered Individual means an individual who (a) contributes in a substantive, meaningful way to the development or execution of the scope of work of a project proposed for funding by DOE, and (b) is designated as a covered individual by DOE.

DOE designates as covered individuals any principal investigator (PI); project director (PD); co-principal investigator (Co-PI); co-project director (Co-PD); project manager; and any individual regardless of title that is functionally performing as a PI, PD, Co-PI, Co-PD, or project manager.

In addition, DOE designates technical staff (e.g., postdoctoral fellows/researchers and graduate students) as covered individuals for the purpose of this funding opportunity.

DOE may further designate covered individuals during award negotiations or the award period of performance.

2. Summary of Application Requirements

Component	File Format	Page Limit	File Name
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	Form	n/a	N/A
Technical Volume	PDF	15	TechnicalVolume.pdf
Letters of Commitment	PDF	1 page each	LOC.pdf
Project Management Plan	PDF	n/a	PMP.pdf
Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	MS Excel	n/a	SF-424A.xls or .xlsx
Budget Justification Workbook	MS Excel	n/a	Budget_Justification.xls or .xlsx
Subrecipient Budget Justification	MS Excel	n/a	Subrecipient_Budget_Justification.xls or .xlsx
Work Proposal for FFRDC, (see DOE O 412.1A)	PDF	n/a	WP.pdf
Authorization for Non-DOE or DOE FFRDCs	PDF	n/a	FFRDCAuth.pdf
Waiver for Foreign Entity Participation	PDF	n/a	FEW.pdf
Performance of Work in the United States (Foreign Work Waiver)	PDF	n/a	FWW.pdf
Resumes (Non-Research and Development (R&D))	PDF	3 pages each	Resumes.pdf
Current and Pending Support (for each covered individual)	PDF	n/a	CPS.pdf
Digital Persistent Identifier (for each covered individual)	N/A	N/A	Include in Current & Pending Support
Transparency of Foreign Connections	PDF	n/a	BusinessSensitive_TFC.pdf
Potentially Duplicative Funding Notice	PDF	n/a	PDFN.pdf
Project/Performance Site Location(s)	Form	n/a	N/A
Environmental Questionnaire	PDF	n/a	ENV.pdf
Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable (SF-LLL)	PDF	n/a	SF-LLL.pdf
Certification Regarding Lobbying (OMB 4040-0013)	PDF	n/a	Cert Lobbying.pdf
Summary for Public Release	PDF	1	Summary.pdf
Summary Slide	MS Power Point	1	Slide.pdf

3. Technical Volume

The Technical Volume must conform to the following content and form requirements. This volume must address the technical review criteria as discussed in [Technical Review Criteria](#).

Applicants must provide sufficient citations and references to the primary research literature to justify the claims and approaches made in the Technical Volume. However, DOE and reviewers are under no obligation to review cited sources.

The Technical Volume to the application may not be more than 15 pages, including the cover page, table of contents, and all citations, charts, graphs, maps, photos, or other graphics, and must include all information below. The applicant should consider the weighting of each of the technical review criteria (see [Technical Review Criteria](#)) when preparing the Technical Volume.

Cover Page:

The cover page must include all of the following:

- The project title
- Specific NOFO topic areas (if applicable)
- Technical and business POCs (e-mail addresses and telephone numbers)
- Senior/key personnel and other covered individuals
- The project team, including recipient name, entity type and names of all team member organizations
- The project location(s)
- The proposed total federal funding level, cost share and period of performance
- The proposed federal funding level and cost share for each project participant
- Statements regarding confidentiality

A sample technical Volume Cover Page is included as an attachment to this announcement.

Table of Contents: Applicant to capture, at a minimum, all of the required sections identified in this table.

Project Objectives

This section should provide a clear, concise statement of the specific objectives/aims of the proposed project.

Merit Review Criteria Discussion

The section should be formatted to address each of the merit review criterion and sub criterion listed in “Technical Review Criteria”. Provide sufficient information so that reviewers will be able to evaluate the application in accordance with these merit review criteria. DOE/NNSA will evaluate and consider only those applications that address separately each of the merit review criterion and sub-criterion.

Statement of Project Objectives

Applicants must clearly describe their approach, methodology, and capabilities for executing the established SOPO to ensure a comprehensive understanding.

Relevance and Outcomes/Impacts

This section should explain the relevance of the effort to the objectives in the program announcement and the expected outcomes and/or impacts. The justification for the proposed project should include a clear statement of the importance of the project in terms of the utility of the outcomes and the target community of beneficiaries.

Roles of Participants

For multi-organizational or multi-investigator projects, describe the roles and the work to be performed by each participant/investigator, business agreements between the applicant and participants, and how the various efforts will be integrated and managed.

Multiple Principal Investigators

The applicant, whether a single organization or team/partnership/consortium, must indicate if the project will include multiple PIs. This decision is solely the responsibility of the applicant. If multiple PIs will be designated, the application must identify the Contact PI/Project Coordinator and provide a "Coordination and Management Plan" that describes the organization structure of the project as it pertains to the designation of multiple PIs. This plan should, at a minimum, include:

- Process for making decisions on scientific/technical direction;
- Publications;
- intellectual property issues;
- communication plans;
- procedures for resolving conflicts; and
- PIs' roles and administrative, technical, and scientific responsibilities for the project.

Facilities and Other Resources

Identify the facilities (e.g., office, laboratory, computer, etc.) to be used at each performance site listed and, if appropriate, indicate their capacities, pertinent capabilities, relative proximity, and extent of availability to the project. Describe only those resources that are directly applicable to the proposed work. Provide any information describing the other resources available to the project such as machine and electronics shops.

Equipment

List important items of equipment already available for this project and, if appropriate, note the location and pertinent capabilities of each. If you are proposing to acquire equipment, describe comparable equipment, if any, already at your organization and explain why it cannot be used.

Identification of Potential Conflicts of Interest or Bias in Selection of Reviewers (Not Included in Page Limitation)

Provide the following information in this section:

Collaborators and Co-editors: List in alphabetical order all persons, including their current organizational affiliation, who are, or who have been, collaborators or co-authors with you on a research project, book or book article, report, abstract, or paper during the 48 months preceding the submission of this application. Also, list any individuals who are currently, or have been, co-editors with you on a special issue of a journal, compendium, or conference proceedings during the 24 months preceding the submission of this application. If there are no collaborators or co-editors to report, state "None."

Graduate and Postdoctoral Advisors and Advisees: List the names and current organizational affiliations of your graduate advisor(s) and principal postdoctoral sponsor(s) during the last 5 years. Also, list the names and current organizational affiliations of your graduate students and postdoctoral associates.

Bibliography (Not included in page limitation)

If applicable: Provide a bibliography for any references cited in the Technical Volume section. This section must include only bibliographic citations.

C. Funding Restrictions

Program-specific funding restrictions applicable to awards funded under this NOFO are identified below. Standard funding restrictions are described in the [NOFO Part 2, Funding Restrictions](#) section.

Applicable Funding Restrictions		
Title	Location	Additional Information
Allowable Costs	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Pre-Award Costs	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Performance of Work in the United States (Foreign Work Waiver Requirement)	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Foreign Travel	NOFO Part 2	Foreign Travel is not allowed for awards made under this NOFO
Lobbying	NOFO Part 2	Applicable to awards made under this NOFO
Equipment and Supplies	NOFO Part 2	Purchasing American-made equipment and supplies is applicable to this award.

V. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

There are several one-time actions applicants must take before applying to this NOFO. Some of these may take several weeks, so it is vital applicants build in enough time to complete them. Failure to complete these actions could interfere with application or negotiation deadlines or the ability to receive an award if selected. These requirements are outlined in detail in the [NOFO Part 2, Get Registered](#).

A. Required Registrations

1. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. To register, go to SAM.gov Entity Registration and click Get Started. From the same page, you can also click on the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register.

Each applicant must:

1. Be registered in SAM.gov before submitting an application;
2. Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier in the application; and
3. Continue to maintain an active registration in SAM.gov with current information at all times during which you have an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal agency.

DOE may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time DOE is ready to make a federal award, the DOE will determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

2. FedConnect

Register in FedConnect at <https://fedconnect.net>. For more information about the registration requirements, review the FedConnect Ready, Set, Go! Guide at https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/Marketing/Documents/FedConnect_Ready_Set_Go.pdf. The SAM and UEI must be obtained before this registration can be initiated.

3. Grants.gov

Register in Grants.gov at <https://www.grants.gov/register> to set up your Workspace and to receive automatic updates when amendments to the NOFO are posted. Doing so requires a Login.gov registration as well. An applicant cannot submit an application through Grants.gov unless registered. See step-by-step instructions for applicants at How to Apply for Grants website at <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants>.

B. Application Package

1. Grants.gov

The application package requirements are outlined in the [Application Content and Form](#) section above. The application package forms for application requirements are included in Grants.gov. The application forms and instructions are available on Grants.gov at <https://www.grants.gov/> under the NOFO number identified on the NOFO Cover Page.

Note: The maximum file size that can be uploaded to the Grants.gov website is 50MB. Files larger than 50MB cannot be uploaded and hence cannot be submitted for review. If a file is larger than 50MB but is still within the maximum page limit specified in the NOFO, it must be broken into parts and denoted to that effect. For example:

- TechnicalVolume_Part_1
- TechnicalVolume_Part_2

DOE will not accept late submissions that resulted from technical difficulties due to uploading files that exceed 50MB.

Electronic Authorization of Applications and Award Documents

Submission of an application and supplemental information under this NOFO through electronic systems used by the DOE, including Grants.gov, constitutes the authorized representative's approval and electronic signature.

C. Submission Date and Times

All required submissions must be submitted to the Grants.gov site identified in the [Key Facts](#) section of NOFO Part 1 no later than 5 p.m. ET on the dates provided on [Key Facts](#) section.

There may be more than one deadline, depending on whether a letter of intent and a concept paper is required.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit all required application documents at least 48 hours in advance of the submission deadline. Under normal conditions (i.e., at least 48 hours before the submission deadline), applicants should allow at least one hour to submit application documents. Once the application documents are submitted in the Grants.gov site identified in the NOFO Part 1, applicants may revise or update that submission until the expiration of the applicable deadline. If changes are made to any of these documents, the applicant must resubmit them before the applicable deadline. DOE will not extend the submission deadline for applicants that fail to submit required information by the applicable deadline due to server/connection congestion.

D. Intergovernmental Review

This NOFO is not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

VI. Application Review Information

A. Standards for Application Evaluation

Applications that are determined to be eligible will be evaluated in accordance with this NOFO and the guidance provided in the “DOE Merit Review Guide for Financial Assistance,” effective October 1, 2020, which is available at: <https://energy.gov/management/downloads/merit-review-guide-financial-assistance-and-unsolicited-proposals-current>.

B. Responsiveness Review

The following applications will be deemed nonresponsive and will not be reviewed or considered:

- Project concepts or approaches not based on established scientific principles.
- Project concepts or approaches identified specifically as NOT of interest (see the [Applications Specifically Not of Interest](#) section above).

C. Review Criteria

1. Compliance Criteria

All applicant submissions for applications must:

- Comply with the applicable content and form requirements listed in Application Content Requirements and Submission Requirements and Deadlines of the NOFO Part 1 and 2;
- Include all required documents;
- Be uploaded successfully in Grants.gov indicated in the [Key Facts](#) section above including clicking the “Submit” button; and
- Comply with the submission deadline stated in [Key Facts](#).
- The project team will require at least one (1) organization: First Responders, Local Authorities, Community Stakeholders.

DOE will not review or consider submissions submitted through means other than the Grants.gov site indicated in [Key Facts](#), submissions submitted after the applicable deadline, or incomplete submissions.

If required in the [Key Facts](#) section, applicants must submit a letter of intent and a concept paper by 5:00 p.m. ET on the due date listed on the [Key Facts](#) section to be eligible to submit an application. If required, applicants who do not submit a letter of intent and concept paper are not eligible to submit an application.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit all required application documents at least 48 hours in advance of the submission deadline. Under normal conditions (i.e., at least 48 hours before the submission deadline), applicants should allow at least one hour to submit application documents. Once the application documents are submitted in the Grants.gov site identified in the [Key Facts](#) section, applicants may revise or update that submission until the expiration of the applicable deadline. If changes are made to any of these documents, the applicant must resubmit them before the applicable deadline. DOE will not extend the submission deadline for applicants that fail to submit required information by the applicable deadline due to server/connection congestion.

2. Technical Review Criteria

Applications

Applications will be evaluated against the technical review criteria shown below. All sub-criteria are of equal weight.

The following evaluation criteria will be utilized by the Technical Evaluation Committee and Federal Merit Review Panel members in conducting their evaluations of applications subjected to comprehensive merit review.

Review Criterion Overview	
Criterion	Weight
Criterion 1: Education and Innovation	30%
Criterion 2: Significance and Impact	25%
Criterion 3: Management Approach	15%
Criterion 4: Team and Resources	30%

CRITERION 1: EDUCATION AND INNOVATION (30%)

This criterion will evaluate the educational potential and innovation of the proposed project as detailed in the application. This criterion will also be used to gauge the degree of which the educational programs will prepare the community through the proposed solution in comparison to contemporary guidelines.

1. Level of the Applicant's/project team's understanding of the existing safety protocols and requirements as indicated by the degree of clarity and thoroughness articulated in the description of the proposed approach.
2. Extent to which the proposed project is innovative compared to previous and ongoing educational programs.
3. Adequacy of the plan to ensure significant engagement of multiple community stakeholder groups.

CRITERION 2: SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT (25%)

This criterion will evaluate the significance of implementation of the proposed project, and the resultant impact to operational efficiency, safety, resiliency, and reliability of electricity delivery systems.

1. Extent to which the proposed project outcomes meets or exceeds the goals specified in the NOFO.
2. Degree to which the application clearly and convincingly describes/explains the likelihood of improved community response to an unanticipated ESS failure over existing safety plans.
3. Degree to which the application clearly and convincingly conveys broad safety preparedness impacts to utility-scale ESS sites.
4. The size of the ESS and the surrounding community potentially affected by a potential failure or emergency event.
5. Extent to which the proposed approach fosters collaboration and would lead to dissemination of data, results, and lessons learned to relevant entities not immediately involved with the project.

CRITERION 3: MANAGEMENT APPROACH (15%)

This criterion will evaluate the level of the Applicant's management skills and the adequacy, appropriateness, and reasonableness of the proposed management strategy to achieve the stated goals and objectives of both the NOFO and the proposed project as articulated through the Project Management Plan (PMP).

1. Level of the Applicant's project management skills and thoroughness of the PMP as demonstrated by the use of sound project management principles to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the project team, an appropriate schedule of tasks, with associated interdependencies, milestones, and the use of sound risk mitigation strategies and plans. At a minimum, the PMP must address the following elements:
 - Executive Summary – clarity and conciseness of the project description which, at a minimum, must discuss the objectives, goals, and expected results.
 - Key Personnel – appropriate utilization of the project team's key personnel; including the principal investigator (PI), business point of contact, and any other individuals having significant tasks or responsibilities in the execution of the project.
 - Funding and Costing Profile – adequacy of detail (including a Budget Table and Quarterly Spending Plan) in describing how the Applicant will manage and monitor the execution of the project budget.
 - Milestone Log – extent to which each milestone in the Milestone Log is appropriate, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely, verifiable, and shows progress toward achievement of project goals. At a minimum, each milestone must include a description, planned completion date, and verification method.
 - Project Schedule – adequacy and relevance of interdependencies between tasks. The schedule must clearly indicate milestones identified in the Milestone Log and include a proposed project timeline broken down by phase and task (as identified in the provided SOPO template) with team members and their roles. The schedule must also indicate the deliverables identified in the Project Deliverables Log, which must include each deliverable's title, associated phase/task, and planned completion date.
 - Risk Management – extent to which the application identifies and defines the potential risks that may impact project success and the adequacy of the proposed approach to continue to assess and address risks throughout the project.

CRITERION 4: TEAM AND RESOURCES (30%)

This criterion will evaluate the likelihood that the project team, facilities, and other resources are appropriate and sufficient to achieve the project's proposed goals and objectives.

1. Adequacy and appropriateness of the qualifications, expertise, and experience of key personnel and team members.
2. Suitability of the project team that includes representation from the following groups:
 - A. First Responders
 - B. Local Authorities
 - C. Community Stakeholders
3. Availability of key personnel.
4. (As applicable) The appropriateness, and quality of past peer reviewed publications of key personnel and team members demonstrate the team's technical expertise and past results.
5. Degree of demonstrated experience and past collaboration of the project team in completing comparable efforts.
6. Level of dedication of the project team as demonstrated by letters of commitment that clearly

identify each participant's role and contribution.

7. Availability, appropriateness, adequacy, and condition of facilities and equipment.
8. Diverse partnerships that are conducive to inter-disciplinary knowledge generation.

D. Other Selection Factors

In addition to the above criteria, the Selection Official may consider the following program policy factors in determining which applications to select for award negotiations:

1. The degree to which the proposed project exhibits technological diversity when compared to the existing DOE project portfolio and other projects selected from the subject NOFO;
2. The degree to which the proposed project, including proposed cost share, optimizes the use of available DOE funding to achieve programmatic objectives;
3. The level of industry involvement and demonstrated ability to accelerate demonstration and commercialization and overcome key market barriers;
4. The degree to which the proposed project is likely to lead to increased high-quality employment and manufacturing in the United States;
5. The degree to which the proposed project will accelerate transformational technological advances in areas that industry by itself is not likely to undertake because of technical and financial uncertainty;
6. The degree to which the proposed project, or group of projects, represent a desired geographic distribution (considering past awards and current applications);
7. The degree to which the proposed project incorporates applicant or team members from Minority Serving Institutions; and partnerships with businesses majority owned or controlled by underrepresented persons or groups of underrepresented persons or Indian Tribes;
8. The degree to which the proposed project contributes to the diversity of organizations and organization types and sizes selected from the subject NOFO when compared to the existing DOE project portfolio.
9. The degree to which the proposed project avoids duplication/overlap with other publicly or privately funded work.
10. The degree to which the proposed project supports complementary efforts or projects, which, when taken together, will best achieve the research goals and objectives.

VII. Selection and Award Notices

Please see the [NOFO Part 2, *Selection and Award Notices*](#) for information on notifications for Applications, Award Negotiations, and Post-Selection Information Requests.

VIII. Award Administration Information

A. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

DOE requires all award recipients to follow and accept requirements governed by laws and policies – both federal government-wide and DOE or program specific. These post-award requirements include all National and Administrative Policy Requirements; financial assistance general Certifications and Representations; Fraud, Waste and Abuse requirements; Safety, Security, and Regulatory requirements; and Environmental Review in Accordance with National Environmental Policy Act requirements.

Post-Award requirements and administration applicable to awards funded under this NOFO are identified below. Detailed descriptions of standard funding restrictions are provided in the [NOFO Part 2, Post-Award Requirements and Administration](#) section. Detailed descriptions of program specific funding restrictions are provided below the table.

Applicable Post-Award Requirements and Administration	
Title	Location
Award Administrative Requirements	NOFO Part 2
Subaward and Executive Reporting	NOFO Part 2
National Policy Requirements	NOFO Part 2
Applicant Representations and Certifications	NOFO Part 2
Statement of Federal Stewardship	NOFO Part 2
Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Financing Statements	NOFO Part 2
Interim Conflict of Interest Policy for Financial Assistance	NOFO Part 2
Whistleblower Protections	NOFO Part 2
Fraud, Waste, and Abuse	NOFO Part 2
Participants and Collaborating Organizations	NOFO Part 2
Current and Pending Support	NOFO Part 2
Prohibition Related to Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs	NOFO Part 2
Foreign Collaboration Considerations	NOFO Part 2
U.S. Manufacturing Commitments	NOFO Part 2
Subject Invention Utilization Reporting	NOFO Part 2
Intellectual Property Provisions	NOFO Part 2
Go/No-Go Review	NOFO Part 2
Conference Spending	NOFO Part 2
Invoice Review and Approval	NOFO Part 2
Cost-Share Payment	NOFO Part 2
Implementation of Executive Order 13798, Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty	NOFO Part 2

Affirmative Action and Pay Transparency Requirements	NOFO Part 2
Construction Signage	NOFO Part 2
Human Subjects Research	NOFO Part 2
Real Property and Equipment	NOFO Part 1
Rights in Technical Data	NOFO Part 1
Cost Share Payment	NOFO Part 1

1. Real Property and Equipment

Real property and equipment purchased with project funds (federal share and recipient cost share) are subject to the requirements at 2 CFR 200.310, 200.311, 200.313, and 200.316 (non-federal entities, except for-profit entities) and 2 CFR 910.360 (for-profit entities).

For resulting awards under this NOFO, the recipients may (1) take disposition action on the real property and equipment; or (2) continue to use the real property and equipment after the conclusion of the award period of performance with Grants Officer approval. The recipient’s written request for Continued Use must identify the property and include: a summary of how the property will be used (must align with the authorized project purposes); a proposed use period, (e.g., perpetuity, until fully depreciated, or a calendar date when the recipient expects to submit disposition instructions); acknowledgement that the recipient shall not sell or encumber the property or permit any encumbrance without prior written DOE approval; current fair market value of the property; and an estimated useful life or depreciation schedule for equipment.

When the property is no longer needed for authorized project purposes, the recipient must request disposition instructions from DOE. For-profit entity disposition requirements are set forth in 2 CFR 910.360. Property disposition requirements for other non-federal entities are set forth in 2 CFR 200.310 – 200.316. In addition, pursuant to the FY23 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Pub. L. No. 117-328), Division D, Title III, Section 309, at the end of the award period the Secretary or a designee of the Secretary, at their discretion, may vest unconditional title or other property interests acquired under this project regardless of the fair market value of the property.

2. Rights in Technical Data

Data rights differ based on whether data is first produced under an award or instead was developed at private expense outside the award.

“Limited Rights Data”: The U.S. government will not normally require delivery of confidential or trade-secret-type technical data developed solely at private expense prior to issuance of an award, except as necessary to monitor technical progress and evaluate the potential of proposed technologies to reach specific technical and cost metrics.

Government Rights in Technical Data Produced Under Awards: The U.S. government retains unlimited rights in technical data produced under government financial assistance awards, including the right to distribute to the public. One exception to the foregoing is that invention disclosures may be protected from public disclosure for a reasonable time in order to allow for filing a patent application.

3. Cost Share Payment

DOE requires recipients to contribute the cost share amount incrementally over the life of the award. Specifically, the recipient's cost share for each **billing period** must always reflect the overall cost share ratio negotiated by the parties (i.e., the total amount of cost sharing on each invoice when considered cumulatively with previous invoices must reflect, at a minimum, the cost sharing percentage negotiated).

B. Questions and Support

1. Questions

Upon the issuance of a NOFO, DOE personnel are prohibited from communicating (in writing or otherwise) with applicants regarding the NOFO except through the established question and answer process described below. Questions regarding this NOFO must be submitted through the FedConnect portal. The applicant must register with FedConnect to respond as an interested party to submit questions, and to view responses to questions. It is recommended that the applicant register as soon as possible after release of the NOFO to have the benefit of all responses. Applicants are encouraged to review previously issued Questions and Answers prior to the submission of questions. Questions or comments concerning this NOFO shall be submitted not later than three (3) business days prior to the application due date and time. Please note, feedback on individual concepts will not be provided through Q&A.

All questions and answers related to this NOFO will be posted on the FedConnect portal, listed in the [Key Facts](#) section above. DOE will attempt to respond to a question within three (3) business days unless a similar question and answer has already been posted on the website.

Questions related to the registration process, system requirements, how an application form works, or the submittal process must be directed to the Support contacts identified below.

2. Support

Grants.gov

Grants.gov provides 24/7 support. You can call 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. Hold on to your ticket number.

SAM.gov

If you need help, you can call 866-606-8220 or live chat with the [Federal Service Desk](#).

FedConnect

If you need help, you can call 800-899-665, Option 2 or submit a ticket at [Unison FedConnect Support](#).

IX. Other Information

Please see the [NOFO Part 2, Other Information](#) for additional information and requirements that apply to all DOE NOFOs.