



Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund Request For Information

Release Date: February 21, 2023

Subject: Request for Information (RFI) on the Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund

Due Date: April 21, 2023, 5pm ET

Submit to: PuertoRicoGDO@hq.doe.gov

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Background and Purpose

As a result of recent hurricanes, as well as ongoing grid reliability issues that are the result of decades of underinvestment, Congress authorized \$1 billion in the recent Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023¹ for activities to improve the resilience of the Puerto Rican electric grid, including renewable energy and storage solutions for vulnerable households and communities. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Grid Deployment Office (GDO) will establish and manage the Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund (PR-ERF) in consultation with Federal Energy Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Responses to this Request for Information (RFI) may be used to inform DOE on program design and implementation. DOE is interested in responses from industry, community-based organizations, federal and state government agencies, state and local coalitions, research institutions, and other stakeholders with an interest in ensuring a more resilient energy future for Puerto Rico.

Principles of equity and justice will guide implementation of PR-ERF, consistent with the Biden Administration's commitments to ensure that overburdened, underserved, and underrepresented individuals and communities have access to federal resources pursuant to the Justice40 Initiative².

Definitions

- **Beneficiary:** an individual, household, or other entity that receives direct services or benefits from this Fund.
- **Critical service:** infrastructure that provides critical community services, including but not limited to emergency services, medical services, safety, shelter, water, food, etc.
- **Energy burden:** the percentage of gross household income spent on energy costs. The national average energy burden for low-income households is 8.6%, three times higher than for non-low-income households which is estimated at 3%³.
- **Individual with Disabilities:** individuals with disabilities that rely on electricity-dependent or battery-dependent medical equipment or assistive technology to live independently or to assist in performing activities to daily living.
- **Low- to moderate-income (LMI):** A household with income less than 80% of the area median income (the midpoint of a region's income distribution), calculated yearly by the U.S. HUD⁴.
- **Recipient:** an entity that receives direct DOE financial/technical assistance under this Fund.

¹ Public Law No: 117-328. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023. \$1,000,000,000, to remain available until expended, to carry out activities to improve the resilience of the Puerto Rican electric grid, including grants for low and moderate income households and households that include individuals with disabilities for the purchase and installation of renewable energy, energy storage, and other grid technologies: Provided, That the Department of Energy shall coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban Development on these activities.

² The Justice40 initiative, established by E.O. 14008, states that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments should flow to disadvantaged communities (DACs). <https://www.energy.gov/diversity/justice40-initiative>

³ DOE's [Low-Income Energy Affordability Data \(LEAD\) Tool](#)

⁴ HUD FY 2022 Income Limits Documentation System
https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2022/select_Geography.odn



Program Design

DOE is seeking comment on the Department's program design, specifically qualifying beneficiary criteria, technologies, and deployment priorities in accordance with language from the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 and all applicable Federal laws and regulations. DOE will explore investment opportunities to address resilience improvements with a broad range of possible beneficiaries (LMI single-family houses, LMI multi-family buildings, and LMI households with people with disabilities). The resilience technology investments include but are not limited to rooftop solar and storage, community solar and storage, microgrids and smart grid technologies. DOE expects to release one or more competitive solicitations in the areas of technology deployment and community engagement, education, and workforce development. DOE plans to focus on two types of deployment:

- **Residential (single family) homes:** DOE is acutely aware of the need for rapid deployment of resilience solutions, and the urgency of funding projects quickly. With that in mind, DOE is pursuing an accelerated solicitation for investment in residential rooftop solar and storage.
- **Community resilience (Critical services & multi-family housing):** DOE is considering investments for low-income multi-family buildings and critical services in low-income areas. Technological solutions could include community solar, grid-scale storage, microgrids, and others.

Questions

Technology & Engineering

1. What should DOE consider regarding rooftop solar and storage technology to improve household energy resilience and reduce energy burden (e.g., system size, system cost, average household load, average household critical load, household repairs, storage requirements, etc.)?
2. How should DOE consider distributed energy resources (DER) aggregation to address grid benefits and hosting capacity concerns?
3. What are the major technological barriers to rooftop solar and storage ownership or community solar and storage ownership?
4. What are other technologies and business models that DOE should consider for future competitive solicitations in this Fund (e.g., community solar, other distributed energy technologies, grid-scale storage, smart grid technologies, microgrids, etc.)? Are there any examples or use cases in Puerto Rico or comparable jurisdictions?

Beneficiary & Community Considerations

5. As per the Consolidated Appropriations Act, this fund should focus on low- and moderate-income households and households with individuals with disabilities. Recognizing there is more need than funding, how should DOE prioritize possible beneficiaries? Are there existing criteria, screening tools, databases, or definitions that DOE should incorporate in program design?
6. How can DOE encourage/require engagement with local stakeholders and organizations during program implementation?
7. How should DOE consider asset ownership in program design (i.e., beneficiary ownership versus lease/power purchase agreement (PPA))? What benefits and challenges exist with each model?



8. What are the major non-technological barriers to rooftop solar and storage ownership (i.e., property titles, roof material, roof repair, education gap, hesitation to sign long-term agreements, locating target beneficiaries, etc.)?
9. What measures can DOE take to reduce the barriers to program participation? What measures can be taken to reduce the barriers to participation?

Financial Assistance

10. How should DOE structure financial assistance to solar companies/installers to enable the lease of systems to beneficiaries to increase resilience and reduce energy burden? Or, how should DOE consider structuring financial assistance to beneficiaries for the ownership of systems?
11. How should DOE structure the financial assistance so that long-term operations and maintenance (O&M) are ensured for the full asset lifetime?
12. How can financial assistance be structured to leverage private-sector investment or leverage tax incentives (e.g., investment tax credits in the Inflation Reduction Act)?
13. High upfront costs may be a barrier to execution. What challenges exist regarding upfront capital, credit enhancement, etc. in the procurement of materials and services?
14. How should DOE design programs under this Fund to facilitate local participation in project execution, including the participation of new market entrants in solar development?
15. Are there opportunities for DOE to leverage ongoing activities, projects, or financing mechanisms in Puerto Rico to maximize the impact of these funds?

Technical Assistance, Capacity Building, and Workforce Development

16. How can DOE and the National Laboratories provide recipients with technical assistance to support the execution of deploying energy resilience solutions (e.g., innovative finance tools, benefit cost analyses, public engagement, risk assessments, etc.)?
17. Are there existing Technical Assistance or Capacity Building activities ongoing in Puerto Rico related to the intended use of this funding? How can those efforts be best supported or augmented under this Fund?
18. What existing workforce education and training efforts (e.g., specific registered apprenticeship programs, labor management training programs, community college or technical school programs, etc.) are preparing workers for this industry? How can those efforts be best supported or augmented under this Fund?
19. What applicable models exist to award financial or technical assistance to nonprofits and community organizations to develop a pipeline of community-led energy resilience projects?

Monitoring, Evaluation, Auditing

20. What types of governance structures, reporting requirements and audit requirements (consistent with applicable federal regulations) should DOE consider requiring of direct and indirect recipients to ensure responsible implementation and oversight of operations?
21. What metrics are needed to measure success and how can those metrics be acquired? And how should this data and the program outcomes be disseminated to the public?
22. Are there best practices in program design that DOE should consider to reduce administrative burdens on recipients, subrecipients, and beneficiaries that still allow for standard federal contracting rules and requirements?



RFI Response Guidelines

Responses to this RFI must be submitted electronically to PuertoRicoGDO@hq.doe.gov no later than 5:00pm (ET) on April 21, 2023. Responses must be provided as attachment(s) to an email. It is recommended that attachments with file sizes exceeding 25MB be compressed (i.e., zipped) to ensure message delivery. Responses must be provided as a Microsoft Word (.docx) attachment to the email, no more than 20 pages in length, 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Please identify your answers by responding to a specific question or topic. Respondents may answer as many or as few questions as they wish.

Respondents are to provide the following information at the start of their response to this RFI:

- Company / institution name
- Company / institution contact
- Contact's address, phone number, and email address

Information collected from this RFI will be used by DOE for planning purposes, which could include developing competitive solicitations. DOE does not intend to publish the information collected in response to this RFI. DOE will not respond to individual submissions or publish publicly a compendium of responses. A response to this RFI will not be viewed as a binding commitment to develop or pursue the project or ideas discussed.



Disclaimer and Important Notes

This RFI is not a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA); therefore, DOE is not accepting applications currently. DOE may issue a FOA in the future based on or related to the content and responses to this RFI; however, DOE may also elect not to issue a FOA. There is no guarantee that a FOA will be issued because of this RFI. Responding to this RFI does not provide any advantage or disadvantage to potential applicants if DOE chooses to issue a FOA regarding the subject matter. Final details, including the anticipated award size, quantity, and timing, will be subject to Congressional appropriations and direction.

Any information obtained because of this RFI is intended to be used by the Government on a non-attribution basis for planning and strategy development; this RFI does not constitute a formal solicitation for proposals or abstracts. Your response to this notice will be treated as information only. DOE will review and consider all responses in its formulation of program strategies for the identified materials of interest that are the subject of this request. DOE will not provide reimbursement for costs incurred in responding to this RFI. Respondents are advised that DOE is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information received or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted under this RFI. Responses to this RFI do not bind DOE to any further actions related to this topic.

Freedom of Information Act

Responses received under this RFI are subject to public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. Because information received in response to this RFI may be used to structure future programs and funding opportunity announcements and/or otherwise be made available to the public, **respondents are strongly advised to NOT include any information in their responses that might be considered business sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential.** If, however, a respondent chooses to submit business sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information, it must be clearly and conspicuously marked as such in the response.

Responses containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be conspicuously marked as described below. Failure to comply with these marking requirements may result in the disclosure of the unmarked information under the Freedom of Information Act or otherwise. The U.S. Federal Government is not liable for the disclosure or use of unmarked information and may use or disclose such information for any purpose.

If your response contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information, you must include a cover sheet marked as follows identifying the specific pages containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information:

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data: Pages [List Applicable Pages] of this response may contain confidential, proprietary, or privileged information that is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for the purposes described in this RFI. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source.