

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
OFFICE OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY
NEPA DETERMINATION**



RECIPIENT: DEFENSEWERX

STATE: FL

PROJECT TITLE: Renewables Siting through Technical Engagement and Planning (R-STEP)

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number **Procurement Instrument Number** **NEPA Control Number** **CID Number**
GFO-PIA-RSTEP-002

Based on my review of the information concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (authorized under DOE Policy 451.1), I have made the following determination:

CX, EA, EIS APPENDIX AND NUMBER:

Description:

A8 Awards of certain contracts	Awards of contracts for technical support services, management and operation of a government-owned facility, and personal services.
A9 Information gathering, analysis, and dissemination	Information gathering (including, but not limited to, literature surveys, inventories, site visits, and audits), data analysis (including, but not limited to, computer modeling), document preparation (including, but not limited to, conceptual design, feasibility studies, and analytical energy supply and demand studies), and information dissemination (including, but not limited to, document publication and distribution, and classroom training and informational programs), but not including site characterization or environmental monitoring. (See also B3.1 of appendix B to this subpart.)
A11 Technical advice and assistance to organizations	Technical advice and planning assistance to international, national, state, and local organizations.

Rationale for determination:

In November 2022, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) issued a Broad Agency Announcement indicating an interest in entering into one or multiple agreements with Partnership Intermediaries (PI) to work with DOE's Office of Technology Transfer, other DOE programs, and DOE National Laboratories and Facilities. Through one or more Partnership Intermediary Agreement (PIA), DOE would expand its capabilities to connect and engage with the broader energy and national security ecosystem and address gaps facing companies, organizations and communities seeking to engage with DOE and/or develop, scale, commercialize, deploy, and adopt technologies relevant to DOE's mission.

DOE is currently proposing to execute a PIA with DefenseWerx (Niceville, FL) to serve as the PI for the Renewables Siting Through Technical Engagement and Planning (R-STEP) program. Through R-STEP, the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy aims to build capacity and expertise within state, local, and tribal governments on the permitting and siting of large-scale renewable energy projects. With an emphasis on improving how local communities plan for and engage in the development of renewable energy projects, R-STEP would catalyze renewable energy deployment while enabling host communities to maximize the benefits they receive from hosting projects. R-STEP would achieve these objectives by 1) providing funds to state-based collaboratives (SBCs) to expand existing or establish new initiatives or programs focused on improving siting and planning for renewable energy development within their state, 2) providing the awarded SBCs with technical assistance (TA) and peer-learning opportunities based on their objectives and technical needs, and 3) establishing R-STEP as the flagship, DOE-supported siting program for stakeholders across the United States by providing resources online.

The PI would focus on expanding the technical capacity of state-level programs to improve how renewable energy projects are sited and permitted. Federal funds would be spent primarily on developing resources, hiring new staff, and executing trainings and workshops. Expected PI activities would include primarily education, training, outreach, and technical assistance. Some analytical activities may be conducted but would be limited to computer modeling and data dissemination. No laboratory or field work would be involved. The proposed work would not result in the modification of existing facilities or new construction projects.

DOE previously completed one ND for this Program: GFO-PIA-RSTEP-001 (CX A8, A9, A11; 6/22/2023) which applied to the first round of project solicitation for this PIA. This ND (GFO-PIA-RSTEP-002) applies to a second round of competitive project solicitation to identify state-based collaboratives.

Based on the types of activities proposed, DOE does not anticipate any adverse impacts to sensitive resources as a result of the execution of this PIA with DefenseWerx.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Notes:

Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO)
NEPA review completed by Jason Spencer, 03/18/2024

FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATIONS

The proposed action (or the part of the proposal defined in the Rationale above) fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B to 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D. To fit within the classes of actions listed in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B, a proposal must be one that would not: (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders; (2) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators), but the proposal may include categorically excluded waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment actions or facilities; (3) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases; (4) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B(4) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B; (5) involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those listed in paragraph B(5) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.

There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.

The proposed action has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. This proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during preparation of an environmental impact statement.

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature:  _____ Date: 3/18/2024
NEPA Compliance Officer

FIELD OFFICE MANAGER DETERMINATION

- Field Office Manager review not required
- Field Office Manager review required

BASED ON MY REVIEW I CONCUR WITH THE DETERMINATION OF THE NCO :

Field Office Manager's Signature: _____ Date: _____
Field Office Manager