



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Determination Categorical Exclusion

Recipient:	Team Smart Grid
State:	Texas
Project Title:	Energizing Rural Communities Phase 2: Partner Track – Ensuring Energy Reliability for Rural Futures
OCED NEPA Control Number:	OCED-ERC Phase 2 Partner-003-CX

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:

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION APPENDIX, NUMBER, AND DESCRIPTION: Categorical Exclusion B1.7 Electronic Equipment Acquisition, installation, operation, modification, and removal of electricity transmission control and monitoring devices for grid demand and response, communication systems, data processing equipment, and similar electronic equipment.

Rationale for Determination: The \$15 million Energizing Rural Communities (ERC) Prize challenges individuals and organizations to develop partnership plans (the partner track) or innovative financing strategies (the finance track) to help rural or remote communities improve their energy systems and advance clean energy demonstration projects. This prize is part of the \$1 billion Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas (ERA) Program, created by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED). The ERA Program supports projects that improve the resilience, reliability, safety, availability, and environmental performance of energy systems in rural or remote areas of the U.S. with populations of no more than 10,000 people. The application period for Phase 2 of the ERC prize closed in July 2024.

The Ensuring Energy Reliability for Rural Futures project would involve installation of Fault Indicator (FI) equipment on existing infrastructure in the Sioux Valley Energy (SVE) electrical distribution system.

Installation of the wireless fault indicators would not require any ground disturbing activities. The FI system actively monitors the grid for any faults and irregularities. They are installed on existing powerlines and continuously monitor electrical current. If a fault or irregularity occurs, the FI system wirelessly notifies the utility company of the issue.

DOE has considered potential impacts on resources, including those of an ecological, historical, and cultural nature. DOE does not anticipate adverse impacts to any sensitive resources because of the proposed activities.

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 1501.9(e)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant

impacts (40 CFR 1508.1(g)(3)) 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.

DOE has determined that work to be carried out outside of the United States, its territories and possessions is exempt from further review pursuant to Section 5.1.1 of the DOE Final Guidelines for Implementation of Executive Order 12114; "Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions."

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

A portion of the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Notes: This categorical exclusion applies to those activities associated with the Ensuring Energy Reliability for Rural Futures project and does not authorize any additional activities other than the installation of the wireless fault indicators. Any changes to the project activities or location are subject to additional NEPA review by DOE and are not authorized for federal funding unless and until the Contracting Officer provides written authorization on those additions or modifications.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

OCED NEPA Compliance Officer Signature:

Date: