

Question and Answer Guide - Empire Building Challenge

Real Estate Partnerships – Cohort 2

PON 4987

Terms:

- EBC - Empire Building Program, or Program
- EBC Partners – The team of real estate owners and MEP engineers that become qualified as partners under the Program.
- Cohort 2 – The second cohort of EBC partners being selected through this solicitation.
- Cohort 1 – The first cohort of EBC partners that was selected in 2021.
- MEP engineers – Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing engineers/engineering firms

Teaming and Applicant Eligibility

1. Why is there an MEP engineer requirement for this solicitation, when no such requirement was in place for the selection of the first EBC cohort?

The consulting MEP engineering firm working with an EBC partner to create a decarbonization roadmap plays a critical role in the decarbonization planning process and low carbon retrofit design. MEP engineers, their qualifications, and commitments to carbon neutrality concepts will therefore play a more direct and meaningful role in the selection process for Cohort 2. MEP engineers are also an integral part of replicating EBC successes, as solutions proven through EBC will need to find pathways for broader adoption in the market.

2. Will international MEP companies have to partner with a NY-licensed MEP firm?

Any MEP firm wishing to apply to the Program must do so in partnership with a building owner, operator, or manager in New York. MEP firms should have on-staff Professional Engineer(s). If the firm does not have a Professional Engineer in-house, a partner MEP engineering firm should be brought onto the team.

3. Is the MEP 2040 commitment a requirement for this solicitation? What are the requirements for an “MEP 2040 firm”?

MEP engineering firms are not required to sign onto the [Carbon Leadership Forum’s MEP 2040 Challenge](#) as part of this solicitation. Per the evaluation criteria of the solicitation, NYSERDA will look favorably on MEP firms that have joined the MEP 2040 Challenge. More information about the MEP 2040 Challenge from the Carbon Leadership Forum can be found here:

<https://carbonleadershipforum.org/mep2040/>

4. Can you provide a formal definition of an MEP firm?

An MEP firm should have a Professional Engineer on staff, and be capable of planning, designing and managing the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems of a building.

5. What type of teaming arrangements is NYSERDA looking for?

NYSERDA seeks teaming arrangements that will bring innovative thinking and project management models to the building decarbonization arena, and help the team deliver a successful low carbon retrofit project. All teams must consist of a real estate owner and an MEP engineer, and can also include other actors such as systems integrators, players in the finance and insurance sectors, and others.

Building Eligibility and Retrofit Project Concepts

6. How many buildings are needed to qualify as a portfolio?

A portfolio is defined as two (2) or more buildings. Applicants are not required to own a portfolio of buildings to apply to the Program, but the EBC Team qualified under this solicitation must demonstrate how they will apply learnings from EBC across a broader footprint of the built environment in New York State. NYSERDA seeks to work with partners who are capable of clearly articulating how a low carbon retrofit strategy or solution identified through the Program (and eventually demonstrated through the Program) can be successfully scaled across multiple buildings.

7. Do sports arenas/stadiums qualify

No. Only commercial office and multi-family buildings that have 20 or more stories are eligible.

8. Would a high-rise condo building qualify if they pay the electric system benefit charge?

Yes.

9. Would a 20 story NYCHA building supplied by NYPA qualify for the Program?

In order to qualify for the Empire Building Challenge, a building must contribute to the system benefits charge on their electric utility bill. If a building on NYPA power does not contribute to this charge on their electric bill, the building is not eligible.

10. Can NYCHA PACT (Permanent Affordability Commitment Act) properties be accepted into the program?

To be eligible, buildings must contribute to the system benefits charge on their electric utility bill. This charge typically occurs on a Con Edison electric bill. All Applicants are encouraged to verify that the buildings they are advancing with their applications contribute to this charge.

11. What building types are eligible for this solicitation?

Eligible buildings are classified as multi-family/commercial buildings 20 stories or taller. Other building types including dormitories, healthcare, institutional, industrial and hospitality, are not eligible. In addition, proposed building(s) must have a major capital event occurring within the next four years, such as a heating/domestic hot water (DHW) system replacement, large tenant turnover, or building repositioning.

12. Do applicants need to bring in a specific project to the program?

As part of the application requirements, Applicants must submit information about 1) the building(s) that they are committing to carbon neutrality under the Program, 2) a summary roadmap for how carbon neutrality will be achieved, and 3) conceptual overview of the retrofit projects that are likely to be pursued under the Program. Please refer to *Section V: Application Requirements* for more details on application requirements, and *Section II: Introduction* for details about the types of retrofit projects that will be given preference under the Program.

13. What kind of projects are not eligible?

In our work with Cohort 2 EBC partners, NYSERDA seeks to demonstrate ambitious and replicable decarbonization strategies for high-rise buildings. Funding well-established, “common” energy and/or carbon reduction solutions, such as lighting upgrades and controls, are not part of the suite of decarbonization strategies that EBC is looking to support. For the types of retrofit projects that NYSERDA is looking to support through this solicitation, please refer to the *Introduction* section of the solicitation (pp. 4-5). Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the following materials to gain a better understanding of the types of decarbonization strategies and frameworks that have emerged from the work completed to date with the first cohort of EBC partners:

- [Building Decarbonization Insights](#)
- [EBC Knowledge Base](#)
- [Resource Efficient Electrification](#)

Funding

14. Please clarify the difference between technical support funding and implementation funding?

All new EBC Partners who become part of Cohort 2 are eligible to receive up to \$100,000 dollars in technical assistance funds. Those funds can be used to develop the carbon neutrality roadmap, or low carbon retrofit project concepts, for example.

Additionally, NYSERDA will run a competitive funding solicitation in October 2022 to provide implementation funding to install proposed low carbon retrofit projects that have been developed by the EBC Partners through their awarded technical assistance funds. Only EBC Partners will be

eligible to submit proposals for this funding, and no EBC Partner can receive more than \$3 million in implementation funds.

15. Is the \$3 million cap for implementation funding per EBC Partner or per building?

The \$3 million cap in implementation funding is per partner (i.e. each team made up of a building owner and MEP engineering firm). The funding can be applied to more than one building, but no EBC Partner can receive more than \$3 million in implementation support from EBC.

16. Can the technical assistance funding be combined with other NYSERDA technical assistance funds (i.e. FlexTech incentives) for building analysis, especially for the implementation phase?-

The technical assistance funding provided by EBC is flexible and Partners are encouraged to leverage it to support their work under the EBC Program. For example, if a Partner already has a fully developed carbon neutrality roadmap, they could use the technical assistance funding to develop their proposed retrofit projects. This funding can be combined with incentives from other NYSERDA and utility programs. However, FlexTech funds cannot be used to *study* the *same* decarbonization measures that would also be studied under EBC.

17. Can a potential EBC partner apply for utility incentives for the same project and still get funding from the Empire Building Challenge, or can teams only receive funding from one source?

EBC partners can apply for both Con Edison incentives and incentives from the Empire Building Challenge.

If you have additional questions, please email EBC@nyserda.ny.gov.