



Question and Answer Guide - Empire Building Challenge (EBC)

Real Estate Partnerships – Cohort 3 Multifamily

PON 5459

Program links:

- [EBC solicitation page, including exhibits and attachments](#)
- [EBC demonstration projects and case studies](#)
- [EBC framework for resource efficient decarbonization](#)

Webinar links:

- [Informational webinar slides](#)
- [Webinar recording](#)

INCENTIVES

- 1. How do EBC awards layer with Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) electrification pilot funding?**
Layering of EBC and HPD electrification pilot funding is not allowed.
- 2. How do EBC awards layer with Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) Clean Energy Initiative funding?**
Layering of EBC and HCR Clean Energy Initiative funding is not allowed.
- 3. How do EBC awards layer with New York State Clean Heat (NYSCH) funding?**
Applicants may leverage both EBC incentives and Clean Heat incentives for the same project, as long as they meet all respective program requirements and limitations.
- 4. How do EBC awards layer with the New York State Affordable Multifamily Energy Efficiency Program (AMEEP) funding?**
Layering of EBC and AMEEP funding is not allowed.
- 5. How do EBC awards layer with NYSERDA multifamily programs such as [Low Carbon Pathways \(LCP\)](#), [Low Carbon Capital Planning \(LCCP\)](#) and [Flextech](#)?**
Applicants cannot leverage multiple NYSERDA programs to incentivize the same measures. Applicants may participate in more than one NYSERDA program as long as they are not using incentives from these different programs to support the same measures.
- 6. How do EBC awards layer with NYSERDA non-multifamily programs, such as NY-Sun, etc.?**

Applicants cannot leverage multiple NYSERDA programs to incentivize the same measures. Applicants may participate in more than one NYSERDA program as long as they are not using incentives from these different programs to support the same measures.

7. How do EBC awards layer with Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) incentives?

Applicants can leverage both IRA and EBC incentives. These are not mutually exclusive.

8. 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. However, FlexTech funds cannot be used to study the same decarbonization measures that would also be studied under EBC.

9. Is an entity that previously received a NYSERDA NextGen HVAC Innovation Challenge award eligible to be a technical partner in conjunction with a multi-family building owner in an EBC submission?

Being part of a project team participating in another NYSERDA program does not disqualify a firm from participating in EBC. However, applicants cannot leverage multiple NYSERDA programs to incentivize the same measures. Applicants may participate in more than one NYSERDA program as long as they are not using incentives from these different programs to support the same measures.

TEAMS AND APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

10. Can the team be made up of the building owner and an energy consultant? Does more than one developer need to be included on the team?

Applicants are required to apply to the program with one or more solution providers as a team. There is no requirement for a developer to be included on the team.

11. Must all technical contractors be lined up to do the work in order to be eligible to apply as a team?

No. In order to be eligible, a team must comprise of a real estate partner, and a solution provider. There must also be a Technical Lead on the team, who will be responsible for developing the decarbonization roadmap and project concepts. The Technical Lead may or may not be the Solution Provider.

12. Does the Technical Lead have to be an MEP engineering firm?

The Technical Lead can be an MEP engineering firm, or another firm with related expertise. The Technical Lead is not required to be an MEP engineering firm.

13. Would a provider of software solutions for identifying and prioritizing different thermal ECMs be considered a Solution Provider under this solicitation?

Solution Providers can include engineering or architecture firms, equipment manufacturers, systems integrators, and building aggregators/facilitators. A provider of software solutions could also be included as a member on the broader applicant team.

14. 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 or representative, and can also include other actors such as systems integrators, players in the finance and insurance sectors, and others. A Solution Provider and a Technical Lead are also required to be on the team at the time of application.

15. Does NYSERDA offer any support for proposal team building? Is there a mechanism for building owners to connect with solution providers who are interested in submitting an application, and vice versa? Is there a list of solution providers building owners can use for team building?

NYSERDA does not offer matchmaking services for building owners and solution providers. Building owners wishing to identify solutions providers can refer to various lists of consultants that are under contract with NYSERDA. These include the [FlexTech Consultant Network](#), the [Multifamily Solutions Provider Network](#), and [the RetrofitNY provider network](#), among others. Applicants are not required to use solution providers from these consultant lists.

16. Is prior energy retrofit experience required from building owners, managers or developers?

Proposals will be evaluated, in part, on the level of experience team members have with resource efficient, thermal-oriented approaches to decarbonization, including elimination of fossil fuel heating systems. A team's track record on building decarbonization and energy efficiency will also be evaluated.

17. What is the difference between a "building aggregator" and "project facilitator" as defined in the solicitation?

A building aggregator and a project facilitator are the same thing.

18. Can any member of the team (e.g., solution provider, MEP engineer, aggregator) submit the application as representative of the whole team, or must the building owner/developer submit the application?

Either the building owner or the solution provider can submit the application.

19. Can Public Housing Authorities apply to the program?

In order to be eligible, the buildings submitted through the program must contribute to the System Benefits Charge on a common area electric utility bill.

20. Are condominiums and co-ops with more than 50 units, either individually or spread over a portfolio, eligible to participate in the program?

Yes, all multifamily buildings that meet the eligibility requirements are eligible, regardless of ownership structure.

21. Would the installation of Packaged Terminal Heat Pumps (PTHP), Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) systems, or mini-split heat pumps be eligible for the implementation funding, once that solicitation is released next year?

All means of electrification are eligible for capital funding. The design and implementation approach is what candidates will be evaluated on, keeping in mind that this solicitation is seeking partners with projects that focus on decarbonizing heating and hot water loads, projects that facilitate the efficient delivery of thermal energy throughout a building, and transitioning major building energy loads away from high temperature distribution systems.

22. If a property has already completed a feasibility study, could the technical assistance funding be used for the previous cost?

No.

23. Would measures that are dramatically reducing fossil fuel consumption be eligible, or is this solicitation only seeking full decarbonization/electrification measures?

The focus of EBC is the decarbonization of thermal systems, including the enabling steps that are necessary to reach full decarbonization. It is understood that partial decarbonization is part and parcel of the journey.

Partial electrification measures that support the decarbonization of thermal systems are eligible.

24. How will full decarbonization/electrification be achieved if funding will not be provided for installing electric stoves for buildings with gas cooking, or panel upgrades to accommodate new loads? Is the owner expected to include these from other sources of funding?

Eliminating gas stoves will be part of a long-term roadmap for reaching full carbon neutrality, but the EBC is currently focusing on deploying innovative thermal energy solutions (including but not limited to heat recovery, thermal storage, advanced heat pumps, low temperature hydronics and other thermal energy distribution, advanced system integrations). EBC is looking for partners who have project concepts focused on:

- Decarbonizing heating and domestic hot water (DHW) loads with a well-planned deployment of a highly efficient, in-building thermal energy network, integrating and connecting low carbon technology;
- Facilitating the efficient delivery of thermal energy throughout a building, or to-and-from a building.

- Transitioning major building energy loads away from current high-temperature thermal energy distribution systems for building heating (e.g. steam), including a plan for linking disaggregated heating and cooling energy loads and all building incoming and outgoing thermal flows through heat recovery and recycling approaches.

EBC is not providing funding for electrical panel upgrades, or control upgrades.

BUILDING AND PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

25. Are buildings on the Con Edison district steam be eligible under this solicitation, since they use steam generated by gas by the utility?

No. For a building to be eligible, the heating and domestic hot water (DHW) systems must be fueled by on-site fossil fuels (gas or oil). Buildings with heating and hot water systems fueled by district steam are not eligible.

26. The evaluation criteria slide in the webinar mentions district steam as an example of fossil fuels but a previous slide mentioned that the building's heating and DHW systems need to be fueled by gas or oil. Please clarify.

This has been fixed. The language in the webinar slides is now correct and reflects that a building on district steam is not eligible under this solicitation.

27. Are commercial-to-multifamily conversion projects eligible under this solicitation?

While technically eligible under the program, they might be a better fit for NYSERDA's New Construction program. Applicants should consider all requirements and evaluation criteria closely before submitting an application to EBC (for example, projects must be ready to begin implementation by 2025 and must show strong replication potential) to determine whether a project of this type would be competitive under program rules. NYSERDA will review these projects based on the evaluation criteria listed in the solicitation.

28. Is educational housing considered multi-family?

No, college dorms are not considered multifamily facilities under this solicitation.

29. Will reducing fossil fuel use for heating through envelope efficiency improvements receive equal priority as HVAC measures? Would solar window film or window inserts be eligible as an ECM under this solicitation?

Yes, measures that improve the thermal performance of the building envelope are eligible.

30. Is there a building height requirement and a minimum number of units that buildings must have in order to participate?

There is no height requirement for building eligibility. Low rise buildings (1-3 stories), mid-rise buildings (4-7 stories) and high-rise buildings (8 stories and up) are eligible. However, eligible buildings need to contain at least 50 units. The 50 units can be located in one building, or across multiple buildings.

31. Are affordable housing coops that wish to implement a boiler-to-heat pump conversion eligible under this solicitation?

Affordable housing coops are eligible, as long as they meet all eligibility requirements listed in the solicitation (including but not limited to paying into the systems benefit charge, and containing at least 50 units). Projects of interest to EBC include projects that focus on 1) decarbonizing heating and domestic hot water (DHW) loads with a well-planned deployment of a highly efficient, in-building thermal energy network, integrating and connecting low carbon technology; 2) facilitating the efficient delivery of thermal energy throughout a building, or to-and-from a building, and 3) transitioning major building energy loads away from current high-temperature thermal energy distribution systems for building heating (e.g. steam), including a plan for linking disaggregated heating and cooling energy loads and all building incoming and outgoing thermal flows through heat recovery and recycling approaches. The proposed project will also need part of a broader decarbonization roadmap for the building.

32. Why is the focus of the program on the decarbonization of thermal loads, versus general decarbonization of multifamily buildings?

Decarbonizing thermal loads in multifamily building remains a challenge to be overcome; replicable solutions still need to be devised, refined and successfully demonstrated in this sector, hence the unique focus of the program on this aspect of decarbonization.

33. Is a project already past design stage and soon to go under demolition stage eligible for this funding opportunity?

NYSERDA is not able to provide funding for tasks that have already been completed, including technical assistance related tasks, and installation of energy conservation measures.

34. Are gut rehab projects eligible under this solicitation, or are there other NYSERDA programs better suited for these types of projects?

Gut-rehab projects may be eligible under the solicitation. They may also be a good fit for NYSERDA's [New Construction Program](#). Applicants should carefully review the eligibility and evaluation criteria of each program to determine which program is the best fit.

35. Do subsidies count as owner contribution? Can a project include other subsidy layers from the city and state? What sources of funding count towards project cost-share?

Owner cost-share does not include subsidies. It is understood to be investment that comes from the building owner as in indication of commitment and ability to implement decarbonization projects in a timely fashion and replicate project successes.

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

The \$3 million cap in implementation funding is per EBC partner. 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 in this round.

37. Is there a per unit cap on either the technical assistance funding, or the future implementation funding?

NYSERDA reserves the right to implement a funding cap, on a per dwelling unit basis, dependent on the size of the buildings being advanced through an application.

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

All new EBC Partners who become part of Cohort 3 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 expects to issue a competitive funding solicitation in Q4 2024 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.

39. How does the program define a “significant reduction” in fossil fuel reduction?

The goal of the program is to support the elimination of on-site fossil fuels from buildings. Applications will be evaluated in part on the level of commitment an applicant makes to eliminating on-site fossil fuel at the proposed building. A competitive proposal will put forth greater levels of fossil fuel reductions than others. Applicants should take care to properly assess the level of EUI reductions they project for individual ECMs, as well as for the total reductions to be expected at the completion of the entire decarbonization roadmap. Projected fossil fuel reductions should be ambitious, but realistic.

40. What determines the extent of funding a project will receive under the future funding solicitation?

Funding is determined by the evaluation criteria, including the level of owner cost share, the potential for replication and scale, and projected energy use intensity (EUI) reductions. For reference, the [evaluation criteria for the last funding round can be found here](#). Evaluation criteria for future funding rounds may differ from past evaluation criteria.

GENERAL

41. Will EBC partners of Cohort 1 and 2 be eligible for the next round of funding? How much funding total will be available for that funding round?

Yes, existing EBC partners would be eligible to submit proposals to the third round of funding, but only if they haven't already received implementation funding from EBC. The total amount of funding that will be available is to be determined.

42. How many EBC partners will be chosen for Cohort 3?

The number of selected Cohort 3 partners will be a function of the amount and quality of the applications received by the program and reviewed by a panel of experts.

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