**PON 3981 Energy Efficiency & Clean Technology Training**

**Informational Webinar | 12 June 2023 | Q&A**

**Q – We are a community college and are trying to decide between a Category 1 or a Category 2 project. Can you please explain the difference between the two?**

A – As an education institution, you would be eligible to apply under both Category 1 Training for Incumbent Workers and Individuals in Formal Training Programs and Category 2 New Workers/New Entrants in Clean Energy. It all depends on the nature of your project. Category 1 would lend itself best to funding requests for, say, curriculum enhancement and maybe some equipment (in conjunction with technical training). A project that integrates clean energy content – perhaps a course – as part of an existing degree program, for example, is a very different project than funding a 2-year clean energy program that ultimately should lead into a career pathway (Category 2).

**Q - If we recently received a funding award under PON 3981, do trainees have to be New York State residents or does that requirement only apply for grants awarded after the most recent round of modifications?**

A - No, that is actually a requirement for all of our projects. NYSERDA funding must benefit New York State residents; it cannot be used to train out-of-state individuals.

**Q – Our training organization is not located in System Benefits Charge (SBC)/Clean Energy Fund (CEF) territory. If our training program targets both Category 1 and Category 2 workers, do we have to meet the percentage requirement for people served in both instances?**

A – Yes, 50% of trainees would have to be from Disadvantaged Communities or Priority Populations in both categories. With the most recent changes to the PON, we’ve added Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) funding, which allows us to invest in training projects outside of SBC/CEF territory as long as that 50% requirement is met. Since Category 2 projects already have that requirement, the 50% now also apply to Category 1 projects in this case. The alternative is to confirm that at least 60% of trainees served either reside or serve customers in SBC/CEF territory but, depending on your situation, the former may be easier to achieve.

**Q - Can you please explain what “large-scale, land-based renewable energy” means or direct us to the definition?**

A – The definition is actually covered in the slide deck. According to the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, *renewable energy systems* are “systems that generate electricity or thermal energy through use of the following technologies: solar thermal, photovoltaics, on land and offshore wind, hydroelectric, geothermal electric, geothermal ground source heat, tidal energy, wave energy, ocean thermal, and fuel cells which do not utilize a fossil fuel resource in the process of generating electricity.” To be eligible under PON 3981, training in renewable energy systems must be *large-scale* (commercial) and *land-based*. Offshore wind and residential-scale solar training, for example, do not qualify.

**Q - Do remote workers qualify for the grant if sixty percent or more of their work is dedicated to New York State customers?**

The training has to serve New York state residents. It cannot serve out-of-state residents who perform sixty percent of their work in-state. If you are referring to the requirement that 60% of trainees either reside or serve customers in SBC/CEF territory, that requirement applies only to Category 1 projects that are conducted in non-SBC/CEF territory (e.g., Long Island). The alternative is to ensure that at least 50% of trainees are from Disadvantaged Communities or Priority Populations.

**Q - Would data analytics fall within technical training?**

A – Without much more context, it would be hard to tell. Data analytics on their own do does not appear to be focused on clean energy workforce development; however, if it were related to a critical training tool, for example, that was focused on an eligible clean energy technology, it could be eligible.

**Q – Would training that is not necessarily focused on an eligible clean energy technology be funded if it leads to careers in those technologies? For example, welding?**

That is a great question. Yes. In fact, we just changed the language in the PON to allow for exactly that scenario. So long as an applicant can demonstrate the connection to careers in an eligible technology area, the project could be fundable.

**Q - Can NYSERDA funds be used to cover the scholarship cost to enroll students in existing workforce development programs?**

A - We have funded scholarships more so in the form of stipends for individuals from Disadvantaged Communities. They would have to be reasonable and fall within a Category 2 project. Stipends are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. They would also have to be for training that NYSERDA is funding that shows a market gap and market need. It couldn't just be a scholarship for an existing clean energy training program.

**Q - Should a budget accompany the Concept Paper? If so, should it be for one or two years?**

A – Attachment A – Proposal Cover Page asks for a high-level overview of your proposed budget, including total project budget, requested NYSERDA funding, proposed contractor cost share, and any third-party funding. That is the only budget we require at the Concept Paper stage. Once an applicant is invited to submit a Full Proposal, they would be asked to submit a more detailed budget form. The average project duration for PON 3981 projects is between one and two years, excluding any applicable 12-month outcome monitoring period for Category 2 career pathway projects, so up to 3 years max.

**Q - In terms of putting together a concept paper with a group of organizations that are partnering to provide the training, what is your recommendation on what type of organization should be the lead?**

A – As noted in the PON, the lead applicant should have a demonstrated track record in clean energy technical training and/or job placement. Additionally, the lead applicant must be registered to do business in New York State and have a New York State office or training location.

**Q - Can you speak to the invoicing process for the funds?**

A – Invoicing can take place in one of two forms, depending on how a project is contracted. If a project is contracted based on time and materials, the contractor would be asked to submit an invoice cover page detailing the approved budget, requested reimbursement, contractor cost share, and any funding and cost share remaining once the invoice is approved. That invoice cover page is intended as a summary of the invoice accompanying any required receipts and other forms of documentation. As an alternative to time and materials-based invoicing, we also have the option of contracting projects using milestones, in which case only the deliverables need to be submitted through our platform; no receipts or invoice cover page needed. There are pros and cons to both approaches, so it really depends on the needs of NYSERDA, taking into account the contractor’s preference.

**Q - If a Concept Paper is not selected, can an organization submit another Concept Paper under later funding rounds?**

A - Absolutely. We offer debriefs after every Concept Paper review. In the case of a Concept Paper that was accepted, we offer a courtesy debrief to review the recommendations, strengths and weaknesses and help the applicant develop a strong Full Proposal once they're invited to move on to the second round. For Concept Papers that were not accepted, applicants still have the option of requesting a formal debrief to review the strengths and weaknesses of their proposal. Applicants are encouraged to address the weaknesses and submit another Concept Paper.

**Q – When must evidence of service to Disadvantaged Communities be provided? Is that at the time of application or over the course of the project period?**

A – Metrics, including the number of individuals who reside in Disadvantaged Communities, are recorded and submitted to NYSERDA quarterly. The sooner you can document whether an individual meets that criterion, the better, because you do not want to expend a lot of funds and not meet the requirement. If you state in your proposal that you will serve individuals from Disadvantaged Communities and it turns out you are unable to meet your target, NYSERDA may opt to prorate your payments.