

## Clean Green Schools Initiative (PON 4924) – Webinar FAQ (2-7-24)

### Eligibility:

- **Where is the link to the Clean Green Schools Initiative eligibility list?**
  - o The Clean Green Schools Initiative eligibility list can be [found here](#).
  
- **What is a high-needs district?**
  - o The [New York State Education Department](#) categorizes school districts using a need-to resource capacity (N/RC) index. The N/RC index is a measure of a school district's ability to meet the needs of its students with local resources, based on a ratio of the estimated poverty percentage to the combined wealth ratio. High-Need categories include High N/RC: New York City, High N/RC: Large City Districts, High N/RC: Urban-Suburban Districts, and High N/RC: Rural Districts.
  
- **The New York State Education Department Need-to-Resource Capacity list is from 2009-2010. Is there a more up-to-date list available?**
  - o No, this is the most current list **publicly available** and it was developed by the New York State Education Department.
  
- **What is a disadvantaged community?**
  - o [Disadvantaged communities](#) are defined under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) as those that bear the burdens of negative public health effects, environmental pollution, impacts of climate change, and possess certain socioeconomic criteria, or comprise high-concentrations of low- and moderate- income households. Pursuant to the Climate Act, the Climate Justice Working Group established criteria to identify disadvantaged communities. Here is a [link to the criteria](#).
  
- **If our district is listed as eligible, are all buildings eligible for Track II?**
  - o Please review the [eligibility list](#). School districts which are included on the first tab (Track I) are eligible for Track I. School buildings which are included on the second tab (Track II) are eligible for Track II.
  
- **Originally, my district only had one building which was eligible under Track I and now my entire district is eligible to participate in Track I. Can I re-apply to Track I for my other buildings?**
  - o Yes, you can re-apply to Track I for the other buildings which weren't included in your original Track I application.
  
- **Are Charter schools eligible for funding?**
  - o Charter schools are not eligible to participate in the program.
  
- **Are BOCES buildings eligible for funding?**
  - o Yes, a BOCES building is eligible for funding if it is located in a [disadvantaged community](#).
  
- **Are private schools eligible for funding?**
  - o Private schools are not eligible to participate in the program.
  
- **Are schools required to pay into the System Benefits Charge (SBC) on their electric utility bill to be eligible to participate in the program?**
  - o System Benefits Charge (SBC) contribution is not required for participation in this program.
  
- **Are New York City public schools eligible to participate in the Clean Green Schools Initiative?**
  - o Yes, all New York City public schools are eligible to participate in both Track I and Track II.

- **If we have a local Municipal Electric Company, are we still eligible to apply?**
  - If your school is included on the Clean Green Schools Initiative eligibility list, then your school is eligible to participate in the program (e.g. it does not matter who your utility provider is).
- **Does a building have to be owned or could it be leased?**
  - Buildings should be owned. Please call us directly to discuss the building ownership situation (518-862-1090 x3606).
- **Do you have to apply for Track I to be eligible for Track II funding?**
  - Participation in Track I is not a requirement to participate in Track II, but Applicants must have an energy study or equivalent analysis completed at the time of a Track II application.
- **Applicants must have an energy study or equivalent analysis completed at the time of a Track II application. What level of analysis is required for this energy study?**
  - An energy study or equivalent analysis is requested to confirm that the school is aware of the proposed project impacts and will proceed with project implementation promptly. We are not dictating the level of the analysis, but the energy study or equivalent analysis must provide enough information to fill out Attachment E – Track II Building Impacts Table.
- **If a district had an energy study done two years ago, do they still need to complete another energy study to apply to Track II?**
  - No, a district would not have to complete another energy study if they completed one two years ago. With this being said, the energy study which was done two years ago must provide enough information to fill out Attachment E – Track II Building Impacts Table.
- **Would an Energy Performance Contract comprehensive energy audit qualify as the "energy study"?**
  - We are not dictating the level of the analysis, but the energy study or equivalent analysis must provide enough information to fill out Attachment E – Track II Building Impacts Table. As long as the comprehensive energy audit includes measures you are proposing in the Track II project, it would qualify as the “energy study.”
- **If our school has already done an energy study which included an evaluation of a refrigerant containing equipment (e.g. chillers/heat pumps) and didn’t analyze utilizing equipment that contains natural or other refrigerant, do we have to go back and analyze this before we submit a Track II application?**
  - No, a proposer would not have to go back and analyze this if it wasn’t originally included in the energy study. With that being said, if the proposal is selected to receive funding under Track II, this evaluation would need to be completed before the Track II project started.

### **Application and Participation Process**

- **What is the link to the PON 4924?**
  - The Clean Green Schools Initiative PON is located [here](#). To read the specific PON, [click here](#).
- **Does NYSERDA provide any services to assist with the application process for Track I or Track II?**
  - NYSERDA staff are available to walk schools through the application process for Track I. Schools looking for support submitting a Track II application may leverage the grant writing services offered under Track I.

- **Are consulting firms required to complete the Scope of Work?**
  - o No, consulting firms are not required to fill out the Scope of Work. Schools can complete the Scope of Work, but most energy study Scopes of Work are completed by the consulting firm.
  
- **If a district has multiple buildings they want to include in a Track I application, should they submit one application or an application for each building?**
  - o We recommend submitting applications at the district level, not building level.
  
- **Can a district submit multiple applications to Track I for different Track I services?**
  - o Yes, districts can apply to Track I multiple times for different Track I services (e.g. on-site energy manager Track I application, energy study Track I application, etc.).
  
- **What is the timeframe for project awarding?**
  - o **Track I** – The [participation process](#) for Track I is located on our website. Once NYSERDA receives a complete Track I application package, it typically takes 8-10 weeks to receive a Purchase Order, but this is dependent on the level of revisions required to the application package.
  - o **Track II** - We anticipate that schools who are selected to receive awards under Track II will be issued an award letter in August 2024. After this point, the awarded projects will work with the NYSERDA Project Managers to negotiate the contracts. It can take six to twelve months to negotiate the contract, execute the contract and receive a purchase order.
  
- **What is the timeframe for completing projects?**
  - o Unless otherwise negotiated, all work funded under Track I must be completed and invoiced within three (3) years of issuance of the purchase order (PO). Unless otherwise negotiated, all work funded under Track II must be completed and invoiced within five (5) years of contract execution.
  
- **Can you apply for a Track I project and make it in time to submit a Track II application?**
  - o Yes, please reach out to [Hannah.Morgan@nysERDA.ny.gov](mailto:Hannah.Morgan@nysERDA.ny.gov) with any questions about the participation process.
  
- **How many schools are participating in Track I currently?**
  - o To date, 1,500 under-resourced schools across 85 districts in 35 counties in New York State are receiving technical assistance to assess indoor air quality, energy reduction, electrification and decarbonization projects.

**Funding:**

- **Are schools required to provide match funding for a Track I project?**
  - o No, schools are not required to provide match funding for a Track I project, unless the project cost exceeds the district cap listed in the PON (see Table 1: Track I NYSERDA Caps in the [PON](#) - page 8).
  
- **Are schools required to provide match funding for a Track II project?**
  - o No, schools are not required to provide match funding for a Track II project, unless the project cost exceeds the funding cap listed in the PON (see page 12 of [PON](#)).
  
- **How much funding is remaining in the program and how much is set aside for each Track?**
  - o In total, the program was allocated \$160 million and we have approximately \$135 million remaining. The funding is fluid between Track I and Track II, depending on program uptake.

- **How many projects do we plan to fund in Track II?**
  - We anticipate that we will fund approximately 20 projects, but it will be dependent on the quantity and size of the projects submitted to Track II.
- **Will there be a third round of Track II?**
  - We hope to but cannot guarantee a third round of Track II. It will be dependent on how much participation there is in Track I and Track II. We will know by Jan 2025 if we will launch a third round of Track II.
- **How does this funding impact Building Aid?**
  - Through a provision in the enacted 2022/2023 NYS Budget, this program incentivizes school districts to invest in clean energy and energy efficient projects that will improve indoor air quality and reduce emissions by eliminating the reduction in Building Aid that districts would otherwise face for projects receiving a grant through NYSERDA's Clean Green Schools Initiative.
- **Does NYSERDA funding need to be subtracted from a school districts Building Aid reimbursement?**
  - No, NYSERDA funding will not impact the amount of Building Aid a school receives for a capital project. School districts can use the NYSERDA funding to cover the local share of the project costs. For Track II, applicant project costs are up to 100% funded, net of funding from investor-owned utilities, state aid (e.g. building aid), federal funding, or any other funding source.
- **Are the funding caps in the presentation included in the PON?**
  - Yes, the funding caps included in the presentation were pulled directly from PON 4924, which can be found [here](#).
- **For Track II, if a project is selected to receive funding under Track II, what is the schedule of payments?**
  - NYSERDA plans to issue milestone-based contracts to awarded proposals in accordance with the Attachment C – Sample Agreement. This means that structured lump sum payments will be made by NYSERDA upon completion and approval of a Task(s). NYSERDA reserves the right to issue milestone payments that differ from what has been outlined in Attachment F – Track II Milestone Payment Schedule.

### Track I:

- **When is the deadline to submit a Track I application?**
  - Applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis dependent on resource availability until December 30, 2025, by 3:00 PM Eastern Time.
- **Are there template documents for Track I which describe the task breakdown for the Scope of Work?**
  - Yes, there is a Track I – Scope of Work Template available on the Clean Green Schools Initiative [Documents and Resources](#) website.
- **Can schools only apply to Track I?**
  - Yes, schools can leverage Track I only.
- **For the new Track I caps, are there breakdowns on caps per activity/category like there were previously or are the caps for any and all Track I activities/categories?**
  - The NYSERDA funding caps are at the district level. There are funding caps for some Track I activities (see page 8 of [PON](#) - Table 1: Track I NYSERDA Caps).

- **What, if any, is the cap on spending for a district energy manager?**
  - There is no specific cap on the On-Site Energy Manager Track I activity. Please review Table 1: Track I NYSERDA Caps in the [PON](#) (see page 8).
- **How long will you pay for an On-site Energy Manager?**
  - The engagement will be funded for up to 3 years, or until the district cap funding is exhausted.
- **Can the On-Site Energy Manager be part-time?**
  - Yes, the On-Site Energy Manager engagement must be for a minimum of 12 months and be at least 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (20 hours per week).
- **Can school systems share an On-site Energy Manager?**
  - Yes, an On-Site Energy Manager can be shared across different eligible districts.
- **Does the On-Site Energy Manager have to be an employee of the school or can it be a contracted position?**
  - The On-Site Energy Manager services may be performed by a new permanent hire, contracted staff, or a hybrid arrangement of supplementing permanent staff with contracted staff.
- **What are the qualifications for an On-Site Energy Manager?**
  - On-Site Energy Manager staff must have:
    - Relevant qualifications such as licensed Professional Engineer (P.E.), Certified Energy Manager (CEM), Certified Energy Auditor (CEA), or comparable.
    - Past experience related to energy advisor tasks.
    - Demonstrated business acumen and leadership skills to be able to sell energy projects to upper management.
- **Are On-Site Energy Managers required to complete all of the activities included in the [Track I – Eligible Activities](#) list or do we have flexibility based on the district’s need?**
  - There are six required activities associated with the On-Site Energy Manager position, but it is ultimately up to the district as to how they want to use the On-Site Energy Manager. See page 2 of the [Track I – Scope of Work template](#) to review the six required On-Site Energy Manager activities.
- **How do firms get involved as service providers for Track I?**
  - Schools can select whomever they want to work with. Consultants may undergo additional review before being approved to perform certain services. Reach out to schools directly if you are interested in providing consulting services under Track I.
- **If a school is in need of a consultant to perform work under Track I (e.g. energy efficiency or decarbonization studies), can NYSERDA provide a list of consultants to work with?**
  - Schools in need of a consultant for engineering and architecture services may choose from NYSERDA’s [FlexTech Consultant](#) list.
- **If a school is interested in applying for design and construction funding, should they apply through Track I or Track II?**
  - A school should apply for design funding in Track I and construction funding in Track II.

## Track II:

- **Does Track II support new construction or renovations?**
  - Track I and Track II provide support for existing buildings, not new construction projects.
- **Can Track II funding work alongside an energy performance contract?**
  - Yes, schools can leverage the Track II funding along with an energy performance contract.
- **Can Track II fund an energy performance contract that is comprised of eligible activities?**
  - Yes, schools working with an energy performance contractor are eligible to apply for Track II funding.
- **What stage does the project need to be in to qualify for Track II (e.g. study, design, etc.)?**
  - A complete Track II proposal package includes the following:
    - Completion of the series of questions presented in NYSERDA's online portal submission platform.
    - School Authorization Form, if applicable (Attachment B)
    - Track II Proposal Template (Attachment D)
    - Track II Building Impacts Table (Attachment E)
    - Track II Milestone Payment Schedule (Attachment F)
    - Energy study or equivalent analysis used to select the Track II project components

Please review the Track II Evaluation Criteria on page 14 of the [PON](#) to review the Evaluation Criteria associated with Track II of the program. The degree to which a project is further along in the design or approval phase will impact the points in the "stage of the proposed project" category.

- **We are in the process of construction. Are we too late to apply for Track II funding?**
  - Applicants must not have started construction on a Track II project prior to NYSERDA issuing an award letter. Work completed prior to NYSERDA issuing an award letter is ineligible for funding. Once an award letter is made, NYSERDA reserves the right to issue a pre-agreement letter to allow for work to be completed after an award letter is issued, but before a Track II contract is signed.
- **Is there a comprehensive list of measures which are eligible under Track II?**
  - See page 10 and 11 of [PON 4924](#) to review the types of eligible activities under Track II.
- **Are ground source heat pumps an eligible measure under Track II?**
  - Yes, ground source heat pumps are an eligible measure under Track II.
- **Will ground source heat pump (GSHP) proposals receive more points under Track II?**
  - Please review the evaluation criteria to see how projects will be evaluated under Track II. If a proposer is submitting a Track II project under the Clean Heating and Cooling category and is not proposing a GSHP system, please provide justification as to why it was not included in the Track II project (e.g. land constraints, financial constraints, etc.).
- **Are heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) projects eligible?**
  - Yes, they are eligible as long as they are not fossil fuel based. See page 10 and 11 of [PON 4924](#) to review the types of eligible activities under Track II.
- **Are unit ventilators an eligible measure under Track II (when combined with a primary activity)?**
  - It depends on what the heating/cooling source is behind the unit ventilators (e.g. steam, electric, hot water for heating and DX/chilled water cooling). Reach out to [Hannah.Morgan@nyserda.ny.gov](mailto:Hannah.Morgan@nyserda.ny.gov) to discuss the specific set up of the unit ventilators.

- **Are green roofs eligible as part of a Track II project?**
  - Yes, green roofs and green spaces may be considered as part of a larger project, when completed in combination with any eligible primary activities (e.g. Clean Heating and Cooling Projects or Capital Projects to Move Towards Decarbonization).
  
- **Is solar PV an eligible measure under Track II project?**
  - Yes, solar PV and/or energy storage may be considered as part of a larger project, when completed in combination with any eligible primary activities (e.g. Clean Heating and Cooling Projects or Capital Projects to Move Towards Decarbonization).
  
- **Are lighting projects eligible to apply to Track II as standalone projects?**
  - No, lighting projects must be paired with a primary activity (e.g. Clean Heating and Cooling projects or Capital Projects to Move Towards Decarbonization).
  
- **Conversion of distribution systems (e.g. steam to hot water) is an eligible project under Track II. How does it relate to decarbonization?**
  - Conversion of distribution systems (e.g., steam to hot water) is considered an eligible Track II project type provided it supports a school's transition to potential future electrification (e.g. future installation of a ground source heat pump system).
  
- **Do Track II projects need to follow the typical capital planning process (e.g. submit to NYSED for review)?**
  - Yes, they have to follow the typical capital planning process. NYSERDA does not get involved in this process. School districts must adhere to their own procurement requirements and requirements of the New York State Education Department Facilities Planning Office, the New York City Department of Education or the New York City School Construction Authority.
  
- **Do you need voter authorization prior to the Track II submission deadline?**
  - No, you do not need voter authorization to submit a Track II proposal.
  
- **Can Track II participants also apply to other rebate programs (e.g., NYS Clean Heat program)?**
  - Yes. We encourage schools to leverage other sources of funding for their projects. Applicant project costs are up to 100% funded, net of funding from investor-owned utilities, state aid, federal funding, or any other funding source. NYSERDA will not pay for more than 100% of the project costs.
  
- **Were there any Track II projects selected to be awarded funding during the first round of Track II?**
  - Yes, three projects were selected to receive funding during the first round of Track II. These awards can be found on our [website](#).
  
- **Are there any labor standards for the work to be performed under Track II?**
  - School districts must adhere to their own procurement requirements and requirements of the New York State Education Department Facilities Planning Office, the New York City Department of Education or the New York City School Construction Authority. NYSERDA understands and assumes that this work will consist of Public Work and therefore shall be subject to the requirements of Article 8 of the NYS Department of Labor Law. In addition, Track II projects implemented by contractors that are participating in New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) recognized pre-apprenticeship programs or NYS DOL registered apprenticeship programs impacts the Track II Evaluation Criteria (see page 14 and 15 of the [PON](#)).

## **Transportation:**

- **Can the Track I funding be used to develop an electric school bus roadmap?**
  - o Yes, clean transportation studies are an [eligible activity](#) under Track I.
  
- **Do electric vehicle charging infrastructure installations qualify for Track II?**
  - o No, electric vehicle charging infrastructure installations are not eligible for Track II. [Charge Ready NY 2.0](#) may have funding for Level 2 EV charging stations. Please e-mail [ChargeReadyNY@energycenter.org](mailto:ChargeReadyNY@energycenter.org) to learn more about this opportunity. In addition, the [NY School Bus Incentive Program](#) provides funding for low-voltage chargers for school buses. If you have any questions, please e-mail [schoolbus@nyserderda.ny.gov](mailto:schoolbus@nyserderda.ny.gov).
  
- **Does Track II funding support transportation infrastructure upgrades?**
  - o No, Track II supports building electrification projects. See page 10 and 11 of [PON 4924](#) to review the types of eligible activities under Track II.

## **Outreach:**

- **Do you visit individual companies to discuss the program in more detail?**
  - o Yes, NYSERDA can present to P-12 schools, consultants, organizations or associations if they are interested in learning more about the program.
  
- **Are there any resources available to help promote this program to schools?**
  - o Yes, you can send schools the PowerPoint presentation and direct them to the [Clean Green Schools Initiative](#) website.
  
- **What kind of outreach are you doing to promote the program?**
  - o The P-12 team coordinates webinars, in-person presentations, e-mail blasts and much more. If you are interested in having someone from NYSERDA present to your P-12 school, association or group, please e-mail [Hannah.Morgan@nyserderda.ny.gov](mailto:Hannah.Morgan@nyserderda.ny.gov).

## **Other:**

- **Will the slide deck be available on the website?**
  - o Yes, the PowerPoint presentation and Q&A can be found on the [Clean Green Schools Initiative](#) website.
  
- **What programs may charter schools leverage at NYSERDA?**
  - o The [FlexTech Program](#) shares the cost to produce an objective, site-specific, and targeted study on how best to implement clean energy and/or energy efficiency technologies. Charter schools are eligible to participate in the FlexTech Program if they pay into the electric System Benefits Charge (SBC) through their utility company. Please reach out to [Hannah.Morgan@nyserderda.ny.gov](mailto:Hannah.Morgan@nyserderda.ny.gov) to learn more about the funding opportunities at NYSERDA.