

12/3/2024

Shane Hamstra, TWX

Good afternoon, good morning, everyone depending on where you're joining from today. Thanks so much for being here for this Transmission Acceleration Grants opportunity office hour session. Just a few logistical notes before we get started. Today's session is being recorded. We do hope you can stay for the duration, but if you can't, we will archive this session and post it on the website.

The chat for today is closed, but we do encourage you to use the Q&A to submit questions, comments, or any technical needs you may have, and I'll be happy to respond there, and our moderator and panel will be reviewing all the questions that come in and answering as many as possible today.

You can also enable the transcript and captions on your own screen by clicking on the CC button and clicking on enable subtitles. So, once again, if you need any help technically, please let me know in the Q&A pod, and I'll happily hand things over to our moderator to kick us off. Thank you so much.

Taylor Moot, TWX

All right. Thank you. Shane. Hi, everyone. Thank you for joining us. Today we're excited to host this informational webinar on the Transmission Acceleration Grants, which is being funded by GDO, or the Grid Deployment Office, here at the Department of Energy. Next slide, please.

So just a really quick intro. My name is Taylor Moot, and I'm part of the TechWerx Hub. TechWerx is a new innovation hub managed by RTI International in support of the Department of Energy, and our goal is to facilitate connections among federal, state, tribal entities, academia, nonprofits, and small businesses across the US, just to name a few. To hear about any new opportunities that come up or any updates on TAG, we recommend that you follow our page on LinkedIn, as well as sign up for our newsletter via the link on our website. Next slide, please.

Just a few housekeeping things. Some of these are mentioned up front, but just to remind you, all questions will be handled towards the end of the session, and we're going to be using that Q&A function of Zoom and addressing the questions that get the most votes. So, as you're seeing questions come in, add them yourselves, but also vote up the ones that are similar to what you also want to know, so we're making sure to answer those first.

Depending on the number of questions that we get today, we might not be able to get through all of them. But for those that we don't get through, as well as all the ones that we cover today, those will get uploaded to the FAQ section of our website. We'll work with DOE

to make sure that everything gets answered and updated there shortly, and we'll continue to update that periodically as more questions come in through other mechanisms.

Just a couple of other things per DOE guidance. We don't allow any AI bots on the webinar, such as Otter AI, or any of those other note-taking AI bots. You shouldn't need these, because this is being recorded. The transcript will also be available on our website. But just so you know, if we see them we will kick them out of the session. Last as a reminder, this webinar is being recorded and will be posted to the TechWerx website within a few business days, again, along with those slides and transcript. Next slide, please.

So today we are joined by folks from the Grid Deployment Office, Andrea and Liza as well as Kirsten. And with that I'm going to pass it over to GDO to cover the more interesting part of the webinar, which is what you all are here for.

Liza Reed, DOE GDO

Thank you so much, Taylor, and let me thank everyone again for joining us this afternoon slash morning depending on where you're joining us from. I'm Liza Reed. I'm the Senior Industry Advisor for transmission in the Grid Deployment Office. Before we dive in on the next slide, I'm going to do a quick overview of the Grid Deployment Office.

So here at GDO we work to catalyze the development of new and upgraded infrastructure across the country by maintaining and investing in critical generation facilities, developing and upgrading high capacity, electric transmission lines nationwide, and deploying transmission and distribution infrastructure and technologies. And the TAG program that I'm about to highlight touches on all of these in some way. And we're really excited about this new funding that we're able to present today.

So, on the next slide, let me dive into the TAG program. TAG stands for Transmission Acceleration Grants, is an initiative out of the Transmission Division of GDO and is managed through a partnership intermediary agreement that we have with TechWerx who's joining us on this webinar today. TAG is designed to provide technical assistance support to state and tribal entities, to address growing transmission needs and project backlogs through the acceleration and improvement of siting, permitting, and transmission planning. The goal of the projects who are awarded tech funding will be to accelerate transmission development to lower consumer costs, to increase grid resilience, and through this provide benefits to all Americans. On the next slide, I'll talk a little bit more about the TAG eligibility and then the potential TAG projects.

So TAG has pretty broad eligibility. The applicants who are eligible are state entities, tribal entities, or not-for-profit organizations working directly with them. And you'll see in the template and in the materials we provided online for the application, we do require that nonprofits who are applying provide evidence that they are engaging with state and tribal

entities, whether that is through a direct partnership on the grant, where they are part of the project team, or through a letter of collaboration--which I want to clarify is different than a letter of support which might just say, we support this project, or we agree this project should happen--we are looking for direct collaboration. So, that is a role that would make a nonprofit eligible for these funds is direct collaboration with state or tribal entities on these projects. That could include a regional state committee, for example. So there's a lot of different forms that that could take.

So that's the eligibility from an application perspective. This round of funding has 10 million dollars available, and the maximum availability for each project is 3 million dollars. However, we do want to emphasize that we expect a wide range of project sizes, and we'll get a little bit more into what we're talking about in terms of different types of projects. So that 3 million is a cap, but really, we would not be surprised to see a whole range of different request sizes depending on the scope and scale of need for whatever state or tribal entity is applying. There is no federal cost share requirement here, so the applicant is not required to provide any matching funds.

And then, finally, the activities. It's up to 12 months, but it's actually, and we will be clarifying this in the online materials, up to 12 months of activities with an additional potential 12 months of optional after that. So, you could propose 24 months of activities. But there is a required go/no go milestone at 12 months. So, this is particularly relevant for some of the search capacity funding potential, if you're looking to support search capacity needs for transmission permitting or siting reviews, we recognize that those can take an extended period of time. And so the way that the program is structured is that there is an initial 12 month period with again a required go/no go milestone if there is a desire to extend the project up to a maximum of 24 months. And then the activities are related to planning, siting, or permitting of transmission lines and transmission. The purposes of this program is 100 kilovolts or above. And then next slide.

And here's the broad range of activities. We have some examples that we went over on the Webinar, and I encourage folks to watch that recording, although you're of course, welcome to ask questions here as well. But on the webinar, a few weeks ago we went through an example for each one of these to help illustrate the types of activities that might fall under these that could make sense for tag. Those examples are not intended to anchor, but rather to expand. So we are looking to be supportive of a broad range of activities across these four types of buckets. And those examples were just provided to help folks start thinking of what could work for their region.

So the broad categories that we've described for TAG are identifying or evaluating corridors or zones or other types of areas that may be designated as preferred locations. So you're looking for siting transmission infrastructure and you could sort of pre-evaluate corridors.

And these could be collaborative multi-jurisdictional initiatives or a single state initiative. Again, depending on your region's needs.

Another category is efforts to streamline transmission siting and permitting processes and approvals, so particularly in jurisdictions where permitting authority is spread across many different actors and governmental entities. This could be something that an entity is looking for. This might not be relevant to every geography, as I'm sure attendees on this session already know. Transmission siting and permitting takes different flavors everywhere you are in the United States. So, depending on what the situation in your jurisdiction is, you might be interested in pursuing some streamlined approaches to enhance coordination. If there are multiple jurisdictions involved in siting and permitting.

Another activity area is enhancing or expanding other transmission related activities. What does that mean? So that could be transmission planning, for example, establishing a state or tribal based planning entity. Some states are already doing this work. Again, if there's an opportunity here to be studying what another state is doing and evaluating what that could look like for your state. Or studying how to establish a state or tribal based funding, or financing program for transmission facilities or pursuing coordination among entities within the state or within other states, developing transmission focused governmental organizations. There's a lot of different flavors here about how you might be looking at what transmission related activities are in your region, and how you could support more transmission development by enhancing or expanding what you already have, or coordinating with other jurisdictions.

And then the third one is surge support to increase capacity of siting authorities to help meet, rising, siting, and permitting workloads, particularly where siting and permitting is facing unprecedented levels of demand. So, we've been hearing this from many different entities, that there's so much activity in the transmission space and there's support needed to help really evaluate and site and permit transmission lines.

I mentioned it on the previous slide. This is another case right where, again, there's up to 24 months of performance, but a go/ no go at 12 months. And as that affects your planning, as you think about your proposals in the next 2 months, please take that into consideration.

I described these as categories, but I want to clarify because you'll see this, when you apply, you do not have to pick a category. So, these are not exclusive to each other. These are just types of activities that we have described again to help folks think through what it is that we're looking for. But you do not have to assert one or choose one, and you can put forth a proposal that cuts across multiple or includes activities under multiple of these groups.

12/3/2024

Next slide, please. The application will be reviewed against three types of criteria: the technical merit, technical approach and understanding, and technical and management capabilities. In the webinar a few weeks ago, again, I encourage folks to watch that recording or view online, we spell out exactly what the criteria are under each of these and what we will be looking for. You'll see that the template also attempts to reflect where we recommend applicants, make sure to highlight various review criteria within their application to help us evaluate and to help you put forward your strongest application. Because even with those examples of types of activities in our walkthrough, in the previous webinar of what a series of milestones could look like, ultimately we will be evaluating against your an application's ability to demonstrate that that series of activities does make sense, is able to be completed in the 12 or 24 month period, that you have the technical and management capabilities, that it's a clear need and opportunity for your region, and it's really important to be able to make that compelling case for why your proposed activities make sense for DOE to be funding at this time.

Next slide, please. And then we have some dates. We've covered the first two. Open the 31st, we had our first webinar, that objective strategic session a few weeks ago on November 13th, and here we are at office hours session, eager to get to questions. This is my last slide so hopefully folks have been asking some questions, and I'll be able to check the chat in a minute.

And then a week before applications are due, we'll have a second session so we'll be available again to ask questions. Of course, you can email questions as well. The TechWerx website where the opportunity is hosted has an inbox that is monitored where you can post any questions, and then the application deadline is January 21st and we expect to announce selectees by June 2025. So that's the bulk of it. That's a high, level overview of everything. But I wanted to make sure that we had time for questions.

Taylor Moot, TWX

Alright, I think we can go to the next slide if I'm not mistaken. Yeah. So, this has the QR code, just so that you can. We'll take a post webinar survey. But more importantly, we can start going through the questions. So far we have two. So, I'm just going to read them off. But as you all are thinking about things, feel free to ask more questions, and we'll get to them.

The first question is, if an applicant is a state commission that has received an award under TSED, is the applicant permitted to apply under TAG?

Liza Reed, DOE GDO

So, TAG does not have any eligibility restrictions on other grant funding you've received. I'm not sure if TSED does, so, that is something that I would encourage an applicant to ensure

12/3/2024

with TSED that they're eligible. But certainly, TAG does not have any eligibility limitations based on other sources of funding. However, we do require that the specific activities funded by TAG not be funded by another grant. Right, we cannot provide double funding, but if another grant is providing 50% of the funding and 50% of the funding is coming from TAG, that's something that's acceptable. As long as it's very clear what TAG is funding of a whole project. You need to be able to illustrate specifically what TAG funding is going for. But you can present a larger part of the program in the template. Even the cover sheet of the template discusses that a bit as well. It asks for the total project budget, and then the requested project budget, so that we can be clear what we're evaluating those TAG dollars are for.

Taylor Moot, TWX:

All right. The next question, and I'll encourage folks to add more as they think of them, the next one is, are grants agnostic regarding the power generation source that's creating the energy needing transmission?

Liza Reed, DOE GDO:

So these, if you review our review criteria, you'll see that we look at what it is that you are doing to accelerate transmission. So, we're not asking specific questions on renewable energy. We are seeking information on what the applicant needs for siting, permitting, and planning of transmission.

Taylor Moot, TWX:

All right. Another question, is, is a state transmission authority, that is that is instrumentally of a state, not a state agency, eligible to apply?

Liza Reed, DOE GDO:

We'll have to take this question back for clarification with our legal team specifically talking through. And Maury, if you have any more information that you could provide so we're able to clarify why this is not a state agency, I think that would be really helpful, so that we can be clear on what this, what the situation is.

Taylor Moot, TWX:

Yeah. And Kyra will drop our email in the chat. But it's info@techwerx.org. So, any other additional information or any questions more broadly, send them our way, and we'll get them over to DOE. Thank you. Okay, that is all the questions we have so far. But please put some more questions in the chat. If you have them, we're happy to stay on as long as it's helpful to you all.

Okay, great. Another similar follow-up question. We have a board that was created by the state legislator, but is not specifically integrated into the executive branch of the state government. It is more or less independent. Could it apply?

Liza Reed, DOE GDO:

This is another question, Brian, that if you can provide specifics and we're happy to follow up. It's a little, I apologize that I cannot answer that live, but this is helpful to understand and sort of how all of these authorities are created, sort of a little differently. And so, I don't want to say anything general, when I think the specifics are really going to matter in this situation. But please feel free to share whatever information you can in more detail, and we will review and provide some responses directly or in the frequently asked questions.

Taylor Moot, TWX:

Yeah. And same thing, email us at the info@techwerx.org. And we'll make sure that that gets passed on. All those specifics will get passed on to DOE and for review, same thing. We have no current questions, so we'll stay on for a couple more minutes to make sure that we're answering everything that's coming in. Yeah. So happy to help.

Liza Reed, DOE GDO:

Yeah. And thank you so much for these questions already, because it is always helpful to hear what we need to make clearer, and we're happy to provide that guidance as soon as we have a better sense of where some of our definitions can provide more insight to folks. I can't encourage you enough to review the webinar from a couple of weeks ago, where we walk through some examples, the slides are available online as well. Where we walk through what it could look like to be trying to evaluate, you know, what transmission facility financing could look like if it came from a state authority or a tribal entity similarly with different and new approaches to transmission planning, or a central sort of transmission focused governmental entity. So, lots of really interesting ideas. And we're excited to see what folks have to propose.

So, we've got a question about how funding happens, and I believe the short answer is, yes, that the funding, it is for expenses incurred after the contracting is awarded.

Taylor Moot, TWX:

Yeah, so sorry. So the question is, does requested funding have to be incurred after the grant is awarded? Or will you reimburse for expenses that incurred prior to the award? Broadly speaking, for these or any other program that's run. Similarly, payments are milestone based. So, any milestones need to be hit within, Liza, correct me if I'm wrong, within the like period of performance. That being said, there can be milestones, such as a

12/3/2024

kickoff meeting to get some funds to start with, and you'll see that in the milestone template.

I'll give it another couple more minutes. It seems like we still have a couple of folks still on. But if we don't get any more questions, I think we'll pending more questions. We'll stay on until the half hour mark and then kind of go from there.

Liza Reed, DOE GDO:

Thank you all again for coming on early December right following a holiday weekend. We know this is a busy time for everybody. So glad we were able to be here and be available to help folks think through their applications and be ready to start pursuing in the next six or seven weeks.

Taylor Moot, TWX:

Alright. I see folks signing off. So, I'm gonna give us one more minute before we all log off. If there's any last-minute questions feel free to drop them in the chat. Again, our email is always open if you have things that you think of outside of this.

Well, with that, I think we'll wrap up. So yeah, again, if you have any questions, feel free to email us at info@techwerx.org. We also have a 'contact us' form on our website.

All of this information like, we've said a couple of times now, is on our website. And this will all get uploaded there within a couple of days. So the best place to find the most up to date information is there on our website

Last, we do have a post webinar survey we'd love if you could take it. Tell us what we can do better, all that good stuff. We appreciate your feedback as always and thank you so much for attending.

Liza Reed, DOE GDO:

Thanks all. Have a wonderful end of year.