

2023 Zero Energy for the Ocean State (ZEOS) Project RFP Questions and Answers

August 22, 2023

Q: Hi, I have two different deadline dates for the ZEOS application 8/28 and 8/31. Would you please clarify? Thank you.

A: The deadline is 8/31 at 5:00 PM.

August 14, 2023

Q: I am the Executive Administrative Assistant for Complete Construction, Inc. following up on behalf of an email sent last week in regards to the ZEOS Program. I was made aware all questions regarding the program and RFP must be asked via email to zeosprogram@rihousing.com and the application period is still open to apply for funding. The deadline is August 31, 2023, by 5:00 PM. Can you please send the link and or necessary resources we need to apply? Thank you in advance.

A: Please visit www.rihousing.com/rfps-rfqs/ where you will find the 2023 Zero Energy for the Ocean State (ZEOS) Project RFP. Click 'Learn More' where you can review the RFP, download proforma templates, download self-scoring template, cost breakdown templates, as well as review the FAQs. The RFP itself has instructions for checklist of requirements needed for application submission as well as how to submit your application. You will need to contact Nivea Linhares nlinhares@rihousing.com to submit your application, and she provides a link for you to upload your files.

August 11, 2023

Q: I am inquiring about the ZEOS Program as we are finishing a two-family new construction and we believe are a fit for this program. We would like to know if there is still funding available through this program to determine if it is advantageous for us to entertain the application process?

A: The application period is still open to apply for funding. The deadline is August 31, 2023, by 5:00 PM. All questions regarding the program and RFP must be asked via email to zeosprogram@rihousing.com as it is a public funding round, and all questions and answers are public knowledge.

August 8, 2023

Q: We cannot find the instructions to submit our RFP. Will providing a cloud-based to the application be permitted in case we cannot email our application?

A: Please review instructions on page four. Applications should not be emailed to zeosprogram@rihousing.com. Please contact Nivea Linhares at nlinhares@rihousing.com for your organization specific access code and instructions.

Q: Could you confirm that projects participating in “community net metering” are eligible under this program? Our roof does not have the capacity to host a solar PV system that will support energy use for our all-electric affordable housing development, so we’d expect that our project would be eligible based on its commitment to source renewables from the grid vs. on-site production, which will not cover the project’s projected energy use – is that correct?

Tenants must select their own power source because units are individually metered. So, they would be able to benefit from renewables if that is their choice, and the common areas will be powered by renewables, but we cannot legally enforce how an individual sources their power. The residents would clearly benefit from renewables for the common areas and have an opportunity to source power from the renewable grid (so the project could theoretically be net zero).

A: That is correct. To be eligible, you will need to be able to make the buildings fully net zero and demonstrate how the tenants will directly benefit from this.

A project like this would be eligible for Community Remote Net Metering (CRNM). However, there is going to be a long time before there is more capacity available in the CRNM program. We understand it would be difficult to require all the tenants of the building to subscribe to a community solar project. We understand you likely will only have control of master meters and can offset that load with rooftop solar or with a virtual net metered systems located offsite.

August 3, 2023

Q: We have additional questions on several of the forms required for submission. Can tell us what is necessary in this section of the cost breakdown titled "Division"? Can you please define the difference between the “Cost to ZEB” and “Cost to Code” sections? We believe this is looking at the incremental cost to be net zero, but we would like clarification please. Thank you.

A: We require an Outline Specification be provided, based on 16 MasterFormat Divisions as defined by the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI). The cost breakdown is organized by the Contractor's construction division in the CSI format.

You are correct in that for Cost to ZEB vs. Cost to Code, we are looking for the incremental cost to be Net Zero.

July 13, 2023

Q: We decided to move forward to apply for incentives under the ZEOS. We are worried about us being out on Block Island, and not part of RI Energy. We know we have been told that if we think we have a good project we should apply, but we worry about who is our power company. It is Block Island Power Company, and not RI Energy.

We intend to build to a higher standard as this program requires, however, we cannot enroll in RI Residential New Construction and ZEOS Energy Homes as designed by RI Energy. We can have certifications and testing of our design and final product, but we don't see a way to meet *Task 2b) Participate in RI Energy's Residential New Construction Program at onset of project.*

A: The project partners have decided your project is eligible to apply. It was not intentional to leave Block Island projects out and if there are future projects on Block Island and Pascoag, we can find a way to make them work. Please move forward with submitting an application.

June 20, 2023

Q: I am very interested in the ZEOS program for a multi-family rehab that we are planning. This project will create more affordable housing units and is a good candidate for this grant money. There is one question that I haven't found an answer to yet.

In the ZEOS program description, it states the Solar panels must "deliver the highest, long term utility bill benefits for the households living in the units." I understand the spirit of this statement but how can I achieve this?

First, this project will be creating rental units. If solar panels are installed, they are owned by the nonprofit, Women's Development Corporation. According to RI Energy's policy, the electricity credits generated from the panels that are owned by WDC can only be used to offset the consumption of the house meters. These credits are NOT transferable to the tenants. By offsetting the house meters, it saves more that can be used on other expenses associated with operating the facility.

How would I pass along the benefits (solar credits) to the tenants? Is there policy that allows for this to happen? If so, can you send me a link to it?

A: Please see the linked documents on the Renewable Net Metering credit for more information on [determination of benefits to tenants](#) and [submission requirements to determine eligibility and benefits to tenants](#).

June 15, 2023

Q: There is a demand response component to this, and batteries would be important to providing such a response. I am designing utility scale battery systems for this purpose in NY and parts of New England. ZEOS does not say we cannot have batteries in our design, but they cannot receive funds. Can you tell us why batteries are excluded? It seems counter intuitive.

A: Designs that utilize demand response technologies such as battery storage, smart thermostats, or other smart appliances and participate in RI Energy's demand response programs to optimize energy time of use are strongly encouraged. There are two contributors that make up the \$500,000 available in funds. RIHousing's portion and OER's portion are both equal contributions. The RFP states that OER's portion of the grant cannot cover batteries, however, RIHousing's portion of the grant can cover batteries associated with energy storage systems.

June 12, 2023

Q: Hello, I am on the Block Island Housing Board and also have the necessary solar licenses for this RFP. We have a project that seems well suited for this opportunity. We pay into the renewable and energy efficiency fund. The PUC has ruled in the past Block Island can participate in National Grid programs. Can we participate in this one?

A: If you think you are well suited for the opportunity, please submit an application and we will evaluate all applications for potential funding after August 31, 2023.

May 30, 2023

Q: I'm writing to begin a dialogue on this program with you regarding a proposed 11–12-unit subdivision I am preparing to develop in Warwick. If I understand the program correctly, I could potentially qualify for up to \$250k towards the construction? I'm a little confused in that the program also refers to \$500k and in another area it refers to \$17,000 per unit.

A: Each project is eligible for up to \$250,000 in funding. The total amount of funding available is \$500,000. If the 11-12 units is in a multifamily building, the project would be eligible for \$77,000-\$84,000. If the 11-12 units are all single family houses or contain 1-4 units in each building, the project would be eligible for \$187,000-\$204,000.

April 10, 2023

Q: RIHousing, along with OER, would like to encourage any ZEOS retrofit applicants in this current round of funding to also apply for the “Buildings UP Prize.” (New Construction not eligible for Buildings UP).

A: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Buildings Upgrade Prize (“Buildings UP”) aims to build capacity to rapidly and equitably transform U.S. buildings. Buildings UP is offering cash prizes to community-based organizations, local governments, tribes, building owners, utilities, nonprofit organizations, energy efficiency program implementers, and/or partnerships of these organizations, awarding \$200,000 for concepts to deliver scalable and replicable energy upgrades to buildings or \$400,000 for building energy upgrade concepts that focus on disadvantaged communities, low- and moderate-income households, and underserved buildings.

Building upgrades may include transitioning to efficient electric equipment, including heat pumps and heat pump water heaters, and improving building efficiency through insulation and air sealing measures.

Full prize application submissions are due on July 18th, 2023, where winning teams will gain access to trainings, technical assistance, and one-on-one regional experts to assist with deployment and access to additional funding in future phases of Buildings UP, subject to program funding availability. Moreover, an Application Support Prize is also available for any applicants that may be new or face barriers to applying for federal funding from DOE, which includes a \$5,000 cash prize and up to 10 hours of technical assistance for the program application. The Application Support Prize has been awarded on a rolling basis and will accept submissions for **its last round of awards until April 26th, 2023, at 5:00 PM ET**. For more program details please visit the [HeroX program application website](#).

If you are applying to ZEOS for a retrofit project, we recommend that you also apply to the Building Upgrade Prize and supply proof of submittal with your application to RIHousing. If you do not believe your project will qualify, or if this application would place an undue burden to the project team, **please state so in your project application**.

March 24, 2023

Q: Could you provide our names, as well as other teams who have experience building Zero Energy buildings, to the list of developers for them to do their own due diligence? I think it would be helpful that developers knew what resources were out there to help make this important initiative successful.

A: Please submit an AIA Qualification Form

Q: Would ground source heat pumps be allowable for this RFP for multi-family units?

A: Yes, ground source heat pumps (GHPS) are eligible.

March 16, 2023

Q: We just learned of the ZEOS RFP and wanted to know if you could share the list of developers that showed interest, as we are very experienced architects, and Passive House consultants focusing entirely on Net Zero Energy multifamily projects.

A: Unfortunately, we cannot share the list of developers showing interest and will discuss internally what, if any, information we can provide.