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38307 DOE Grid Deployment Office GRIPs Program FOA Webinar

WHITNEY BELL: Hello, and welcome to the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships Program Funding Opportunity Informational Webinar. I'm Whitney Bell with ICF and I'll be your host today. First a few housekeeping items for today's webinar. This Web-X meeting is being recorded and may be used by the U.S. Department of Energy. If you do not wish to have your voice recorded, please do not speak during the call. If you do not wish to have your image recorded, please turn off your camera or participate by phone. If you speak during the call or use a video connection, you are presumed consent to recording and use of your voice and image. All participants are in listen only mode.

If you would like to see only the active speaker during today's workshop, please select layout in the upper right hand corner and toggle off show participants without video. If you have technical issues or questions, you may type them in the chat and select send to host. We are taking questions throughout today's presentation, so please use that chat function to submit them during the presentation.

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If you need to view the live captioning, please refer to the link that will appear in the chat shortly. And finally, the most hot topic question of the day, we will post a copy of today's presentation on the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships' program webpage by this Friday. And the recording of today's webinar will be available in two weeks and we will email all registrants to let you know. So let's go ahead and get started. Today you'll hear from Maria Robinson, the Director of the Grid Deployment Office for her opening remarks. Maria, welcome.

MARIA ROBINSON: Thank you so much and appreciate the opportunity to speak with all of you today. My name is Maria Robinson. I am the head of the Grid Deployment Office here at the Department of Energy, which is the office which is offering today's Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships Program, as well as the associated grant opportunities that we have here. So on the next slide we have a little bit of information about the Grid Deployment Office.

We are one of the new offices developed through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and through a realignment

within the Department of Energy with a focus specifically on all things related to transmission and distribution systems and all things related to grid. Especially with a focus on demonstration and deployment, which compliments the Department of Energy's larger research and development mission.

We have three main areas of focus. One is on power generation assistance, which operates our hydro power and nuclear power related credit programs, our transmission division, which focuses on financial assistance programs, as well as long-term planning and permitting related efforts. And our grid modernization division, which is the office that houses our GRIP related programs. We're very excited about this massive opportunity.

At the top I would like to note that we have received a significant amount of feedback from folks regarding deadlines. At this moment in time we're not contemplating any changes in deadlines as they are currently set around the concept papers. As a reminder, the concept paper is meant to be relatively high level.

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And while it will be evaluated, we hope to reduce the amount of administrative burden on folks who are looking to apply to this program and further information would be required should those concept papers make it on and be recommended for submission into the second round. So we certainly hear the feedback from folks. At this moment in time, just want you to know that we're not contemplating any potential changes to the schedule.

WHITNEY BELL: Thank you so much, Maria. I am now excited to welcome Collin Meehan. He's the Project Manager of the GRIPs program with the Grid Deployment Office and he's here to provide you a little bit more information today. Collin, I'll go ahead and turn it over to you.

COLLIN MEEHAN: Thanks everyone for joining us today. I'm going to go ahead and step over to the next slide if we can. So as Maria noted, this is the discussion on the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships Program. A really important notice for everyone, this webinar is intended to help applicants and other folks understand the specifics of this program, but ultimately the binding document is the Funding Opportunity Announcement that's listed here. And anything that is

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said in this webinar, in the Q and A, that is in conflict with that document, the document is the determining document.

Also to note that there will be a Q and A session at the end of this presentation, so looking forward to hearing your questions and doing as best as we can to answer them. The Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships or GRIP, as I'll call it, is really three different programs in one. We've got three different topic areas that I'll spend some time on each of them that you may be familiar with from the draft funding announcement that came out earlier in the year.

I do want to emphasize that for the Department of Energy, we have a couple of goals for this program. Fundamentally, we're looking for proposals and projects that are transformational in nature. That really will lead to a step change in resilience at the local, regional, national level. And keeping in mind that we are in a place where our electric grid is continually evolving and rapidly evolving and there are a lot of changes in both load and generation.

So we're looking for opportunities that both take advantage of those facts, and also set us up for success in the long-term. We're also looking for proposals that have a multiplier effect, that really lead to further private sector investment and other non-federal investment to continue deploying the kinds of infrastructure that we need to have a resilience grid that supports continued buildout of clean energy and innovative projects.

And the last thing I'll mention in terms of our goals for the program is we want to see projects that are focused on advancing community benefits for a wide range of communities, and especially including disadvantaged communities. I'll spend some more time on that later in the discussion. As Maria noted, we do have some deadlines coming up very quickly for the concept papers. I'll talk more about both the deadlines and the concept paper shortly.

Before we jump into that, though, just a real quick overview on the programs themselves. We have three

different topic areas, the grid resilience grants and sometimes we'll refer to those as the utility and industry grid resilience grants and that's really to differentiate them from the state formula grant programs. They are both focused on grid resilience, but this is targeted specifically at the utility and energy industry sector.

One thing that I would like to note here, as you'll see there's the total funding amount that was passed in the Infrastructure Bill, but we also have the approximate funding that we will see in this funding cycle. And the reason I want to flag that for folks is just to highlight again that this is the first funding opportunity. There will be subsequent ones.

We know that folks are concerned about deadlines. It's important to keep in mind that there will be additional opportunities in the future. We have the Smart Grid grants program, which is topic area two. This may be familiar to folks from the ERA stimulus package back in 2010. It is an updated version, effectively, of that program with some changes that I'll jump into as we get

to that part of the program. And finally, we have the Grid Innovation Program. And that is a, it's a new program and one that we're very excited about. And again, I'll provide more details shortly.

But first, I do want to talk a little bit about timing. We received a lot of helpful feedback and comments and did our best to accommodate the request for additional time on the full application, which really is the more burdensome, the higher administrative burden of the two parts in this process. In order to be eligible for this round of funding, applicants do need to submit a concept paper.

As Maria noted, we are looking for a high level approach for the concept paper. I'll speak to that a little bit more. But in order to accommodate the need for additional time for the full application, we wanted to kind of provide additional, frankly substantially additional time, for the full applications and in order to do that, we had to kind of compress the schedule for the concept papers.

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But we're looking forward to receiving for the first two, for top grid areas one and two, we're looking forward to receiving those on December 16th and top grid area three, the Grid Innovation Program, we need to provide some additional flexibility because we expect that some of the concepts and some of the projects that are proposed are likely to be more complex and require additional collaboration with stakeholders, in particular state, local and tribal governments.

I do want to note that an entity can submit more than one concept paper and full application under this funding opportunity. The concept papers and applications do each have to be unique and distinct projects. In talking about the concept papers, I thought it would be helpful to provide you with a little more detail. And I should note that we have, within the FOA itself, within the document itself, in Section 4C, basically a template for the concept paper. So for applicants that are concerned about what is required or would like additional details, I would certainly reference you to that section of the FOA.

But fundamentally, what we're looking for are descriptions of both the project and the approach, as well as the eligibility and the benefits of the project. And finally, the viability of the proposal and the timing. The maximum page number is twelve pages. Our hope here is to help applicants understand that for the concept paper, what we're looking for are some high level descriptions of the project that they are proposing and the kind of specifics of that project, along with some, a succinct description of how they intend to develop a community benefits plan. So we're not looking for a kind of a pre-application or a significant level of specificity in these concept papers.

This is intended to provide applicants with an opportunity to put forward a concept that we can review and provide them some feedback on, whether or not we encourage their full application. Again, to ultimately reduce your administrative burden, that's our goal and our intent here.

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I want to spend some time talking about each of the programs and again, refer you all to the FOA itself. You can see the sections of the FOA that speak to these different issues within each program here in the lower left hand corner. For the grid resilience grants, the eligible entities are listed on the left. A variety of electric industry, operators and owners that are eligible to apply for these grants.

And ultimately, these are - and I should note that there is a specific small utility set aside for this grant program where small utilities are only required to match one-third of the grant amounts received, and at least 30 percent of this funding over the course of this program needs to go to small utilities. For all other applicants, the cost share is 100 percent, so it's a 50/50 split, but at most, in terms of what the federal government can provide.

In terms of the grid resilience grants, we've got here a list of the types of areas that we would like the grant to address, and it must address at least three of the requirements here. So you can get a sense for what

we're looking for ultimately is a combination of grid hardening, and resilience and ability to both resist impacts from natural disasters that we know are increasing, as well as an ability to recover more quickly from those impacts.

I should note that there are some specific resilience measures that are not allowed to be funded under this provision, specifically the construction of new electric generation or a large-scale battery storage facility that is not used for enhancing system adaptive capacity during disruptive events. Cybersecurity is also not eligible to be funded under this program.

In terms of the smart grid grants program, again, this is, I would call it an updated version of the smart grid grants from the ERA legislation in 2010. The eligible entities for this are very broad, so you can see over on the left hand corner. Ultimately, the grants are intended to support and enhance grid flexibility. You can see on the right hand side we have a set of goals and objectives. Again, all of these are provided in more detail in the Funding Opportunity

Announcements. So I just want to continue to direct you to that document. It has a lot of information. It is well organized. I know it's a lot to go through, but I would encourage you to review that in detail.

Specifically for the smart grid grants, we are looking for, our goals and objectives for this program are to increase transmission capacity and specifically we're interested in grid enhancing technologies, but other approaches that could increase transmission capacity as well. Mitigating wildfires and wildfire risk and mitigating other potential impacts from extreme weather conditions. And also load management and the electrification of grid edge devices. So things like managed charging and grid infrastructure, autonomous control of resources on the distribution system as well. This program does incorporate and needs to, frankly incorporate, a secure communications and cybersecurity. So that's an important part of this program.

Again, we've got a more detailed list here of priority investment area with even more detail in the Funding

Opportunity Announcement itself. We are looking, again, for increased transmission capacity and operational transfer capacity. So you can see here what we're talking about in terms of grid enhancing technologies. I will say that from our perspective, we want to see proposals that are creative and flexible.

We are very interested in improving grid flexibility, as well as reliability. We do want to improve visibility on the electric system, and so communication and autonomous control, data analytics, software sensors, those are all eligible under this program. Secure communication is obviously critical. That's a high priority within this entire program and is eligible to be funded in the smart grid grants program.

We are also prioritizing investment in aggregation and integration of distributed energy resources, whether it's renewable energy resources, electric vehicle charging, energy storage, smart building technologies, we're interested in a wide variety of grid edge technologies under this program.

Fundamentally, we do want to see enhanced interoperability between systems, whether it's between distribution and transmission systems or other parts of the transmission and distribution system. And we're looking for proposals that do anticipate and reduce the impacts of extreme weather or natural disasters on grid resiliency. We know the frequency of these is increasing, and so this is a high priority for us under this program.

Finally, the grid innovation program. The eligible entities are on the right side. You can see the eligible entities are more restricted under this part of the legislation. Ultimately it needs to be, the primary, the lead applicant needs to be a state, a combination of two or more states, an Indian tribe, a unit of local government, or a public utility commission.

We do want to see these entities partnering with other entities, private sector entities, public utilities, others that can play a role in deploying the infrastructure. Because we recognize that this is not

something that many states or public utility commissions or tribal governments or local governments have experience with. But this is a program that we want to see ultimately that needs to be led by the state or unit of local government.

What we're looking for are innovative approaches to transmission and distribution, writ very large. So we are focused on proposals and concepts that will frankly break new ground and create new opportunities for further deployment of infrastructure, as well as energy resources, all of it targeted at enhancing resilience and reliability for the system. We do want to see approaches that enhance regional grid resilience and again, implemented ultimately through one state or multiple states, public utility commissions and other local government agencies.

In terms of our primary objectives for this program, I'm just going to repeat myself again, apologies for sounding like a broken record, but I do want to refer everyone to look at the Funding Opportunity Announcement. And we've got the section helpfully down

here at the bottom for everyone. But ultimately our primary objectives, they are spoken to in the FOA, are to ensure reliable grid operations now and into the future as the system continues to evolve and change. To improve overall grid resilience. And fundamentally to enhance collaboration among the different eligible entities, including private and public sector owners and operators, as well as state agencies, public utility commissions, Indian tribal governments, local government organizations as well. And fundamentally we're seeking proposals that contribute to decarbonizing the electricity system, as well as the broader energy system.

In terms of areas of interest in the Funding Opportunity Announcement, we highlight what I would characterize as three different areas of interest - the transmission system, the distribution system and a combination of those systems. So we're trying to be as comprehensive as possible when we look for innovative proposals within this program.

I want to spend a little bit of time talking about community benefits planning. This is an important area for us within this program and across the broader organization. Before I jump into this, I do want to note that we have gotten several comments regarding a link in the community benefits planning section of the Funding Opportunity Announcement that was not working. That has been updated. There is now an amended Funding Opportunity Announcement. It's actually Amendment 2.

So if you go back to the website where you downloaded the original document, if you look at Amendment 2, there is a new Funding Opportunity Announcement with the corrected link. That is a link to a scoring rubric for community benefits planning that I think applicants will find very, very helpful as they look to understand what it is that we're looking for in terms of community benefits planning.

I do want to note that in the concept paper we are looking for ultimately a description of the approach that the applicant plans to take, or the team plans to take, in community benefits planning. To me, this is

differentiated from looking for a detailed description of what the applicant plans to do regarding community benefits planning. And just as a reminder, the maximum page for the concept paper is five pages. That's a maximum, not a minimum.

But we're looking for you to describe the approach and keep it relatively brief to help us understand how your proposal is going to impact the communities that it will affect. You know, including certainly disadvantaged communities, as well as the labor and workforce in the area.

Within community benefits planning, we have four broad categories - community and labor engagement, investing in the American workforce, diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, and the Justice 40 initiative, which is an initiative from President Biden to ensure that 40 percent of the benefits from the infrastructure legislation accrue to historically disadvantaged communities.

Again, within the Funding Opportunity Announcement, there's a lot of detail on all of these four categories and what we are looking for applicants to do regarding community benefits planning for each of them.

Fundamentally when we get to the full application phase, what we're looking for are applicants who have begun to do the work of engaging with local communities, labor unions, community leaders, local governments, tribal entities, other stakeholders, to understand what the affected communities need and want related to this project, related to the energy system in general.

And in particular, to understand how projects can benefit disadvantaged communities, whether it's by increasing quality job workforce opportunities, or providing environmental benefits or other social and economic benefits. This is a really important section of the application. We recognize that this is for a lot of folks maybe a new area, or a new requirement. We want to provide whatever help we can.

At the bottom of this slide you'll notice there's a link to a frequently asked questions specifically to community benefits planning that should be helpful. There is also in the Funding Opportunity Announcement a tremendous amount of detail and references to help applicants understand how we define disadvantaged communities, what we're looking for in terms of labor engagement and community engagement, what we're looking for in terms of workforce development.

So we provide a lot of detail there and I really encourage you to review the sections of the Funding Opportunity Announcement that refer to the community benefits plan. I do want to spend a little bit of time on the updates that we've made to the FOA since the draft came out earlier in the summer. As we've discussed, the concept paper and full application submission schedule has been updated.

Again, the intent there was to provide significant additional time to applicants so we have several additional months in the full application phase for applicants. We did eliminate some minimum award sizes

and increase some maximum award sizes. Our goal here is really to try and encourage the best of the best applications and to be as flexible as we can in awarding applicants that we think merit those awards. So we don't want to limit ourselves to a specific minimum.

We do have to maintain some maximums in order to just ensure project diversity and competitiveness. But ultimately, we want to try and give ourselves as much flexibility as possible, and also give the applicants as much flexibility as possible in terms of the project size and scale that they're looking to accomplish.

We have updated some of the technical review criteria and some program policy factors. I encourage any applicant to review those sections in detail. Most of the updates are targeted at ensuring that the proposals can demonstrate cost effectiveness. That's an important criteria for us as well.

We've talked a little bit about the community benefits plan. We did provide some additional details for the

community benefits plan, again, to help applicants understand what is required and what we're looking for there. We've got a lot of requests for adding teaming partner lists, and we have added that. So now we've already had a number of folks volunteer, whether it's companies, individual experts, or organizations who have volunteered to be teaming partners for any potential applicant. So encourage you to review that information.

Again, in the FOA we have all of the information to both find that list, and to submit your organization as an eligible partner on that list as well. We provided some additional details on the report on resilience, which is required under topic area 1, the grid resilience grants program. Again, this is intended to provide additional information for applicants.

This is a reporting requirement in the legislation that is necessary prior to approval of any grant, any award. So we wanted to provide as much information as possible regarding what we need to see from applicants. We try to keep it relatively straightforward and just provide

you with the information that hopefully can help you develop that report without too much additional administrative burden. We also added a project description and assurances document, which again is linked to in the FOA, so you should have access to all of that information.

I went through this much faster than I expected, and we are now at the webinar notice reminder. So we're getting ready for the Q and A section of our discussion, which is great that we have enough time for questions. I do just want to remind folks, the information in this presentation is not legally binding. Ultimately the document that you need to refer is the Funding Opportunity Announcement. So if you see or hear anything in this presentation that is in any way not in agreement with the Funding Opportunity Announcement, that document is the binding document. And with that, I think we're going to move to the Q and A session.

WHITNEY BELL: Thank you so much, Collin. We have lots of questions that have been coming in, so we're quite excited here. Please do submit your questions in the

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chat box and select send to host, and we'll do our best to answer them. Before we get started, a quick reminder, we will post a copy of today's presentation on the web page by Friday, and the recording of today's webinar will be available in about two weeks. Alright, let's go ahead and get started. So first question here, are applicants required to apply now in order to be eligible for future funding announcements?

COLLIN MEEHAN: That's a good question. No, applicants are not eligible, or required to apply in this cycle to be eligible for future cycles. They are required to submit a concept paper in this cycle if they want to submit a full application in this cycle.

WHITNEY BELL: Great. And second question, is this first application drawing funding from multiple fiscal years?

COLLIN MEEHAN: Yes, this is drawing funding from fiscal year '22 and '23. So subsequent funding cycles we haven't yet determined how we're going to approach that. Obviously we want to communicate that as soon as we have -

WHITNEY BELL: How will DOE determine which applicants, based on concept papers, will be encouraged to submit full applications?

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COLLIN MEEHAN: That's a good question, and it's maybe a longer answer. Ultimately we have a review process. We're working with the National Energy Technology Laboratory to review all of the concept papers with a combination of expert independent reviewers, as well as Department of Energy staff. And the criteria for reviewing the concept papers, as well as the full application, are delineated in the Funding Opportunity Announcement itself. So that should give applicants a good idea of what we're looking for and how we will approach the review.

Fundamentally for the concept papers, you know, a key consideration will be whether the concept fits within the intended program or the program that is being applied to. So really encourage applicants to review all of the programs. I think Maria noted, and I'll note, that we have, we also have our transmission conductor for the Grid Deployment Office, which cuts across all programs in the Grid Deployment Office to help connect applicants to a program that's a good fit for them.

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That may be a useful tool as applicants consider how they want to apply. Because fundamentally one of the really key things we're going to be looking for in the concept paper is whether the concept is a good fit for the program. We, again, have a number of metrics that are in the Funding Opportunity Announcement, a combination of technical review criteria, as well as program policy factors, that I would encourage applicants to review because those are going to be a part of our review process.

WHITNEY BELL: Thank you. I know that was a multi-layered question there, so thank you. Our next question, how is DOE defining small utilities?

COLLIN MEEHAN: So it is, yeah, 4 million megawatt hours of sales annually is the definition that we're using.

WHITNEY BELL: All right. How will DOE account for challenging deadlines for concept paper submissions?

COLLIN MEEHAN: Well, we'll account for it in a couple of different ways. First, simply by again encouraging folks to think of the concept paper not as an application or a pre-application or a kind of a rough draft, but really as an effort to help us understand what the concept is that you're proposing, what the

broad outlines of its timing are, the benefits of that proposal, what its impact to the grid and to grid and to grid resilience will be.

You know, fundamentally that the biggest way that we are hoping to account for this compressed timeline is encouraging you to take an approach that is truly a concept paper and not an attempt to kind of detail out a program or a proposal. Secondly, we simply recognize that this is a concept paper. So our review process for the concept paper stage is going to be different from the full application stage.

We are going to be taking into account things like program policy factors as well as the technical review criteria, but quite frankly we don't want to expect the level of detail to fully satisfy all of those answers in the concept paper stage. So our review process is going to look a little bit different. It's going to recognize that these are higher level documents.

And I'll also say, crossed in something like a concept paper, we're really again just focused on the broad

brush outlines. And as noted in the Funding Opportunity Announcement, we have a few criteria that we're looking for you to meet in the concept paper. Delineating not just the concept itself, but how it will impact the system, how it will impact resilience, what the likely catalyzing effect of that proposal might be, as well as how it will impact different communities that it will affect. We're looking for those outlines and it's important to have those outlines, but we recognize that applicants are not going to have the level of detail that's necessary for a full application. That's the entire purpose of having a concept paper.

WHITNEY BELL: Great. How will funding caps for each topic area apply to individual projects?

COLLIN MEEHAN: Funding caps for each topic area are directly applied to each proposal. So if there's a funding cap for a [unclear] area, an individual proposal cannot exceed that funding cap. Hopefully that answers that question.

WHITNEY BELL: All right. Will DOE consider applications for funding for new generation under topic area one?

COLLIN MEEHAN: No. Funding for new generation is not eligible under topic area one.

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WHITNEY BELL: Can you clarify DOE's approach to the waiver process associated with buy America products, or, I'm sorry, requirements.

COLLIN MEEHAN: You know, I think that's something that we're going to have to address in the Frequently Asked Questions. We do provide a lot of detail on the waiver process in the Funding Opportunity Announcement itself. I think providing any more detail we're going to have to answer in the FAQ. And if there are any specific questions about the waiver process, you know, I encourage folks to submit those questions through the fed connect link that again is provided in the Funding Opportunity Announcement.

WHITNEY BELL: Great. Is AMI an eligible investment under topic area two?

COLLIN MEEHAN: Generally speaking, Advanced Metering Infrastructure should be eligible in the sense that it wouldn't to be disqualified simply on the basis that it's Advanced Metering Infrastructure. I think fundamentally what we're looking for in topic area two are proposals that don't just deploy advanced metering infrastructure, but leverage its capabilities. So that's going to be an important element as well.

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WHITNEY BELL: Can you expound on the Justice 40 Initiative requirements, specifically for the smart grid grant?

COLLIN MEEHAN: It's really hard to answer a question that asks me to expound. I'm happy to expound on a lot of different things. What I will say is, whether it's for the smart grid grants or the other programs in the GRIP program, the Justice 40 Initiative and the requirements there again are, there's a lot of detail in the Funding Opportunity Announcement.

And the really critical thing for folks is to review that information and to engage with local disadvantaged communities, with community leaders, with organizations that are focused on environmental and energy justice. As they move to the full application phase, that's going to be a really critical thing. We recognize that not every project is going to be able to accomplish all of the goals that we have within the broad GRIP program, but the Justice 40 Initiative is a high priority for us.

WHITNEY BELL: So our next question is, where can we find the Funding Opportunity Announcement that you keep referring to?

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COLLIN MEEHAN: We do have in the Grid Deployment Office we have a landing page for the GRIP program that has a link to the Funding Opportunity Announcement, as well as a couple of other tools including a template for the concept paper, which can be found in the FOA, but we've pulled out individually on a landing page and program specific kind of quick facts. So that can be an important resource as well on the Grid Deployment Office website.

WHITNEY BELL: Great, thank you so much for clarifying that. Could you indicate the due date for the concept dates again, please? Someone is noting that the FOA online is not very clear. They just want to go through them one more time.

COLLIN MEEHAN: Okay. Well yeah, happy to. And I apologize, I probably went through that a little bit too quickly. So, for the grid resilience grants, topic area one, concept papers are due December 16th and the full applications are due April 6th. Our intent is to respond to concept papers by February of 2023. My hope and my intent is to respond by the end of January if at all possible, to give applicants as much time as possible.

For topic area two, the smart grid grants concept papers are due again December 16th, the same as topic area one. Our goal for response time is the same, February 2023 at the latest, my hope is by the end of January. Full applications for that program are due March 17th, so a little bit earlier than topic area one.

Our hope there with topic area two is that folks, this is a program that's a little more familiar folks. It's the eligibility criteria a little more wide open, as well as the projects themselves and so we're hoping that the application process for this one is a little easier.

For topic area three, because we expect to see applications that are more complex that include working with state, local, and tribal governments and agencies, as well as the private sector, we've tried to accommodate that complexity with more time both in the concept paper phase. So concept papers for the Grid Innovation Program, topic area three, are due January 13th of 2023. Our intent is to respond by March of 2023.

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My goal, I will say, is by the end of February if at all possible. Full applications for topic area three are due May 19th of 2023. And so we're happy that we were able to significantly extend the timeline for all of the full applications across the programs. We recognize that the concept paper deadlines are constrained especially for the first two topic areas, but we think ultimately this struck the best balance that we could.

WHITNEY BELL: Thank you for going over that. Appreciate it.

Can one organization submit two concept papers to two different topic areas?

COLLIN MEEHAN: Yes, one organization can submit two distinct concept papers to two different topic areas. One organization cannot submit two similar or same concept papers to two different topic areas. They have to be unique and distinct.

WHITNEY BELL: This person asks, do they have to complete a Fed Connect account to submit a concept paper?

COLLIN MEEHAN: I will double check that and we can put that up on the FAQ, but I believe that you do. Our, and again this is in the Funding Opportunity Announcement early on in the document, we strongly encourage anyone

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who is considering to apply to go ahead and set up all of the accounts that are required for the full application.

WHITNEY BELL: Can applicants use funds for pre-award expenses?

COLLIN MEEHAN: Let's see, applicants, with some limitation, applicants can use funds for pre-award expenses. I want to be very clear on this. If the funds have not been awarded, the applicants is not guaranteed to get those funds. The applicant can only use funds for pre-award expenses if they have been approved prior to the use of those funds by the Department of Energy. So yes, but there's some risk to the applicant.

WHITNEY BELL: Can applicants use funds for energy storage demonstration projects?

COLLIN MEEHAN: So I will say, this is not a demonstration project program; this is a deployment program. Applicants can use funds for certain types of energy storage projects and the question, the governing question, would be whether they qualify under the different programs. So if they're meeting the needs of the different programs, whether it's the Grid Resilience Grant Program, the Smart Grid Grant Program

or the Grid Innovation Project, energy storage is eligible under different criteria for each of those projects.

To the extent that an energy storage facility that is maybe a novel technology and requires additional funding for demonstration or proof of concept, it might be a better fit for the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations or for some of the other offices. But you know, the broad outlines of the technology of energy storage is eligible under this program.

I do want to note the caveat that I mentioned earlier, that in topic area one under grid resilience grants, energy storage that is not being used, and I'll get the exact language wrong, so refer you back to the FOA, but energy storage that is not being used to support grid resilience is not eligible. That's the short version of it.

WHITNEY BELL: Thank you. Alright, I'm going to do one final question. It looks like we've got a lot of, the over-arching questions answered here. So the last one is can

eligible applicants submit full applications without a concept paper being approved?

COLLIN MEEHAN: They must submit a concept paper. There isn't, we're not approving concept papers; we're responding to concept papers with either an encouragement or a discouragement. This is a good and really important question. Whether or not we encourage a proposal to move forward, whether or not we encourage a proposal to move forward, an applicant can submit a full application. So even if for whatever reason we determine that we're discouraging a project based on the concept paper, an applicant can still submit that application.

WHITNEY BELL: Great, thank you so much, Collin. So that brings us to the end of our Q and A time today. So thank you so much for speaking and participating. For questions that we did not get to, we will be using those to update the FAQ. If you do have any specific questions, please let us know. There will be a link in the chat here momentarily for you to reach out to.

Again, a copy of today's slides will be available on the website by Friday and the recording will be

available in about two weeks. Thank you so much to Maria and Collin for joining us today and thank you to all of our attendees for participating. Take care, and we'll see you next time.

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