

# **GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

## **California Automated Permit Processing Program**



**GFO-21-402**

<https://www.energy.ca.gov/funding-opportunities/solicitations>

**State of California**

**California Energy Commission**

**June 2022**

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## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment Number	Title of Section
<b>01</b>	Application Form ( <i>requires signature</i> )
<b>02</b>	Agreement Terms and Conditions

## **I. Introduction**

**NOTE: This solicitation is for the California Automated Permit Processing (CalAPP) Program and the solicitation documents are unique and different from other California Energy Commission solicitations. Please do not use attachments from other Energy Commission grant solicitations as this will result in disqualification (e.g., EPIC and FPIP programs).**

### **A. PURPOSE OF SOLICITATION**

The purpose of this solicitation is to provide funding for California cities, counties, or cities and counties, to establish online, automated solar permitting. Senate Bill 129 (Skinner, Budget Act of 2021) appropriates \$20 million in funding to the California Energy Commission (CEC) to support a funding program pursuant to this purpose.

Funding through CalAPP is available to all incorporated cities, counties, or cities and counties to implement an online, automated permitting platform that verifies code compliance and issues permits in real time for a solar energy system.

To meet its clean energy goals, California needs new renewable and storage resources, including rooftop solar and storage projects. Per the 2021 Senate Bill 100 Joint Agency Report, achieving 100% clean electricity in California requires an acceleration of the development of rooftop solar projects. CalAPP funding is intended to encourage cities and counties to further enhance permitting processes and accelerate processing and turnaround time, particularly regarding plan review. Overall, funding is intended to promote the development of residential solar and solar-plus-storage systems, greatly decreasing approval times, cutting permitting costs for local governments and homeowners, and helping California meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals through an easier installation process.

## B. KEY WORDS/TERMS

Word/Term	Definition
Adoption	A term for when a new automated permitting platform is fully installed and operational for processing solar permits.
Applicant	The entity that submits an application to this solicitation.
Application	An applicant's written response to this solicitation.
Authorized Representative	<i>Authorized Representative</i> , the person signing the application form who has authority to enter into an agreement with the CEC.
CalAPP	California Automated Permit Processing Program
CAM	<i>Commission Agreement Manager</i> , the person designated by the CEC to oversee the performance of an agreement resulting from this solicitation and to serve as the main point of contact for the Recipient.
CAO	Commission Agreement Officer
CEC	State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission or, the California Energy Commission.
Days	<i>Days refers to calendar days.</i>
NOPA	<i>Notice of Proposed Award</i> , a public notice by the CEC that identifies award recipients.
Platform	Online, automated solar permitting platform
Project Manager	The person designated by the applicant to oversee the project and to serve as the main point of contact for the CEC.
Project Partner	An entity or individual that contributes financially or otherwise to the project (e.g., match funding, provision of a test, demonstration or deployment site), and does not receive CEC funds.
Recipient	An entity receiving an award under this solicitation.
Solicitation	This entire document, including all attachments, exhibits, any addendum and written notices, and questions and answers ("solicitation" may be used interchangeably with "Grant Funding Opportunity").
State	State of California

## C. PROJECT SCOPE OF WORK

The applicant may apply for grant funding through CalAPP. Awarded applicants, in consultation with the local fire department, district, or authority, shall implement an online, automated solar permitting platform (platform), such as *SolarAPP+*. *SolarAPP+* is a web-based portal, developed by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, that automates project plan review and produces code-compliant approvals to support building departments in quickly issuing permits for residential solar energy system installations. Attachment 1, the Grant Application Form, is the scope of work.

If choosing to adopt a tool other than *SolarAPP+*, the CEC will verify that it meets the following requirements:

1. The platform verifies code compliance and issues permits in real time to a licensed contractor for a solar energy system, or an energy storage system paired with a solar energy system, that is no larger than 38.4 kilowatts alternating current nameplate rating.
2. The platform is consistent with the system parameters and configurations of *SolarAPP+* as described in D.6, the *Verification* section of this solicitation manual.

## D. FUNDING

### 1. Amount Available and Minimum/Maximum Funding Amounts

There is a **minimum of \$19,000,000** available for grants awarded under this solicitation. Funding levels vary based on population size of the applicant's jurisdiction, from a minimum of \$40,000 to a maximum of \$100,000 per awarded applicant. Funding amounts are the maximum that can be invoiced by the awardee to the CEC. The CEC will issue payment only for eligible costs supported by required documentation.

Applicant Population	Maximum Funding Award Amount
Less Than 50,000	\$40,000
50,000 to 99,999	\$60,000
100,000 to 200,000	\$80,000
Greater Than 200,000	\$100,000

### 2. Population Determination

The maximum funding award amount is determined by the latest population estimates as of January 1, 2021, or sooner and provisional population estimates as of January 1, 2022, provided by the State of California Department of Finance. Population estimates for each city and county can be accessed at <https://dof.ca.gov/forecasting/demographics/>.

County applicants shall NOT include the population of each city within that county for the purpose of identifying a corresponding award amount since each city can apply individually. A county's population for purposes of this GFO is considered the population outside of incorporated cities within the county's borders.

### 3. Statutory Funding Deadlines

Funding through CalAPP is available for encumbrance (funding reservation) until June 30, 2023, and available for liquidation until June 30, 2027. However, due to administrative deadlines, Recipients will have to complete activities, including final invoicing before the liquidation date. Deadlines to submit an application and complete funded activities are identified in Section E below.

### 4. Budget Costs

Allowable Costs only include reasonable amounts and rates for the following:

- Ongoing staff labor costs associated directly with the adoption, and maintenance of a qualifying online, automated permitting platform, including:
  - In-house staff time, including IT resources

- Third-party consultation services
- Ongoing, in-house staff time spent on staff training specific to the platform.
- Ongoing costs associated with training installers, developers, and other external parties in the use of the system, including but not limited to:
  - Facility rental
  - Training printouts and materials
- Essential hardware or equipment necessary to support the adoption of a qualifying platform, which could not otherwise be completed without such hardware or equipment.
- Following the adoption of an online, automated permitting platform, a maximum of three years of maintenance and subscription costs for permit tracking software in support of the adopted permitting platform.
  - Maintenance may include adding support for energy storage paired with solar energy system permitting to an existing platform such as SolarAPP+.
- Jurisdictions that have started the process of adopting an automated, online solar permitting platform may still apply for funds to go towards any of the ongoing allowable costs in this list in order to complete their full adoption.

Unallowable Costs include:

- Software not related to the adoption of a qualifying online, automated permitting platform.
- Any costs incurred or activities conducted prior to entering into a grant agreement with the Energy Commission or incurred after the grant agreement has ended.
- Typically excluded items such as food and beverages.
- Fines and penalties.
- Advertising costs.
- Permit processing fees charged by operator of an online platform to the user.
- All other costs not identified as allowable.
- Unreasonable amounts or rates.

## 5. Invoicing and Payment

- Payment is issued as reimbursement for eligible costs.
- CAM will provide template invoice spreadsheet to Recipient.
- If invoicing for in-house staff time, the template invoice spreadsheet must identify the employee's name, hours worked, and billing rate to be included as a reimbursable expense.
- The first invoice must follow the successful adoption of a qualifying solar permitting platform and will be verified by CEC staff prior to payment approval. Following the first invoice after successful adoption, recipients may invoice as frequently as once per month during the grant agreement for post-adoption activities allowed under

section I.D.4. To avoid processing and workload delays, CEC staff highly encourage a frequency of no more than quarterly.

- Reimbursement is for:
  - **Paid Costs.** Paid costs are expenses which the Recipient has already made payment.
    - For invoicing, Recipient must submit paid invoices/receipts, or other supporting documentation for line-item expenses over \$500.
    - For expenses under \$500, Recipients will have to retain documentation in case it is requested by CEC staff, such as part of an audit.

## 6. Verification

The recipient shall submit the first invoice to the CEC following successful adoption of a qualifying permitting platform. The applicant will indicate on the invoice form that the platform has been fully adopted. CEC staff will verify successful adoption of a platform prior to approving payment of an invoice. The applicant agrees to assist CEC staff with verification, which may include:

- Verifying adoption of *SolarAPP+* with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) or other authorized collaborating partner.
- Declaration and attestation of completed grant requirements.
- Written report, including screenshots, if the platform is not *SolarAPP+*.
- An online virtual meeting that includes screen-sharing a live demonstration of the platform and answering CEC staff questions.
- In-person site visit to demonstrate an in-house platform to CEC staff.
- Pictures, system overviews, and other items requested by CEC staff.

Applicants choosing to adopt a permitting tool other than *SolarAPP+* will be required to attest to minimum capabilities supported by the tool. Applicants must adopt a qualifying tool that:

- Performs an automated plan review for residential solar energy systems that completes automatic code compliance checks based on user inputs (such as a contractor), thereby enabling or otherwise issuing permits instantly when the project is confirmed as code compliant, without the need for human review.
- Supports online, immediate fee payment once an application is complete, which may include auto-invoicing of permit fee costs.
- Supports immediate generation of a permit job card following payment confirmation.
- Blocks noncompliant applications from receiving a permit.
- Either:
  - Stand-alone permitting tool; or
  - Integrates with current software and inspection platform already in use

CEC staff will review these capabilities during the verification process prior to approving payment of invoices.

## 7. Reporting

Following adoption and verification of a qualifying platform, the Energy Commission may request, and the Recipient will provide if requested, annual data on the number of permits issued for solar energy systems and a solar energy system paired with an energy storage system including relevant characteristics of those systems, such as system capacity.

## E. KEY ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

Key activities, dates, and times for this solicitation and for agreements resulting from this solicitation are presented below. An addendum will be released if the dates change for activities that appear in **bold**.

ACTIVITY	DATE	TIME <sup>1</sup>
Solicitation Release	June 1, 2022	
<b>Deadline to Submit Applications</b>	<b>May 1, 2023*</b>	<b>11:59 p.m.</b>
Questions and Answers	Ongoing	
Anticipated Notice of Proposed Award Posting Date	Ongoing	
Anticipated Energy Commission Approval	Ongoing	
Anticipated Agreement Start Date	Ongoing	
Anticipated Agreement End Date	May 31, 2027	

\* Because the encumbrance deadline for these funds is June 30, 2023, applicants filed late in the process up to the deadline might not receive funds if the CEC cannot process them in time (e.g., many applicants wait until the last minute and submit all at once). Accordingly, applicants are encouraged to apply as early in the application process as possible.

## F. QUESTIONS

During the solicitation process, direct questions to the Commission Agreement Officer (CAO) listed below:

Kevyn Piper, Commission Agreement Officer  
California Energy Commission  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, California, 95814  
Telephone: (916) 827-9241  
E-mail: Kevyn.Piper@energy.ca.gov

The CAO can answer administrative questions directly to applicants. But if questions of a technical nature arise, the CAO may answer by publicly posting questions and answers in order to provide all applicants the information at the same time. If an applicant discovers a conflict, discrepancy, omission, or other error in the solicitation at any time prior to 5:00 p.m. of the application deadline date, the applicant may notify the CEC in writing via electronic mail and

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<sup>1</sup> Pacific Standard Time or Pacific Daylight Time, whichever is being observed.



request modification or clarification of the solicitation. The CEC, at its discretion will provide modifications or clarifications by either an addendum to the solicitation or by written notice to all entities that requested the solicitation.

**Any verbal communication with a Commission employee or anyone else concerning this solicitation is not binding on the State and will in no way alter a specification, term, or condition of the solicitation. Therefore, all communication should be directed in writing via electronic mail to the assigned CAO.**

## **G. APPLICANTS' ADMONISHMENT & RESPONSIBILITY**

This solicitation manual contains application requirements and instructions. Applicants are responsible for **carefully reading** the solicitation, asking appropriate questions in a timely manner, ensuring that all solicitation requirements are met, submitting all required responses in a complete manner by the required date and time, and **carefully rereading** the solicitation before submitting an application. In particular, please carefully read the **Application and Evaluation Criteria and Grounds for Rejection** in Part IV of this Solicitation Manual and any other resource materials located at: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/california-automated-permit-processing-program-calapp>.

Applicants are solely responsible for the cost of developing applications. This cost cannot be charged to the State of California. **Applicants should not submit any confidential information in their applications. Applications that include confidential information will be rejected.** All submitted documents will become public records upon its inclusion on the ongoing posting of the Notice of Proposed Awards.

In addition to any other right reserved to it under this solicitation or that it otherwise has, if the CEC determines, in its sole and absolute discretion, that if an agreement is not being successfully executed with an applicant in a timely manner, the CEC may cancel a proposed award and award funds to another applicant, if applicable.

## **H. BACKGROUND**

CalAPP is authorized with the passage of Senate Bill 129 (Skinner, Budget Act of 2021). The program is receiving \$20 million from the General Fund (up to \$1 million available for administrative costs). The funds appropriated shall be used to support a grant program for cities, counties, or cities and counties to establish online solar permitting.

Existing law requires every city, county, or city and county to develop a streamlined permitting process for the installation of small residential rooftop solar energy systems, and to approve administratively applications to install such systems through the issuance of a building permit or similar nondiscretionary permit.

This solicitation addresses solar permitting processes for city and county building departments by providing grant funding to further improve plan review and approval turnaround time, particularly for small residential rooftop solar energy systems. Improving permitting processes to issue permits quickly is intended to promote the development of solar and storage projects and support California's clean energy goals.

The Energy Commission is aware of proposed legislation that may impact CalAPP. If signed into law, Senate Bill 379, introduced by Senator Wiener in 2021, in its amended version as of May 13, 2022, may require CalAPP awardees to comply with the following provision if this bill is signed into law with existing provisions intact:

- Within one year of implementing an online, automated solar permitting system, a city, county, or city and county shall report annually to the Energy Commission on the number of permits issued for solar energy systems and an energy storage system paired with a solar energy system and the relevant characteristics of those systems.

If this or any other law is enacted that impacts CalAPP, applicants agree to comply with the provisions applicable to them.

## II. Applicant Eligibility Requirements

### A. ELIGIBILITY

This solicitation is open to all California cities, counties, or cities and counties (including any incorporated towns and villages) that will have costs associated with establishing online solar permitting. Applications from any other entities will not be accepted. Grant applications must be completed and signed by an authorized representative of the applicant's jurisdiction or will be rejected as indicated in Section IV.E.

### B. FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED

Applications for grant funding will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Qualifying applications for funding are intended to be accessible to any California jurisdiction interested in adopting a qualifying online, automated permitting platform such as *SolarAPP+*. Eligible applicants may only receive one award under this solicitation. Multiple applications submitted by the same applicant will be rejected. Staff will continue receiving and processing applications until funding is exhausted or until the application deadline, whichever is first.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to submit a complete application as soon as possible to ensure that funding remains available. Applications will be reviewed on a pass/no pass basis using criteria defined in this solicitation manual.

### C. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Each grant agreement resulting from this solicitation will include terms and conditions that set forth the recipient's rights and responsibilities. By signing the Application Form (Attachment 1), each applicant agrees to enter into an agreement with the CEC to conduct the proposed project according to the terms and conditions that correspond to its organization, without negotiation. Standard terms and conditions are included as Attachment 2. Failure to agree to the standard terms and conditions by taking actions such as failing to sign the Application Form or indicating that acceptance is based on modification of the terms will result in **rejection** of the application. Applicants **must read** the terms and conditions carefully. The CEC reserves the right to modify the terms and conditions prior to executing grant agreements.

### III. Application Organization and Submission Instructions

#### A. APPLICATION CONTENT

Below is a description of application materials. Completeness in submitting all required information is critical for timely approval and successful implementation.

##### **Application Form (Attachment 1)**

This form requests basic information about the applicant and the project. The application includes an original form that includes all requested information. The application must be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant's organization or will be rejected as indicated in Section IV.E.

The application form collects information that will be used to develop and execute a grant agreement with the CEC. By signing this document, the applicant attests that all information provided is true and correct, and the applicant agrees to the terms of this solicitation.

#### B. METHOD FOR DELIVERY

The method of delivery for this solicitation is via email to the CalAPP program inbox, CalAPP@energy.ca.gov. This allows applicants to submit their electronic documents to the CEC prior to the date and time specified in this solicitation. Electronic files must be in Microsoft Word XP (.doc format) or PDF formats unless originally provided in the solicitation in another format. Attachments requiring signatures may be electronically signed or scanned and submitted in PDF format with a wet signature. **Applications received after the application due date and time may not be processed. Please note the CEC is not responsible for delays in submitting applications. The due date and time are based on when the CEC receives the application. If an applicant sends its application before the due date and time but it for whatever reason is delayed and the CEC does not receive it until after the deadline, the application will be rejected. Please plan accordingly.**

Applicants will receive an automated acknowledgement e-mail after submitting their application via email to the CalAPP program inbox. You may contact the Commission Agreement Officer identified in the Questions section of the solicitation for more administrative assistance.

## IV. Evaluation and Award Process

### A. APPLICATION EVALUATION

Applications for grant funding will be evaluated and processed based on responses to the information requested in this solicitation on a first-come, first-served basis. Information collected in the application form (attachment 1) will be used to reach an award decision on a pass/no pass basis. A passing application for funding is intended to be accessible to any eligible jurisdiction interested in adopting a qualifying online, automated permitting platform. Submitted applications will be assigned to CEC staff and processed in the order they are received. Applications achieving a “no pass” mark will be reviewed by an Evaluation Committee for confirmation of that determination.

Staff will continue accepting and reviewing applications until funding is exhausted or until the application submittal deadline, whichever is first. Eligible applicants may only receive one award under this solicitation. Multiple applications submitted by the same applicant will be rejected.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to submit a complete application as soon as possible to ensure that funding remains available. Applications will be reviewed on a pass/no pass basis using criteria defined in this solicitation manual.

#### **Applications will be evaluated in one stage:**

##### **Application Evaluation - Pass/No Pass**

Applications will be submitted to the Evaluation Committee for review based on the Application and Evaluation Criteria in **Section E** of this Part.

- An application must achieve a “pass” in each section of the Application and Evaluation Criteria.
- Clarification Interviews: The Evaluation Committee may conduct optional telephone interviews with applicants during the evaluation process to clarify and/or verify information submitted in the application. However, these interviews may not be used to change or add to the content of the original application. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time spent answering clarifying questions.
- **All sections must receive a passing score for the application to be approved for an award.**

### B. NOTICE OF PROPOSED AWARD AND AGREEMENT DEVELOPMENT

#### **1. Notice of Proposed Award**

Applications that achieve a “pass” in the evaluation criteria will proceed.

- CEC staff will post a **Notice of Proposed Award (NOPA)** on an ongoing basis at its discretion that includes: (1) the total funding amount; and (2) the amount of each award. The CEC will post the NOPA on its website, including an email to the program list serve. Proposed awards must be approved by the CEC.
- **Debriefings:** Unsuccessful applicants may request a debriefing after the release of the NOPA by contacting the Commission Agreement Officer listed in Part I via electronic mail. A request for debriefing must be received **no later than 30 calendar days** after the NOPA is released.

Applications that are rejected or achieve a “no pass” mark may submit a new application according to the requirements outlined in the solicitation.

## 2. Agreements

Applications recommended for funding will be developed into a proposed grant agreement to be considered for CEC approval. Recipients may begin the project only after full execution of the grant agreement (i.e., signature by the Recipient and the CEC).

- **Agreement Development:** The Contracts, Grants, and Loans Office will send the Recipient a grant agreement for approval and signature. The agreement will include the applicable terms and conditions and will incorporate this solicitation and the application by reference. The CEC reserves the right to modify the award documents (including the terms and conditions) prior to executing any agreement.
- **Failure to Execute an Agreement:** If the CEC is unable to successfully execute an agreement with an applicant in a timely manner, it reserves the right to cancel the pending award and use the funds elsewhere, such as to fund the next eligible application.

## C. GROUNDS TO REJECT AN APPLICATION OR CANCEL AN AWARD

Applications that do not pass the screening stage will be rejected. In addition, the CEC reserves the right to reject an application and/or to cancel an award for any reason, including any of the following:

- The application contains false or intentionally misleading statements or references that do not support an attribute or condition contended by the applicant.
- The application is intended to erroneously and fallaciously mislead the State in any way.
- The application does not comply or contains caveats that conflict with the solicitation, and the variation or deviation is material.
- The applicant has included a statement or otherwise indicated that it will not accept the terms and conditions, or that acceptance is based on modifications to the terms and conditions.
- The application contains confidential information or identifies any portion of the application as confidential.

## D. MISCELLANEOUS

### 1. Solicitation Cancellation and Amendment

It is the policy of the CEC not to solicit applications unless there is a bona fide intention to award an agreement. However, if it is in the State's best interest, the CEC reserves the right, in addition to any other rights it has, to do any of the following:

- Cancel this solicitation;
- Revise the amount of funds available under this solicitation, including maximum funding award amounts;
- Amend this solicitation as needed; and/or
- Reject any or all applications received in response to this solicitation.

If the solicitation is amended, the CEC will post it on the CEC's website at: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/funding-opportunities/solicitations>. The CEC will not reimburse applicants for application development expenses under any circumstances, including cancellation of the solicitation.

### 2. Modification or Withdrawal of Application

Applicants may withdraw or modify a submitted application before the deadline to submit applications by sending a letter to the Commission Agreement Officer listed in Part I. Applications cannot be changed after that date and time.

### 3. Confidentiality

Though the entire evaluation process from receipt of applications up to the posting of the NOPA is confidential, **all submitted documents will become publicly available records** after the CEC posts applicant's name on the ongoing NOPA or the solicitation is cancelled. **The CEC will not accept or retain applications that identify any portion as confidential.**

### 4. Solicitation Errors

If an applicant discovers any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, omission, or other error in the solicitation, the applicant should immediately notify the CEC of the error in writing and request modification or clarification of the solicitation. The CEC will provide modifications or clarifications by written notice to all entities that requested the solicitation. The CEC will not be responsible for failure to correct errors.

### 5. Immaterial Defect

The CEC may waive any immaterial defect or deviation contained in an application. The CEC's waiver will not modify the application or excuse the successful applicant from full compliance with solicitation requirements.

### 6. Disposition of Applicant's Documents

Upon the posting of applicant's name on the ongoing NOPA, its application and related materials submitted in response to this solicitation will become property of the State and publicly available records.

**NOTE ABOUT SIGNATURES:** The CEC may have waived the requirement for a signature on application materials for this solicitation. If a notice regarding CEC's waiver of the signature requirement appears here: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/funding-opportunities/solicitations>, the waiver applies to this solicitation. In the event of a conflict between the notice and any language in this solicitation regarding signatures, the notice will govern.

## E. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the Evaluation Criteria below. **ALL items in the Evaluation Criteria must pass to be approved for a proposed award.**

### APPLICATION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

**The Application Form (Attachment 1)** must respond to each criterion below. The responses must directly relate to the solicitation requirements and focus as stated in the solicitation.

Evaluation Criteria	Pass/No Pass
<p><b>1. Administrative Screening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The application is received by the CEC by the due date and time specified in the “Key Activities Schedule” in Part I of this solicitation and is received in the required manner (e.g., by e-mail).</li> <li><b>The application form is signed where indicated.</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Complete Application</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All required sections of the application form are complete, and all information provided is true and correct to the best knowledge of the applicant.</li> <li>The applicant selected the correct funding amount according to the corresponding population size.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Intention to Adopt Qualifying Platform</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant successfully identifies a qualifying permitting platform to implement as required in Section I.C.</li> <li>For platforms other than SolarAPP+, the applicant clearly describes its capabilities and how it meets solicitation requirements.</li> </ul>	