



# State of Rhode Island Agricultural Energy Program

*A collaborative program of the  
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the Rhode Island  
Office of Energy Resources*

Guidance Document  
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## 1. Introduction

The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (OER) and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) request Rhode Island Agricultural Operations to submit applications seeking funding for energy projects in an effort to improve energy efficiency, promote renewable energy, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

OER is the lead state agency on energy policy and programs. The mission of OER is to lead Rhode Island to a clean, affordable, reliable, and equitable energy future. Despite robust utility led energy efficiency programs in Rhode Island and a growing renewable energy market, there is a lack of dedicated support structures for agribusinesses interested in implementing energy efficiency upgrades or deploying renewable energy assets.

The Agricultural Energy Program represents a significant step toward filling this gap in the State's clean energy portfolio by providing targeted resources and support that ultimately leads to increased agricultural consumer adoption of energy efficient equipment and deployment of renewable energy assets. Through the Agricultural Energy Grant Program, qualified Rhode Island agribusinesses interested in the installation of approved energy efficiency or renewable energy equipment will be eligible for grants of up to \$20,000.00. Clean energy technologies can reduce energy use, lower customer energy bills, improve facility operations and comfort, and provide additional energy generation and resiliency. These funds are allocated through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) auction proceeds administered by OER.

OER and DEM reserve the right to modify the Agricultural Energy Program and its terms and conditions and/or terminate the Agricultural Energy Grant Program at their sole discretion. The submittal of an application form does not guarantee award and all awards are subject to the availability of funding.

Eligible applicants include agricultural entities and operations that fulfill all of the following requirements:

- Agricultural entities must have a physical location in Rhode Island with the ability to enter into a legal agreement with the State.
- The proposed clean energy investment must be implemented/installed at a Rhode Island-based location.
- The applicant must be considered an "Agricultural Operation." Agricultural Operations include any commercial enterprise which has as its primary purpose: horticulture, viticulture, floriculture, forestry, stabling of horses, dairy farming, aquaculture, the raising of livestock (including the production of fiber), furbearing animals, poultry, or bees.

- Applicants may seek program eligibility for operations not listed above by requesting an eligibility determination from DEM's Chief of Agriculture.
- The leasing of agricultural land to another agricultural operation is NOT considered agricultural income and does NOT count towards the agricultural income requirement.
- Agricultural entities that are considered non-profit (with a 501(c)(3) or similar non-profit designation) are considered eligible applicants for this program and are not required to meet the \$2,500 agricultural income requirement to participate.
- The Agricultural Operation must be able to demonstrate that it has produced at least \$2,500 in income from agricultural operation in one of the last two (2) calendar years through tax documentation.
- The applicant must own the property or has otherwise received permission from the property owner on which the proposed project will be implemented.
- The Agricultural Operation must have received a general energy efficiency audit or commit to scheduling an energy efficiency audit prior to funds being awarded.<sup>1</sup>
  - In the event the completion of an energy audit is impossible or impractical for the proposed project, OER may waive this requirement.
- There is an applicant cost-share requirement of at least 10% of total project costs.

## 2. Program Overview

Rhode Island agribusinesses interested in receiving an energy efficiency or renewable energy grant through this program are strongly encouraged to review all Agricultural Energy Program Materials in full, including this document and the program applications, available at: <https://energy.ri.gov/energy-efficiency/farmers>

Only Rhode Island Agricultural Operations are eligible for the program. Grant awards are based on the availability of funds and awarded from highest to lowest ranking scores.

After a Rhode Island Agricultural Operation enters a contract with a vendor for energy efficiency or renewable energy equipment, they are eligible to apply to OER for an Agricultural Energy Grant. OER will review all submitted materials for completeness and to ensure the applicant meets all eligibility requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> To schedule a free, no-obligation energy audit please contact RI Energy, at 1-888-633-7947 or visit <https://riseengineering.my.site.com/customers/s/new-customer-reg-page>. Be sure to identify your property as a farm.

A completed and approved Agricultural Energy Program application will “reserve” funding to support the qualified project amount and an award letter confirming project award will be sent to successful applicants. Upon receipt of the award letter, applicants will then have thirty (30) business days to provide OER with a signed W-9 form, a signed contract with their project vendor, and an initial paid invoice and/or invoice indicating a zero balance for initial materials purchased.

Projects will receive an initial payment of 50% of their awarded amount upon contract execution with their vendor and submission of documentation to OER that materials have been purchased and payment has been made for those materials. The remaining 50% of the award will be paid upon completion of the project and submission of a final paid invoice and/or invoice indicating a zero balance. Final payments will be subject to a site inspection by OER (or its designee) to ensure the project was implemented appropriately and all program guidelines were adhered to. Only after a project has been inspected and approved by OER will the awardee receive the remaining 50% of funds awarded. OER’s financial administrator will review all payments before disbursement and each awardee will be required to submit to OER a W-9 form and supporting documentation for incurred project costs prior to receiving any funds.

OER and DEM reserve the right to modify the Agricultural Energy Program and its terms and conditions and/or terminate the program at their sole discretion. The submittal of a grant application form does not guarantee award.

### **3. Project Eligibility Criteria and Requirements**

#### **A. Eligible Clean Energy Investments**

The following clean energy investments and technologies will be considered eligible for this program, so long as each proposed project meets all program requirements.

- Renewable Energy
  - Photovoltaics (PV)
  - Small Scale Wind
  - Biomass
  - Energy Storage
  
- Energy Efficiency
  - Envelope Insulation
  - LED Lighting
  - HVAC Systems (especially heat pump technologies)
  - Automatic Temperature Controls
  - Variable Speed Motors, Drives, & Pumps
  - Solar Thermal

If there is a technology not included on this list that an Agricultural Operation would like to apply for, please contact OER prior to applying. A project will not automatically be deemed ineligible if not included on this list. All final determinations on Clean Energy Investment eligibility reside solely with OER.

B. Eligible Proposals:

- Energy efficiency and renewable energy projects that support Agricultural Operations and activities as defined by National Right to Farm Act.<sup>2</sup>
- Eligible farm stands which meet the intent of an Agricultural Operation to sell agricultural products, the majority of which are produced by the applicant's operation.
- Applicant has not applied to the Agricultural Energy Program within one calendar year of a previous award.
- Applicant is limited to one Agricultural Energy Program grant received per calendar year, and there is a maximum of three awards received by any single agribusiness.
- Applicant has not been previously awarded two Agricultural Energy Program grants for renewable energy projects and one Agricultural Energy Program grant for energy efficiency projects.
- OER reserves the right to request additional project information from the applicant, including copies of any required permits, licenses, or any other information they may require to make a funding determination for a submitted project.

C. Project Specific Requirements:

- Projects shall include professional design and, if applicable, engineering support needed for project construction.
- Preference shall be given to construction-ready applicants.
- Proposals shall include an energy savings document of the energy efficiency and/or renewable energy project.<sup>3</sup>
- Awarded projects must apply for and receive all required permits, licenses, and any other federal, state, or local approvals necessary for the project prior to any reimbursement from OER.
- All renewable energy projects must be interconnected to the electric distribution system.

D. Installation & Equipment Standards:

- All construction shall be completed and installed in accordance with all applicable federal, state and local codes, ordinances and regulations.
- Equipment and materials must be new. All PV equipment must be listed under California Energy Commission list of eligible equipment and must be UL listed.

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<sup>2</sup> National Right to Farm Act <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/righttofarm/RhodeIsland.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The required energy efficiency audit can fulfill this criterion.

- Solar PV projects shall meet the Renewable Energy Fund’s Minimum Technical Requirements.<sup>4</sup>
  - If a project cannot meet 80% Total Solar Resource Fraction (TSRF), please provide a letter, on letterhead, indicating that the project will still provide financial benefit to the applicant and that the applicant is aware the project is not eligible for a Renewable Energy Fund grant from Commerce RI.
- In order to be considered a qualified vendor, applications must include legible photocopies of the following documentation:
  - Rhode Island Contractors’ Registration and Licensing Boards registration.
  - Rhode Island Renewable Energy Professional Certificate and/or a Valid A Electrical license (when applicable).
  - Proof of registration with the Rhode Island Secretary of State.
- Small Scale Wind projects shall meet the Renewable Energy Fund’s Minimum Technical Requirements. Turbines must be SWCC certified or have applicable IEC Standards.
- Renewable Energy Projects must be net metered.

E. Ineligible Proposals:

- Proposals for projects that have already been completed or interconnected.
- Proposals from applicants whose operation is out of compliance with any federal, state or local laws or regulations.
- Requests for audits or feasibility studies.
- Any renewable energy projects using the Renewable Energy Growth Program.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. Project Funding

As of the effective date of this document, the maximum energy efficiency or renewable energy grant award amount per applicant, per calendar year shall be **\$20,000.00**. These grant funds shall be for the direct costs associated with the materials and labor related to project construction.

Grants of up to \$20,000.00 will be awarded on a competitive basis. All projects must be completed within one (1) calendar year of the award date. Extensions may be approved on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of OER.

Satisfactory documentation for receipt of payment from OER is required. Upon award, all applicants will need to submit a W-9 form to OER and provide documentation of incurred *and* paid project costs to receive their award funds. Final payments for projects are subject to post inspection by OER or its designee prior to payment.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://commerceri.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MTR-2017.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Funding for this program comes from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Projects may not utilize both the REG program and RGGI funding.

Projects will receive an initial payment of 50% of their awarded amount upon contract execution with their vendor, submission of documentation to OER that materials have been purchased, and proof of payment for those materials. The remaining 50% of the award will be paid upon completion of the project and submission of a final paid invoice and/or invoice indicating a zero balance. Final payments will be subject to a site inspection by OER (or its designee) to ensure the project was implemented appropriately and all program guidelines were adhered to. Only once a project has been inspected and approved by OER will the awardee receive the remaining 50% of funds awarded. OER's financial administrator will review all payments before disbursement and each awardee will be required to submit to OER a W-9 form and supporting documentation for incurred project costs prior to receiving any funds.

Reimbursement will only be eligible for work that satisfies the terms and conditions outlined in this document, contracts, and other instructions deemed necessary by OER.

Projects must demonstrate contributions from other sources and include those in the project economics calculation in the application form. This can include funding from other programs, such as the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Energy for America Program (USDA REAP), Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program (NRCS EQIP), Commerce RI Renewable Energy Fund (REF), Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC), or funds committed by the applicant.

**Any project costs incurred prior to an executed contract with OER are NOT eligible for reimbursement from OER.**

**All funding is subject to availability of funds. OER reserves the right to modify or terminate this program based upon funding availability and/or other factors at its sole discretion. The submittal of an application form does not guarantee an award.**

Site Visit:

All projects being considered for award will require a site visit by OER prior to grant award determinations being made. An initial site visit DOES NOT guarantee funding.

All awarded projects are also subject to a post-installation inspection and final payments will not be made until the successful post-inspection has taken place. The purpose of the site visits are to verify proposed project requirements, discuss vendor selection and experience, and verify the successful construction of the awarded project.

## **5. Applicant Duties and Responsibilities**

The applicant is responsible for submitting all required documentation, information, and applications to OER. Upon review and approval of required documentation by OER, awarded funds will be issued directly to the applicant. Prior to final payment, all projects are subject to



post-inspection by OER, or its designee, and all renewable energy projects must be interconnected to the electric distribution system.

A written progress report or an email detailing the progress of the project, and/or any issues that arise when implementing the project may be requested by OER at any time after the award date.

## **6. Application Process**

The Agricultural Energy Program application is available on-line at: <https://energy.ri.gov/energy-efficiency/farmers>

**Step 1:** After contracting with an energy efficiency or renewable energy vendor, Agricultural Operators must complete and submit an Agricultural Energy Program application to OER on or before the posted submission deadline. The current application deadline date can be found on the program website: <https://energy.ri.gov/energy-efficiency/farmers>. Applications must be submitted electronically via email to [abigail.hasenfus@energy.ri.gov](mailto:abigail.hasenfus@energy.ri.gov) with the Subject Line: “Agricultural Energy Program Application.”

**Step 2:** Upon receipt of applications, OER will review each application for completeness and eligibility. Qualified applicants will have their applications reviewed and scored by the project review team, comprised of OER, DEM, and Renewable Energy Fund staff. Projects will be funded highest scoring to lowest scoring, with each award subject to the availability of funds and exact funding amount awarded to be determined at the sole discretion of OER. Successful applicants will receive an award letter indicating the amount awarded for their project.

**Step 3:** Upon receipt of an award letter, applicants will have thirty (30) business days to submit all required support documentation, as specified in this program guidance and in the application, to OER. At minimum, awarded Agricultural Energy Program applicants must provide copies of the following support documents:

- Completed W-9
- Executed contract with project vendor
- Paid invoice and/or invoice indicating a zero balance of initial materials purchased
- A copy of the award letter

Projects will receive an initial payment of 50% of their awarded amount upon contract execution with their vendor and submission of documentation to OER that materials have been purchased and an initial payment has been made.

**Step 4:** Upon completion of the awarded project, applicants will submit final documentation indicating project completion. The project will be subject to a post-installation inspection by OER or its designee and, in the case of renewable energy systems, must be interconnected to the grid. Only once a project has been inspected and approved by OER will the awardee receive the remaining 50% of funds awarded.

All applications and supporting documents will be subject to review and approval by OER. OER reserves the right to request additional support documentation, as necessary, to verify eligibility. Please note that submittal of an application does not guarantee approval or issuance of a grant award.

## **7. Contact Information**

Applications should be submitted on or before the listed due date to the Office of Energy Resources via email at [abigail.hasenfus@energy.ri.gov](mailto:abigail.hasenfus@energy.ri.gov).

If you have any questions or problems submitting or filling out an application, or for general questions and inquiries regarding the Agricultural Energy Grant Program, please contact the Office of Energy Resources at (401) 574-9117 or [abigail.hasenfus@energy.ri.gov](mailto:abigail.hasenfus@energy.ri.gov).