So, thank you for joining us, everyone. And let me say congratulations on making it this far. I applaud your resilience for hanging in there, and we have 55 days to the deadline. Today, Deb Yocum, my co-manager in the Rural Energy Pilot Program, and I are going to take you the rest of the way in, in a kind of a step way wise manner. Take you to through the Complete Application Guide and the required forms. And we will walk our way through the complete application requirements of the Rural Energy Pilot Program.

So first, I want to call your attention to the website and to the "To Apply" tab that's there. And if you click on the "REPP Complete Application Guide", you'll see that it will bring up this REPP Complete Application Guide. I'm going to turn the presentation now over to Deb. And we're just going to kind of walk through this for the rest of the time that we have together.

All right, thanks, Tony. Um, so like Tony said, you're each sent a response to the Letter of Intent that you submitted. And in that response, there should have been a secure Cloud Vault link. We would ask that you test that Cloud Vault link immediately to make sure that you don't have any access issues, and that you can upload files into that folder. Please don't wait to the last minute to test that. Make sure that you can get those application materials uploaded. We also know that system glitches do happen. So, we would encourage you to not wait until the last minute to submit the complete application documents. We do need them in the Cloud Vault prior to 11:59 PM Eastern on July 18 which is the deadline. And as an applicant, it is your responsibility to make sure that they're uploaded into the Cloud Vault. The Cloud Vault is not set up to notify you when you upload the files. So, we won't be staffed after business hours on the 18th, but if you need to check on something the next day, pop us an email.

So, we're not going to walk through all of the required forms like the SF-420 Form, Form, 424 Form, the Environmental Checklist, but I just had a few comments that I wanted to make sure you guys were aware of. On the 424, we do ask for the Unique Entity Identifier Number, and that should be for the lead applicant. The lead applicant must be registered in the System for Award Management, completing the certification process in SAM and then putting that UEI number on the 424 Form. The other comment on the Environmental Checklist that I wanted to make is to please provide as much detail as possible on that form. All of these REPP applications need to have a complete NEPA Environmental Review conducted before any construction activities start, and before we can award. So, by supplying this information to us, we're going to be able to see what type of an environmental review is needed. Then we'll need to get those conducted before construction commences. If you have any other specific questions on the forms, go ahead and put them in the chat feature. or raise your hand later and we'll get to them.

Let's dive into that Application Template.

I talked about again, the 424 Form where we need the UEI number. In the first section, we do ask for the UEI number. We got caught up in some transition, so just please put the UEI number in both places on, on the Application Template as well as on the 424 Form. The project's Executive Summary in, in section two is where we really want to focus. So Tony, just scroll through here. This is all stuff you guys have seen before. Telling us who you are, what you're applying for, but the Project Executive Summary. We'd like to make sure that you're using the feedback that was received from the Letter of Intent process to strengthen the Executive Summary on the full application. You do need to include all the information with the complete application. Do not reference back to the summary that you submitted with a Letter of Intent, make sure that it all comes in with the full application. But those comments that you received should help strengthen that Executive Summary. And Tony, jump in here at any time if you have something to add.

Okay, thanks, Deb. I appreciate that.

Sure.

Um, the next section in the template is the Applicant Eligibility Requirements. Again, this is very similar to what was in the Letter of Intent ensuring that it's in a rural area, ensuring that in Section 3.2, the lead applicant needs to have the legal authority to carry out the purposes of the REPP Grant. And we do want to see evidence of such attached to the complete application. So, we have a few things, appendices, that the lead applicant would need to attach documentation confirming that they're a legal entity in good standing. And then we also want to make sure that we see documentation on the partnership itself, so the Rural Energy Community Partnership. So, if you have Memorandums of Understanding, you have legal documents, please submit them with the full application.

And, and let me just add to that, that we've been talking with a number of you about this particular document, and we've determined that a draft is sufficient for the complete application. And if you are successful, then we'll work together to make sure that, that Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement has been fully executed as we work through the, the award process. So, a draft is sufficient for submitting the application, and we will, we'll work towards execution of that document in the, in the award.

Okay, great.

Moving down through Section 3.3. Again, only one application can be submitted by an entity. You have your Known Relationship Certifications as part of the application template. Scrolling down.

All the common stuff you see in federal applications, whether or not you have Outstanding Judgements or Delinquencies, we're not going to focus too much on these. The next couple sections are if you have Alcohol and Tobacco related applications, or if you have hemp-type applications, I don't believe you see, saw any of those in the Letters of Intent.

So, then you just check "Not Applicable" to that.

Right.

If that's the case.

Right.

So, the next section we kind of wanted to focus on was the Project Eligibility Section. In the complete application, we would like you to be very clear on the use of the funds. Tell us what costs are directly related to establishing or developing your clean energy community. Whether you're putting in machinery, materials or equipment, whether you're doing construction costs, or improvements, any fees that you have. Really break that down for us so that we know how you're planning to use the REPP funds. Again, part of the funds can be used for cost related to community energy planning, for capacity building or technical assistance, and with activities, materials and equipment associated with energy efficiency, or weatherization. So, we need to make sure that we're looking at the total project costs. 80% comes from REPP funds. And of that 80%, I'm sorry, MPEP funds, and the other 20% of the 80% can be again, those costs related to the planning and capacity building. That doesn't need to be very clearly stated. Some of the Letters of Intent weren't as clear on that topic as they could have been.

The other, next Section 4.4 Tony, we wanted to highlight the Rural Areas Section. The project must serve a rural area, and there's an Eligibility Map Tool that's provided to you. We want to make sure that we're seeing the rural areas to be served by the project. So, if you go into that tool, as Tony showing you here and you're going to go to Rural Business, there's going to be two links. The first link notes the REPP Program, so you're going to click on the first link and accept it. You can then either put an address in or you can just use the feature to zoom to an area and it shows you the county lines in the little dashed areas. But we really want to know what your service areas are. So, if you could print and even manually highlight what the service area of the project is going to be, that's going to allow us to make sure that we're serving that rural area. Again, if there's questions on that, let us know. But those types of pictures and maps with the application do help us in our reviews.

Alright, back to the template. The next section is the Work Plan and Budget Section. And in this section, there are six items. And each task under that work plan and budget should have a cost identified with it. And then we should also identify the grant funds and the matching funds that are coming in for each of those tasks. Some people submit a chart to relay that information. You can also include the person who is responsible for each task and the timeline for completing each task. So, the more clear we can get on this as well, the easier it's going to be for us to review these applications. And if awarded, the easier for us to move forward with processing.

The Use of Funds in Section 4.6. One of the things that we saw in the Letters of Intent were some vehicles which are not eligible under REPP, funding real property or land lease equipment, or leases. Those are all not eligible. So please refer to the Notice of Funding for that full list of funding restrictions.

Now we're going to switch over to Section 5, and this is really the meat of the application. This is the Evaluation Criteria. Points are going to be awarded for how well the application demonstrates achievement on each criterion. We want to make sure that the application is well documented, and that factors which indicate a high probability of being accomplished or those that are supported. So, the first one is developed renewable energy. There’re five different scoring sections, and there's 100 points possible. The first develop renewable energy has four sub-criteria. And there's a total of 25 points possible. So, we show you here that we're going to break it down one point for each of the six priority considerations. You can receive up to six points for deploying renewable energy technology, other than solar, and that's of at least 40% of the total generation capacity. And we measure that by megawatts of alternative capacity to the megawatts of the total generation capacity. We saw a lot of one technology coming in. So that's something to consider in the full application if there's other types of technologies as well which you can pull into that REPP project. Third bullet is up to six points will be awarded for projects that can be delivered within 36 months of the grant award. Again, we're looking for how well is this demonstrated? You have a development schedule that's been thoroughly considered that you're putting together with the application, or you are just stating that, you know, I'm going to complete my project within 36 months. And the final is on leveraging funds. The more leverage and the more partnerships that are demonstrated, the higher the points that will be awarded.

Section B is Community and Regional Impacts. This also has the possible of 25 points. Solid REPP applications are going to outline the community objectives to be achieved with special attention to addressing the six focal points, withstanding disruptive events, economic and energy resilience, increased environmental justice, improving racial equity and expanding economic opportunity, plus stability or diversification of distributive energy resources. So, remember, this is a pilot program, and we challenge you to give thought to demonstrating resolution to the more complex objectives such as environmental justice and racial equity.

The next section is Targeted Region. There's 25 points available for the characteristics of the region to be served, and how well the project will advance environmental justice, racial equity and economic opportunity. And there are six elements here with a maximum of five points available not to exceed the 25 points. So, you basically have six different places where you could earn points, but the maximum points that we're going to give in this section is 25. We saw in the Letters of Intent, the stronger Letters, Letters of Intent provide a very distinct documentation, included maps of the service area, gave us the applicable indexes scores associated with the area noted how they measured up to surrounding areas and measured up to the state. If a project covered multiple areas, documentation should be included for all the areas. So that's kind of what we're looking for here. We can kind of walk through some of the areas. The first one is the EIG Distressed Communities Index. And that's going to tell us the distress scores and economic distress characteristics of the region such as unemployment rates and income levels. And data is populated on a zip code level there. So, you guys should all be familiar with this. But tell us, there's five tiers from prosperous to distressed. Where does your project fall? And we want to see that map.

And Tony is kind of walking through what that looks like now. If there's any specific questions that you have, we can entertain those during the Q and A.

The next indicator is the...

Right there.

Yeah, I think we might...

Okay, yeah, it's the DOB Low Income Energy Affordable Data Tool. And this is where you're going to describe the energy burden of the region. And that would be shown in a percentage of income spent for energy cost, the annual energy cost, and housing costs. This is measured by census tract or city. Again, you can compare your area to the rest of the state, and you can also export the maps that you find in here.

So, you see on the top the three different areas that you can choose for a region.

The third section is the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index. And this is where we're looking at the environmental health burden of the region to be served. It's a range from zero to one, with one being the highest vulnerability.

I know we're walking through these fairly quickly. But again, you guys have submitted the complete application, so you've seen these indices before. Again, that's what we're looking for is that data for the specific area what that overall index score is.

The next criteria is the Opportunity Zones. We want to know if the region is located in a qualified opportunity zone.

The fifth criteria is Distressed Energy Communities indicating whether the region is primarily stressed with high concentration of employment in coal, oil and gas industries, and coal fired generation is transitioning away from fossil fuels. So, if your community is noted as a distressed energy community, you can receive points here. And there's the green areas which show distress.

And the final section here is the noting how the region needs, the Definition of a Disadvantaged Community. And we're using the EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool to provide information on communities that have been historically marginalized or, or overburdened.

So, if you have some questions about these tools and these mappers, again, put them in the chat or feel free to raise your hand and we can go back to them towards the end of the presentation. That walks you through the six different areas. Again, there's six chances to obtain the maximum of 25 points.

And if you remember, we went through, when we, through these, each one of these, when we went through the Letter of Intent, and gave a demonstration of how each one of the indicators is used. And we made an example out of Danville, Virginia, and showed how it applied to five of the six, or actually it was four of the six, and got a maximum for each one of those four, and we'd figured 20 points for that, for that community.

Okay, so the next section is Project and Community Support. Up to 10 points are going to be awarded for applications that demonstrate solid funding sources showing that there's technical resources committed to the project and showing a willingness from institutional partners to expand the capital and invest in projects that emerged from the REPP. Applications that demonstrate resources to sustain the project beyond the grant period can receive an extra five points.

The final section here is Demonstrated Readiness and Likelihood of Success. Again, this is worth 10 points. It's relatively straightforward. It notes how the points will be assigned for each of the four sub-areas. So, we're looking again, does the application demonstrate the likelihood that the project will be implemented? Is there a stakeholder engagement plan? Have you identified an energy resilience goal, and has the project financing been confirmed?

The next section is Matching Funds. Again, with the REPP match of no less than 20% of total eligible project cost is required. Complete application should include the documentation on the source and the amount of matching fund commitment. The template towards the back has a bunch of appendices. In Appendix C, that can be used depending upon the type of match. Applicant in-kind match is not allowed but third-parties can provide in-kind match. So just be sure that if you're using one of the templates, that you're pulling the correct template for the type of match, and that you're providing and completing each of the elements as noted on the template. Lastly, the application should be signed by the authorized party.

And then we're down to the appendices again that we talked about earlier. Oh, go ahead, Tony.

Did I go by the signature block?

Very quickly, but there it is.

Okay. LAUGHTER. There it is. There, there it is. LAUGHTER. So don't you miss it.

Yeah. The appendices again, the first one is for Tribal. Good standing documentation. Appendix B is for your non-Tribal applicants. And then you get into Appendix C, which is fairly long, it's got all of those templates for matching funds. Appendix D and E are necessary only if you have alcohol and tobacco or hemp related projects. And then the last appendix is Appendix F, where we're asking you to include a copy of your Letter of Intent response that you received, attach that to your full application.

So far, the only comments that I had to walk through that real quickly. Tony, if you have any others otherwise, do we have any questions teed up in the chat, Scott?

Let me just say that Appendix B is where we expect you to drop in your Partnership Agreement.

Yep.

Just a reminder there. The legal authority in good standing that's where we, we would expect you to establish that and as, and then drop in the agreement. Again, it's a draft copy. It doesn't have to be fully executed yet. But if it is, we certainly, we'll accept that as well. All right, Scott.

Thank you, Tony. And thank you, Deb. We do have a few questions in the, in the Question-and-Answer Box. So, I'm going to go ahead and read through those. I do want to encourage our folks on the line here to get those questions in now. You could also raise your virtual and speak with Tony or Deb directly. But I'm going to go ahead and get started here. Do you have a Microsoft Word template for the sections in the Grant Application Guide?

It's a good question to start. We don't have one that is fully ready for that. What we do encourage you to do is just make a copy of this, of this form, and drop it into a Word document. And then, but when you do submit it, we'd prefer that it be in PDF form. So, you would have to then convert it back to a PDF if you decide to do that.

Right, it's not a, it's not an actual Rural Development Form. So, changes can be made to it. It's a template. But as Tony indicated, if you could PDF it once you do the final submission that's easier for us to open when we do our reviews.

Thanks, Deb. Thanks, Tony. So where do we find the UEI number?

Okay, this is Deb, I'll take that one. So, the lead applicant needs to be registered in the System for Award Management. And once you register in the System for Award Management, and you do the certifications, it's going to assign you a UEI number. That number replaces the DUNS number that was formerly used by federal grants. So, you'll get that once you complete the process in the System for Award Management.

Thank you.

Moving along here, excuse me. Section 2 is the Executive Summary Section, but in addition to the summary that also references, the action plan, goals, strategies, budget and objectives. Should all of that information be limited to one page?

There are no page limits in the complete application. You can be as complete and as comprehensive as you so choose, and use as many pages as you need to.

Yeah, Tony, the template does indicate that we wanted to limit that to one page. So, on page five, I believe that's where the questions coming from.

All right, go ahead, Deb.

Now, you know, what I would say there too is if you can do a summary of what you're trying to complete, and keep it to the one page as much as you can, but then once you get to the other sections where we're talking about the use of funds that's where most of the activities and the budget information, the goals of the project, and the objectives could really be spelled out. And as Tony indicated, there's no page limits. So, if you wanted to attach different documents to that, you can feel free to do that. We don't have a page limit on that. But we do want a succinct summary that we can use if the project were to be awarded. How would you market your, your project? That's what the Executive Summary Section should tell us. Does that make sense?

It makes sense. Thanks, Deb.

Yeah, definitely. Thank you, Deb.

Moving along here. So, can matching funds be used for planning and capacity building, i.e., is the 20% restriction on REPP funds only or 20% of total project cost?

So, the, the REPP funds are limited to 80% of total project costs. And out of that 80%, you can use 20% for planning activities if you so desire, or you could use the full 80% for implementing renewable energy systems.

Okay, got it.

Okay.

Um, okay. Let's see here.

What form of documents can be used to support the application? Can we submit a detailed spreadsheet that has a budget and project plan with the project narrative or Microsoft Project Files, etc.?

You may, but we, we would appreciate that being in a PDF form. So that we don't have to wrestle with your spreadsheets and your planners.

The biggest concern that we have is whether or not everybody that's taking a look and reviewing can access that type of a file. With PDFs, it's pretty easy to use. Excel spreadsheets are fairly common, but when we start getting in some of those other types of formatting, or fonts that's when we start getting into problems. So, I would say, yes, a spreadsheet should be okay, and PDFs for sure would be appreciated.

Got it. Thank you.

So, there was a 15-page limit for the LOI. Is there a similar limit for the grant application?

No, there's not.

Thank you, sir.

For number one under the targeted region, the directors, the directions referenced the Distressed Communities Index. However, the link in the document which pulls up the Metro High Poverty Neighborhoods Map instead, which index is the correct one to reference?

Let's see.

You want to open that up.

Where we, let's see, let me get down to the Evaluation Criteria. And where, and see, and the reference was for which one?

Distressed Communities.

Distressed Communities.

He says the link in the document pulls up the Metro High Poverty Neighborhoods Map instead, so which index is the correct one to use, or to reference?

Isn't it, oh, well, there is a, the Distressed Energy Communities are those that are highlighted in green, or shaded in green?

Yeah, Tony you're not on the right link. You're on the Distressed Energy Communities. You need to go to the, the Distressed, EIG Distressed Communities for 2020.

So go up to number one.

Oh, I beg your pardon. Thank you.

So, if you go, if you go in here and you go up on the top, it says "Issue Areas". If you click on that, and then you'll, you'll see under, well, the way I did it, Tony, click on "Issue Areas" again and hold it down.

There we go.

And then under "Economic Geography", it says the "DCI", the Distressed Communities Index. That's where you... LAUGHTER.

There, that's the one.

And then it says "Distressed Communities Index. Mapping the country's economic well-being". So that tells you that you're in the right place.

Interactive Map.

Yeah.

Sorry for the confusion earlier.

We only have 47 tabs open. So, it's okay.

So let me point to Danville, Virginia.

If I can find, there it is, as one of those communities.

And then you can just make a copy of the picture and pull it into your report or into your application as evidence. And there are some statistics that go along with that, that you can make.

So that shows you where you rank. If you look down at the... Yeah, right there in the blue. The National is 12.3. It's listed as 10.1. You know, feel free to talk about all of these clips in your application.

Okay, Scott,

Awesome, thank you.

So, if our community is within an opportunity zone but it's not reflected as such on the Opportunity Zone Map, can we submit another form of proof?

So, we're using the EIG's Opportunity Zones. So, I'm not sure exactly what would be used for how they're defining opportunity zone. That's what we're going to be using unless, unless it was recently added that I'm not aware of. Tony, do you know if there were any new ones that were added?

I am not aware of any.

I would say go ahead and submit it with your application, but just know that the indicator that we are using is the EIG.

So, if you, if you intend to use something else you will need to show us first what the, the one that we're, we're providing for you to use shows. Display that, and then compare it with what you, you want to represent your community.

And it's helpful if you don't need the opportunity zone criteria just to note that. That way, you know, again, you're assured as you're walking through that you've gone through all of the criteria, and the ones you've met, and the ones you don't need.

Great, thank you guys.

While a higher match of 20% can be beneficial, does that improve ranking?

Well, no. It certainly will help you demonstrate that the readiness of your project and the commitment of your project. And let's just take a second here to see if we have...?

Yeah, there's some points that are going to be awarded for matching funds, showing a willingness, but the maximum that are going to be available is the 10. So, if I'm reviewing an application that comes in with the required, right, you have to have 20% to be eligible, and I'm comparing it to someone that has a 50% match, the project that demonstrates a really defined commitment of 50%, in my opinion, would score a 10 versus the other one may score an 8.

Got it.

Do you want to add to that, Tony? Would you agree?

No. I would, I would agree with that, and say that the maximum of total score is 100 points. So, get to it as best you can.

Thank you.

So will USDA, or can you, or will USDA be providing applicants with their LOI scorecards so we can fully view, fully review comments to improve a full application?

No. The feedback we gave you in the Agency response is what you can expect from us. We won't be providing the scorecards from the panel members.

And again, that wasn't a scoring process per se. It was a reviewing to see how well the proposed Letter of Intent fits within the program. It's a two-part process. So, we're not going to be scoring them officially until we get the full applications in, but yes, use the comments of writing in the letter that's what we would have for your particular application feedback.

Thank you.

Quickly, we're getting some more questions. But will more points be awarded for having a fully executed MOU as opposed to a draft?

No.

Thank you.

And then do you want a printout/screenshot for each item to prove it is true Vulnerability Index, Economic Distressed and next etc.? And does this count toward my total page count?

CROSSTALK. No, go ahead, Deb.

I was going to say there's, there's no total page count for the applications. The only limit is, you know, we're asking you to give us a summary that's no longer than that one page. But there's no limits on it. And again, the easier you can make the application read, the better you can demonstrate it that will all help you in terms of you know, receiving a better score for your project. So again, that's kind of up to you how you want to present it but these are just some tips that we've seen in more successful applications throughout all of our programs.

Thanks, Deb.

Does the NEPA Environmental Review have to be completed by the time we submit our application or just before construction?

Yeah, just before construction. What you need to do for a complete REPP application is make sure that you're completing the Environmental Checklist, and submitting at least that information with the application. If you have started any other environmental studies or made any other environmental contacts with other agencies, you can for sure include that as part of your application. That will help inform us on where you're at with the Environmental Review.

Thank you, Deb.

So, I'm going to go ahead, some of these are a little long winded, so just bear with me, I'm telling Deb. And then, but if we, and then if we need clarification whoever asked this question or these questions can just go ahead and answer or raise their hand, maybe they clarify them, but let's go ahead and go through these first and see what I could do. I might mess up the acronyms on your Tony, but that'd be quite a shock. So, in our LOI, we indicated that we intend to use our REPP funds primarily to defray the cost of installing solar at LMI households, as well as some public entities. These parties will have different levels of cost share which will count as part of our matching funds. So how do we account for this in the Matching Funds Sections since we don't know yet who our program participants will be?

Deb, this is probably a good chance for us to talk about ownership.

Right. So. So to address the question, you're going to need to do the best that you can in your REPP application to show us that you're bringing in the minimum 20% that's required. Whether that's putting parameters on those individuals that are going to be participating with your project that could be in your documents that you have with them. But as Tony mentioned, one of the things that we wanted to bring up is in regards to making sure that in the Notice of Funds, it talks about the lead applicant owning the assets that are funded in part with the REPP funds. So, if you're looking at putting solar on households, we just need to make sure that the REPP applicant is going to maintain those assets versus the individual homeowners. Anything you need to add to that, Tony?

Nope, that was good. Thank you.

And if we didn't address that question, feel free to raise your hand and we can discuss it more later, or we can take a discussion offline if necessary.

Thank you, Deb. Thank you, Tony.

So, continuing on matching funds. Is there a distinction between departments of the applicant organization for in-kind contributions? For example, our sustainability program will be in charge of the, for the project management services performed by the Public Works Department. Since this project, since this project doesn't exist in current budgets, this match would be very helpful.

I'm not sure I under, understand the question, did you catch that, Deb?

Um...

I can repeat it if necessary.

Yeah. Why don't you repeat it?

Sure. Is there a distinction between departments of the applicant organization for in-kind contributions? For example, our sustainability program will be in charge for the project management service performed by the Public Works Department.

So those are all still coming from the same applicant entity. So, we will not allow in-kind. They could contribute cash to the project, but it couldn't be in-kind if that's the lead applicant.

Great, thank you.

How should the disadvantaged indexes be described when the area of service extends across differently scored areas?

Disadvantaged Indexes? Let me go back.

So how should the disadvantaged indexes be described when the area of service extends across differently scored areas?

So, I'm assuming we're referring to the EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool and the definition of Disadvantaged Communities. Again, if, if there's multiple locations or multiple counties tracts, we would like you to provide information and discuss them all. If there's, you know, five of them that are, are ranking fairly high and maybe two of them that aren't as high. You know, note that. Is there going to be special emphasis provided to certain areas over others? Again, you tell us how you are going to be targeting this money for this pilot program to get at those most economically distressed communities.

I'll note that in some of the stronger LOIs used a table to present that because their service area was across several communities, oh not communities, several zip codes. And so, they just broke it down by zip code and showed how to apply to each index, or how, particularly in number six when there are so many sub-indicators within that, how they, they stressed the number of the really significant ones in a table form. And that was, for me, that was a very readable presentation. It was strong evidence in support of their claim, and I would just encourage you to consider using that.

Right. Now we're not prescriptive, so you get your point across wherever you need to get your point across.

Thank you.

So, the Application Guide intersperses sections that require boxes to be checked and other sections calling for narrative content. Should we include this narrative content in the linked appendices, or should we be included, or should it be included with the other sections that require boxes to be checked?

If it's asking for information along with the box, you can, you can provide the supporting information right there under it. That would that, would work just fine.

Yeah, again, we're not prescriptive about it. But if you wanted to edit the PDF and, and, you know, answer with the information directly under the question that's going to help with readability. If it's easier for you to do an attachment, just say "See attachment five", we can look at that as well.

Thank you, Deb. Thank you, Tony.

All right. So, this is kind of repeating ourselves, but it might be worth it only do this to one time, Tony. Can the 20% match be used for capacity building and planning in addition to the 20% of the 80% provided by REPP funds? Essentially can up to 40% of the total budget cost to use for planning capacity building?

And 20% is the limit. 80% of the total project costs must go toward the installation or retrofitting or associated costs of installing a renewable energy system and or a distributed renewable energy system.

I got. Thank you.

Yeah. Does the IES, I'm sorry, EIS need to be completed as part of the proposal? If not, does it need to be priced in the application, and can it be, can it be an allowable grant cost?

I'm guessing that's the Environmental.

Right. Um, it does not need to be completed with the application. If there are costs associated with it, the applicant would be responsible for paying for those costs in order to move forward with an award. We don't really have anything on our Notice about that. Tony,

We, the one thing that comes to my mind is ineligible cost, cost of applying for this program. That would be considered one of the costs associated with applying.

Okay.

Thank you.

What is the estimated timeline for evaluation of the applications and subsequent announcement of awards?

Well, we would like very much to make awards before the end of our fiscal year, which is September 30. We'll see how that goes. We're going to move as expeditiously as we can to do so. But hey, you know, we've been disrupted before. LAUGHTER. But as we all are aware, but that's our intent.

Okay, thank you, Tony.

Can our ARPA funds be used for part of the 20% match?

ARPA funds?

A-R-P-A. ARPA.

ARPA. All right.

If you are, if you have not already begun work on the project, and you are, you are working. Alright, take me through the timeline on this one, Deb. First, they have, that was things are only occurred, considered occurred, incurred, excuse me, during the grant period?

Correct.

Absolutely. They can be. So, our rule of thumb is if you're applying to another federal program and they allow you to use their funds for our program, then we're accepting it.

Right. So, if another federal program does not have a problem allowing that money to be used as match, then we would also accept it but as Tony indicated, it would need to be spent during the period of performance, which is after our award is made.

Okay, thank you.

Is it possible to have several MOUs and contacts documents to carry out the purposes of REPP? Should we assume all docs need to be included in Appendix B, or one master contract?

So, we would expect every party in the partnership to be in the MOU, or the MOA, submit, if you have several partnership agreements, or contractual arrangements, then of course, we would want to see those as well. But it, but it would be helpful to us to just have a listing of all of the, all of the entities that are in the partnership, and a signature from an executive from each one of those partners in what you were referring to as the master. But what we would just call the, the partnership agreement.

Okay, thank you.

Will all applicants, will applicants be required to complete the Executive Order 12372 consultation prior to the application, or will that process occur after?

Thank you for asking that question. That Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program. You do not need to consider that. This program is far less than $100 million in funding, and because of that, it does not apply. That Executive Order does not apply to the Rural Energy Pilot Program.

Awesome. Thank you

All right. So, it's kind of a two persevere, or two, two question. Well, we'll take it one step at a time. So, while there is a lead applicant, and the lead applicant cannot provide in-kind, can other partners provide in-kind, example, an RECP that has multiple partners? Would all partners in the RECP but limited to cash or just the lead applicant?

Just the lead entity who we would consider the applicant.

Correct.

Okay. Thank you. And the how and where should we include Letters of Support from parties that support our application, but are not members of the RECP?

Well, you can definitely submit those as attachments to the application. There's a section in here that talks about... I'm going to have to go back and try to find it, but it talks about willingness to fund projects and willingness to assist with projects that come out of the RECP. That's where I would see the Letters of Support being noted. I can't put my finger on it right now what section...

Is it community support, and in that criteria?

Yeah, likely. I just don't know what number it is here.

It's in our criteria it's D. You should see it now.

Yeah.

So, you can attach Letters of Support there.

Shall I continue, or do we still...?

I think we're ready.

Yeah. Okay, thank you.

Yep.

And we're, we're getting to the bottom of these. We still have probably about a half hour left. So, if you want to get those questions in, go ahead. And also, if you want to talk directly, just go ahead and raise their hand, and we'll unmute you. So is $10 million the total amount available for grant recipients, for example, would awarding five $2 million grants exhaust the fund?

That is a good example. That's exactly what we intend to do if those are the, the most meritorious projects in the most particularly underserved communities.

And a vast majority of the Letters of Intent that we received were for the $2 million. But there were some that were not. Again, as Tony indicated, we'll be going through and those that are the most meritorious and are in the most distressed communities that's where we'll be putting our funds. But yes, it could be up to five at $2 million exhaust the full $10 million.

That's right. And we have no indication if this pilot will be renewed or awarded and continued beyond this fiscal year. We have funds that are available until they're expended, and we've not received any indication that we'll receive additional funding for it. So, $10 million is what we have, and we intend to, intend to exhaust it as soon as we can.

Thank you, Tony. Thank you, Deb.

So, and can you, can you tell us again, where and how to get the Unique Entity Identifier or the UEI?

So, you need to go to SAM.gov, and you need to take the tax ID of the lead applicant entity and you need to register in SAM.gov. And once you do that registration process, you will go through multiple certifications, and you will have a confirmation that you've fully registered. And then you will be issued a UEI number.

Under the "Help", Tony, I think there may be...

No, come down, scroll down. There may be...

You're back there.

Yeah. Up top.

Okay,

or there's "Getting Started". Yeah, I thought there may be some resource manuals under that. So, there you go.

Okay.

So, there is a Federal Service Desk if you have questions.

I will say that most of the LOIs had Unique Entity Identifiers already. Some still just put their DUNS number which you know that we're not using anymore. But a good number of LOIs already had their UEI, EUI, pardon me. Thank you.

Will award funding be provided to advance or reimbursement request?

It will be through reimbursement requests, but we're going to work those things out during the award phase, during the execution phase of the, of the projects. We're trying to, well, I don't want to talk about that because it's too premature. But the idea is that we're trying to work with the awardees in trying to do something simultaneously.

Thank you.

Where is the Environmental Review need discussed in the application? Did I hear correctly that this review needs to be done before the application?

So let me just find...

On the application template, there are a list of forms that need to be require. And then there's also the Environmental Checklist that needs to be provided. That Checklist is basically going to tell the Agency the type of project that you're planning on implementing and that's the starting point for us then to conduct the NEPA Environmental Review. Again, if, if you have done Environmental Reviews on your project, you may submit those but before we can award funds to you, and before the project is started, we have to have a complete Environmental Review done. So, if you're putting up a wind turbine, we need to make sure that, you know, you're not setting footings and digging ground if this is in a place where there's endangered species or if it's on a wetland or a floodplain. It's all those types of things that are listed here in this Environmental Checklist that we're looking for.

And that, again has to be submitted with the application, and then we will conduct the review as it's appropriate for that project as we move closer to the award.

Right and, and if there's, you know, concerns or questions that we have for you if you're in that pool of candidates that are tentatively to be awarded, we will work with you in order to complete that NEPA Review. But we cannot obligate any of these dollars or disperse any funds until we have a completed NEPA Review. That's required for all of our federal obligations.

Thank you.

So, to clarify in-kind match further, if in-kind match is provided, will the amount of REPP grants funds for capacity building need to be reduced accordingly so that no more than 20% of the total project costs are for capacity building/technical assistance?

So let me read this out of the Notice, and may, may help clarify it. It says no REPP grant award may exceed an amount that's calculated as 80% of total eligible project costs, or the maximum grant amount of $2 million, whichever is less. Not more than 20% of awarded funds, so that's grant funds, or $400,000 whichever is less, maybe used for those costs associated with carrying out capacity building, community energy plans, technical assistance, etc. So, the 80% of REPP dollars, out of those 80%, you can use 20% for capacity building. But then you also need to bring in 20% match to the total project costs of REPP. So, in theory, 100% total project costs, 20% match, and 80% REPP funds for the system. Or you could have 100%, 20% match, 60% of the system with 20% for those costs associated with capacity building. So, if you look in the Notice, it's in section, it's in Funding Restriction Section E. Is that shot I can plop that into?

Um, yeah, I can enable the chat. And then you can go ahead and put that out to the group here.

Notice itself?

Yeah, it's in the Notice, Tony.

So, remind me where we are.

I'm on page 2756.

All right.

Right there, E.

Okay.

I'll bring it up just a little bit bigger.

So not more than 20% of funds, or $400,000 on a max grant can be used for capacity building, community energy plans, technical assistance, reporting the results to the Agency during disbursement, all of those things.

Awesome, thank you.

Does providing SUTA, Substantially Underserved Tribal Areas, evidence provide any leverage?

So, does providing SUTA evidence provide any leverage and that's the Substantially Underserved Tribal Areas?

I don't think we have a place for that, but please make a note of it as, when you are demonstrating in the criteria, particularly distressed communities or disadvantaged communities, that would be helpful in support of that.

And I would also add if, if it's in a SUTA area and you have other funds that are flowing into that region and you're using those as leveraging that may be another tie.

Now will these questions and answers be published? And I go ahead and answer that one. We will be posting this webinar with the questions onto the website. Right, Tony?

Yes, we will.

Okay, we'll get that as soon as possible.

Okay, let's see. If we have multiple sites will the Environmental Information Form be required for each site?

Yes. So, if you're putting a renewable energy system at multiple sites, we have to consider all sites. So yes, please complete the environmental information for every site.

Thanks, Deb. And which Executive Order mentioned before do we not need to be concerned about?

Yes, sir. 12372. Executive Order 12372.

Okay, thank you.

And that's, is that the interagency one, Tony?

Yes, it is.

All right. And then this is our last question so far. We do have plenty of time guys, about 20 minutes. And it asks if we can please describe Section 5A, Bullet 2 a little more.

Section 5A.

5A, Bullet 2.

Okay, so I'm assuming it's up to six points that are going to be awarded for projects that plan, execute or deploy renewable energy generation technologies other than solar PV of at least 40% of total generation capacity. So, what we're looking at here is to diversify the portfolio of technologies. We've seen a lot of solar in not only, I mean our Rural Energy for America which is one of our flagship Rural Development programs, we see a lot of solar in there. So, if you have an application that's coming in that is looking at other types of technologies of at least 40% of the total generation capacity that the REPP is doing, it can be eligible for up to six points to be awarded.

Thank you, Deb. So as of now that does it for the, oh there we go.

INAUDIBLE.

So, would a $3 million total project that request $2 million in federal funds with $1 million in cash and match funds fit the NOFA 80/20 requirement?

Can you repeat that?

Yeah, no problem. So, would a $3 million total project that requests $2 million in federal funds with $1 million in cash and match funds fit the NOFA 80/20 requirement?

You know what I want to talk with this individual offline. Would they, would you mind sending me an inquiry about that, specifically, and talk to me about the specifics of it? And we'll address that offline. The general... I want to make sure that this is in fact a, a single project and not part of a larger project. That it's not a utility scale that you're just doing a portion of. So, we would not, we would need to discuss that in particular before I would give the go ahead about that.

Thanks, Tony.

Are there any rules/consideration relating to battery storage as it's charging from renewable generation resources?

Yeah, that I can think of as that it needs to be commercially available technology.

We would consider that a part of the distributed energy system and a part of the renewable energy system. So that would go toward that 80% required funds, required use of funds. But in terms of any particular limits on that, nothing comes to mind as I, as I think about it.

Okay. Then we got another question. Does battery storage count as a generation source other than solar for the purpose of the 40% non-solar point bonus?

It's a good question. I don't know that we've addressed that anywhere, Tony. Your thought on that?

We haven't. I don't think we have that in the... We haven't discussed that in the Notice. I'm inclined to allow it, but I need the determine from my General Counsel to see if that if I can authorize that without publishing it in the Notice.

So...

That's about deploying renewable energy generation technologies?

Yeah.

My only thought would be...

It's not...

Storage is not generated.

Storage, the new generation. Thank you.

But yeah, we may have to...

Alright, so write, again, write the REPP email address with your specific question, and I will give you a definitive answer on that one, if you don't mind.

Okay, thank you, Tony. Thank you, Deb.

Okay, so, one second here. Now, I opened up the chat. And now we got some chats coming and so.

We have a gentleman, R. Rave from Rosebud Sioux Tribe REDCO, storage being an alternative. So, we got an agreement. And that, okay, let's see. Does that mean geothermal is not an eligible technology? This is a follow-up to which you were just talking about.

Geothermal is definitely a generation technology.

And it's eligible?

And it's certainly eligible.

Awesome. Great, right.

That is all I'm seeing right now, Tony and Deb. We just got another one. Cool. Cool. Keep them coming, guys. So, we have another question in. If we only, if we only provided one energy solution in the LOI, can we add a second in the final application?

You may, but make it clear that, that it wasn't in the LOI, but that you're adding it in, in the application. Just let us know what you're doing.

Thanks, Tony. And that, oh we do, okay, so I guess you're looking, well. How many applicants, it says how many, the question is how many applications make it? So however, you want to answer that, Tony?

How many applications what?

How many, I guess, it's says how many applications make it? So, I'm assuming it's like how many you guys are looking for here? I think like you said, we're made it, oh, excuse me, how many applications made it?

We, alright, let's go back to the Letters of Intent. But we received 85 that were successfully submitted in the window, they requested over $135 million. We have $10 million available. We intend to, to award the most meritorious projects from the most particularly underserved communities. And what we will do is after we convene our panel, our review panel, again, we will work our way through each one of the completed applications successfully submitted in the window. And we will review them, we will score them, and we will rank them, and we will go down the list until the money is exhausted. So that could be, my guess is it could be as few as five, it could be as much as probably not more than 10. I would certainly imagine. But somewhere in that, in that middle there is probably the number of awards that we'll have.

Right. And I'll just add that as long as a Letter of Intent was submitted by the deadline. Any of those 85 applicants can apply and put in a full application by the July 18th deadline.

Absolutely

The review process for the Letter of Intent was just to give feedback on how well the Letter of Intent and the proposed project to date hit the targets or really fit within the REPP Program. So, if there was a proposal that didn't fit real well, that was the feedback that we wanted to provide. But we definitely will accept applications from any of the 85 that met that LOI window. If they didn't meet the LOI window, they cannot apply for the full application. And we've been getting, getting a few of those the past couple of days.

Right.

Awesome. Thank you, Deb and Tony. That is all I see right now in the Question and Answer. And there are currently no hands raised. So, I will turn it back over to you. We do have about 10 minutes or so. So, if you want to get those questions, there's still time, but other than that, Tony, I'll turn it back to you.

Let's see any last thoughts, Deb, any last thoughts?

No, not at this point in time. I would just encourage you if you have questions as you're completing your application to send them into the repp@usda.gov website, I'm sorry, email address, and we'll provide some answers to you.

Absolutely. So, Deb's advice at the beginning I will say at the end, go ahead and check out that secure Cloud Vault link, make sure it's working for you. And start dropping things in as quickly as you can because that, that it's available to you and you only to use until the deadline. And if you need a confirmation that you have everything in there after you've dropped everything in, send a request and the next business day I'll try to respond to that, and give you confirmation of what's in there. I'm thinking if there's anything else? We'll have one more webinar. We have one scheduled in June, I believe. And it's basically a question-and-answer session. And we will hardly have any presentation in this. We're just going to open it up for you to ask questions, and, and we'll try to give answers during that time. In the meantime, as Deb said, you're welcome to send, submit questions or need clarification on something. Go ahead and write the, the REPP email address, repp@usda.gov and we'll get back to you on the next business day as we can.

Anything else, Deb?

Nope. I think that wraps it up. Thanks for everything.

All right. Thanks, everyone. I appreciate your time and attention.