

City of Chicago

Climate Infrastructure Fund

February 2 Webinar – Questions and Answers

The following is a list of questions asked during the February 2 Informational Webinar for the Climate Infrastructure Fund. Responses reflect those that were provided during the webinar as well as responses to questions that were not answered during the event (indicated in **bold**). Further, some responses provided during the webinar were determined to be incomplete or unclear. Corrections to such previously provided responses are noted below, with incorrect text indicated via ~~strike through~~ and added text indicated via **bold italics**.

Please refer to www.chicago.gov/ClimateFund for additional updates and information, including updates to the [FAQs](#) and [Resources](#) based on questions arising during the Webinar.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Q1: Can an applicant apply for more than one project type on more than one application?

Projects should fall in only one Project Type category. An applicant can apply for multiple independent projects across project types. However, a single project cannot be “split” into multiple applications.

Q2: If you want to install an EV charging station for public use and install heat pumps and efficient lighting in your building, will you have submit two different applications?

~~Yes. Applications will need to be filled out for each project type.~~ ***Projects can only apply to one project type. Applicants are permitted to apply for multiple projects under multiple project types, but they may not “split” a single project into multiple applications.***

Q3: If we are working with a contractor or other professional, should we apply under our organization’s name or under the contractor’s name?

Applications should reflect the end-user organization. Applications may be submitted by a third party on behalf of, and in cooperation with, the end-user.

Q4: Should/can we submit a contractor’s quote with our application?

If a scope and quote has been developed, please include this in the “Project Financing” section of the application. A formal quote is not required to apply.

Q5: Do submitted documents need to be the original, or can they be photocopies?

Documents should be uploaded to the application so they can be copies or official copies.

Q6: If project funds are pending can you still apply?

Yes, please provide as much information about project costs and other funding sources as you have.

Q7: What do you look for in terms of letters of support?

Letters of support, while not required, help to show that the organization applying is an effective member of the community and that the impact of the proposed improvements will be felt by others in the community and/or is a supported endeavor by surrounding community members.

Q8: Will permitting be taken into consideration?

While a permit may not be needed for certain project types, you should absolutely consider permitting costs and time needed to obtain a permit in your project.

Q9: Will there be additional rounds of funding?

There may be additional rounds of funding. Future rounds will be announced later this year.

Q10: How soon after the application closes (Feb 24) do you expect to make decisions?

Decisions are expected to be finalized in late spring.

Q11: Are funds expected to be divided equally across the three project types?

There is no set percentage of funds expected for each project type. The funding split will be determined based on the applications received.

Q12: Are there reporting requirements related to the grant?

There will be some simple reporting requirements for grantees to ensure funds have the intended impact. These will be clearly identified in the Grant Agreement that each grantee will sign, with clear instructions to ensure satisfactory compliance.

Q13: Can an application be submitted for partial funding of a large project that exceeds the \$50,000 - \$250,000 target grant range?

Yes, larger projects are eligible to apply for partial funding of projects. ***Applicants should also consider providing budget information for the full project. Awards over \$250,000 will be considered on a case-by-case basis.***

Q14: Will you reply with how or why an application did not receive the grant? (At least a few bullet points that were in error, incomplete in info, etc.)?

We hope to be able to provide non-selected applicants with feedback. This will depend on the number of applications received and the number selected.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Q15: Where can we access the recording, slides, and Q&A for today's (and prior) webinars?

Webinar materials are posted on the Climate Infrastructure Fund website: www.Chicago.gov/ClimateFund in the top right corner of the front page.

Q16: How/where do we identify environmental justice communities within Chicago? Would a dense area with high-rises be considered an Environmental Justice Community?

Both Federal and State of Illinois definitions and geographies of Environmental Justice Communities in Chicago are used. Please refer to the "Community Resources" section of the [Resources](#) webpage for more information.

Q17: How could we get in contact with folks on this webinar so we could see if we could collaborate?

DPD encourages potential applicants to partner with outside organizations when helpful, provided that the grant recipient is an eligible organization. However, we cannot provide contact information for other organizations at this time.

Q18: Is there a preferred order that documents should be submitted?

There is no specific order required to complete the online application. Applicants can begin an application, save, and return to that application at a later date.

Q19: Is there a place where the calculation methodology used for emissions in the 62% goal can be found? Are projects that reduce upstream emissions related to products that are utilized / consumed in/by Chicago in scope? If the answer is "it depends", is there a way to assess whether a potential project would be in scope prior to submitting and preparing a full application?

The 62% reduction statistic refers to the City's Climate Action Plan. All projects must fall under these categories:

Renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements: Including solar panels, wind turbines geothermal systems and efficiency upgrades involving a building's electrical or mechanical systems, building envelope, and more.

Electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging infrastructure: Purchase of vehicles may only be for business operations/use, while charging stations may be for organization use and by the public.

Green infrastructure: Site improvements that help manage stormwater, including green roofs, permeable pavement, and native plantings.

To calculate the potential of your own project's emissions reductions, consider visiting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator for more information. <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>

ELIGIBILITY & PRIORITIZATION

Q19: Can a business or nonprofit that has received NOF or the Chicago Recovery Grant still be eligible for the Climate Infrastructure Fund?

Prior awards of City-funding for a different project(s) do not prevent applicants from applying to the Climate Infrastructure Fund. If the prior award was for the same project being submitted now, applicants should make the prior award clear in the application and should describe why the additional funds are needed. Projects cannot apply for more than one DPD grant funding program in a single funding round.

Q20: We are a foreign start-up, but we have partners located in Chicago. Can apply for your program with them. We have developed the first geothermal panels to decarbonize buildings?

DPD encourages applicants to partner with organizations that may improve their capacity to complete a proposed project (e.g. with technical assistance, project design, etc.). Partners are not subject to the same eligibility requirements as grant recipients, but grant recipients must be 501(c)(3) nonprofits or small businesses based in Chicago, and projects must be located within the city limits.

Q21: Can at home business apply?

Businesses located in non-commercial properties are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In all instances, the business owner must maintain all applicable business licenses and proposals **must exclusively involve business use**. Grants cannot be used for personal or non-business purposes.

Q22: Would education or environmental awareness campaigns qualify?

No, only capital improvement projects are eligible. While we recognize that value of this kind of work, it is not an allowable expense for this specific funding source.

Q23: Can we apply to provide energy efficiency education and capital improvements simultaneously?

Funds are available only for capital improvements and cannot be used for operations, maintenance, or training. Further, while capital improvements must be installed by qualified professionals, should an applicant propose a program that leverages qualified professionals to also train others, that can be considered. However, training-specific expenses are not eligible.

Q24: When considering whether a project is located in an Environmental Justice Community, is it the project address or the service area of the organization that is considered? For example, if an applicant is proposing an EV fleet, would the location of the transit motorpool or the Area of Operation for the service provided be considered?

All projects are assessed for Environmental Justice Community location based on the project address. Projects submitted by nonprofits are also assessed based on the description of their service area as noted in the "Organization Information" section of the application.

Q25: Can you do one project that impacts multiple sites? For example, plantings across several plots of land within Chicago?

Individual projects that span multiple sites owned or controlled by a single entity can be submitted via a single application. If a series of sites owned by multiple entities is envisioned as part of a broader "portfolio" of projects, a separate application must be submitted for each project. Applicants should make reference to the connection to other projects in the Project Description section of the application.

Q26: Would you consider collaboration between two organizations? Meaning if there are companies here who need support on the community impact front (e.g. organizing and education), could we collaborate and submit a joint proposal?

DPD encourages applicants to partner with organizations that may improve their capacity to complete a proposed project (e.g. with technical assistance, project design, etc.). Partners are not subject to the same eligibility requirements as grant recipients, but grant recipients must be 501(c)(3) nonprofits or small businesses based in Chicago, and projects must be located within the city limits.

Q27: I have a three-unit rental building operating as an LLC; can I apply for energy efficiency improvements?

Any 501(c)3 nonprofit organization or small business is eligible. The City of Chicago will prioritize projects in environmental justice communities. **Residential uses are ineligible. An exception is made for nonprofit-operated facilities that fall under the "Group Living" definition in the [Chicago Zoning Ordinance](#).**

Q28: Can grants support the conversion of equipment (e.g. auto repair) from fossil-fuel to electric and improve recycling equipment?

Funds must be used for capital improvements within the three specified categories and cannot include movable equipment.

Q29: If a business does not have a brick and mortar but uses a vehicle for business, can they apply for EV and EV station?

Considerations such as this will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Please contact us directly to tell us more about the business via email at ClimateFund@cityofchicago.org. We will then inquire internally for a legal determination based on that situation. That said, all small business rules for this grant would apply, including having a valid business license, be an allowable business type, use the vehicle and charging station for businesses purposes only, etc.

Q30: Can we apply for support of items where installation is already imminent or in-process?

Projects can be ones that are already underway, but eligible costs are only those that have not yet been incurred, with the exception of eligible predevelopment costs (e.g. energy assessments, design drawings, etc.) which may be incurred prior to award. Final determination of funding amounts are decisions made by the City of Chicago.

Q31: Our organization trains youth to install solar panels and wind turbines; are we eligible?

Funds must be used for capital improvements and cannot be used for programming, operations, maintenance, or training.

Q32: We partner with Chicago Public Schools and Park District buildings. Since they are City-owned building that need these services, is there a special route to get approval or should we work directly with the supervisors and principals?

Only projects on private property are eligible at this time.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Q33: Can you provide an example of the types of “items” that might qualify for support as part of this sort of project? High efficiency HVAC? Specific roof treatments? Insulation? High efficiency water heaters? Low flow plumbing fixtures?

As noted in the FAQs: Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency costs may include installation of on-site renewable energy (including solar, wind and geothermal), upgraded space heating and cooling with electric heat pumps, electric panel upgrades, air sealing and insulation, lighting efficiency upgrades, heat pump water heaters, and induction cooking (when replacing an existing service only). Projects that replace fossil-fuel related space heating are prioritized. Funding is not provided for energy conservation measures that extend reliance on fossil fuels. Ongoing maintenance and operations, staff training and all other operational costs must be maintained by the submitting agency and are not eligible fund expenditures. Please visit the FAQs for other project types including electric vehicles and EV charging stations, and green infrastructure.

Q34: If roof repair/replacement is required for renewable energy installation, can this be covered by the Fund?

Yes, improvements that are required to support climate-related investments are eligible. The exact amount of funding that can go to such “supportive” investments will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Q35: Are upgrades to storefront windows to improve weatherization eligible?

Yes, building envelope improvements, including window replacement, is eligible.

Q36: Are both gas and electrical high-efficiency HVAC improvements eligible?

High-efficiency electric HVAC improvements are eligible, though heat-pump systems will be prioritized. Fossil-fuel systems (such as natural gas), even high-efficiency ones, are not eligible.

Q37: Can funds be used to upgrade an electrical panel to accommodate other building electrification measures?

Yes, if such an upgrade is deemed a requirement to support other electrification measures for which you are seeking funding.

Q38: Would this funding be available to build a solar farm?

Solar installations are an eligible expense, provided they are proposed by Chicago-based nonprofits or small businesses. Funds cannot be used for operations, maintenance, or training.

Q39: Can an energy assessment be simply to state/document that we will use X% less petrol/diesel in our business? Or do we have to calculate how much less CO2 emissions? For example, that we will use X fewer gallons of fuel?

Building energy assessments for energy efficiency/renewable energy projects are not required to complete the application. However, recent energy assessments or proof of pending assessments **by an energy professional** are strongly recommended to demonstrate both impact (energy and/or emissions reduction) and project readiness. Energy assessments are required for final budget approval.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND CHARGING

Q40: If we are only applying for an EV vehicle with a charging station, do we need an energy assessment? What about site plans?

An assessment is not needed for the purchase of a vehicle, however, a proposal for a charging station may be needed to demonstrate electrical capacity of current site, or upgrades necessary for installation and proper functioning. A certified installer will be required for installation, as well as all required permits for said installation.

Q41: Can I just apply for an EV and not a charger?

Yes, though projects which show a comprehensive approach and a community impact will be prioritized.

Q42: Many of the application questions are related site improvements (i.e. "do you have design and construction documents" or "provide a detailed description of the project site's current physical conditions," or "upload images of the current project site.") How should we respond to these if we're focused on an Electric Vehicle project vs. actual capital improvements?

The Climate Infrastructure Fund utilizes DPD's Universal Small Grant Application, which includes some questions that are more targeted to building / site improvements. If you feel a particular question does not apply to your specific project, feel free to respond "Not Applicable" and provide the reason the question does not apply.

Q43: Can you apply for an EV car for your office and an EV charger in the community in a more public street location?

Any 501(c)3 nonprofit organization or small business is eligible. The City of Chicago will prioritize projects in environmental justice communities. **Improvements must be located on private property and cannot be located in the public right-of-way.**

Q44: Do you have any recommendations on finding a EV vendor/installer?

DPD does not provide a list of preferred contractors. That said, there are other sources that do provide such lists. Here's an index of Illinois certified EV installers:
<https://www.icc.illinois.gov/authority/electric-vehicle-charging-station-installer>

Q45: Are e-bikes included in the definition of EVs?

Only electric cars, trucks, and vans are eligible at this time.

Q46: Are hybrid vehicles eligible?

No, only all-electric vehicles are eligible for funding.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Q47: Would creating green space on a residential building roof be considered green infrastructure?

Green roofs are an eligible expense under the Green Infrastructure category, however residential buildings are not eligible.

Q48: Do you consider projects in green infrastructure to include the reduction of corrosion using innovative materials?

Proposals may include stormwater management systems that divert water from the city's sewers, including native plantings and soil, permeable pavement, gardens and related projects, especially in flood-prone portions of the city.

Q49: Can we enhance existing school gardens and build new school gardens, including out-of-school programs for youth and parents to teach people how to maintain and replicate efforts at their home?

Green Infrastructure projects can include both improvements to existing open spaces and the development of new open spaces, provided the costs themselves are for eligible items (e.g. native planting, stormwater infrastructure, permeable paving, etc.). ***All projects must be located on privately-owned property. It is the choice of said private property owner to make such an installation open and available to the public.***