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MISSOURI RIVER® ENERGY SERVICES

Missouri River Energy Services: Grant writing 101

How to find & win federal, state, and private grants

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WHO WE ARE

About us

Baker Tilly is a leading advisory, tax and assurance firm, providing clients with a genuine coast-to-coast and global advantage in major regions of the U.S. and in many of the world's leading financial centers

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WHO WE ARE

About us: at a glance

100+
Years in business

90+
Years of energy & utility experience

11,000+
Team members & 1,000+ principals

600+
Energy and utility clients and 1,3000+ government clients

$3B+
Firm revenue in fiscal year 2025

6th
Largest accounting firm in U.S.

100+
Worldwide office locations

Working relationship with MRES

Baker Tilly provides strategic advisory services to MRES to support its pursuit of federal and state funding opportunities, primarily under the following key support areas:

Funding strategy & alignment:	BT identifies grant opportunities that align with MRES priority projects, sharing funding options in grant matrices and memos.
Opportunity communication & monitoring:	BT assists in interpreting grant opportunities, grant requirements, and funding rules; provides weekly email updates and monthly check-ins.
Stakeholder engagement:	Responds to inquiries from MRES and its members; acts as liaison with grant agencies.
Training & outreach:	Coordinates webinars and trainings on grant pursuit and funding opportunities.
Grant pursuit & compliance support:	As requested, BT supports application development, competitive grant writing, program interface, and compliance review.

POLL:

In what area(s) do you need more assistance?

A. Training
B. Grant research and funding opportunities
C. Grant writing assistance
D. Community demographic and profiling information

Learning objectives

(1) Learn about tools and strategies for finding money from state, local, and private groups in areas where MRES members live and work.

(2) Understand what these groups look for when reviewing funding requests and how they decide who gets the money.

(3) Learn how to change the way you write, use facts, plan budgets, and appeal to different audiences so your grant application fits what each group cares about.

Researching grant opportunities

Types of grant funding

- Federal: Government funding from federal agencies available in the form of grants, loans, or cooperative agreements.
- State: State governments also offer grant funding through various state departments
- Foundation: Private funding is also available from a variety of sources, usually focused on a very local service area as well as specific mission or focus areas
  - Community – Community foundations build partnerships with local organizations and donors to offer county-wide funding opportunities in specific areas
  - Private – Private foundations can be hard to find and break into, but they offer local funding opportunities and are often driven by the missions of their founder/founding members
  - Corporate – Large corporations often have foundation or giving arms and prioritize giving in areas where they have physical office locations or local presence

Federal opportunities

PROS

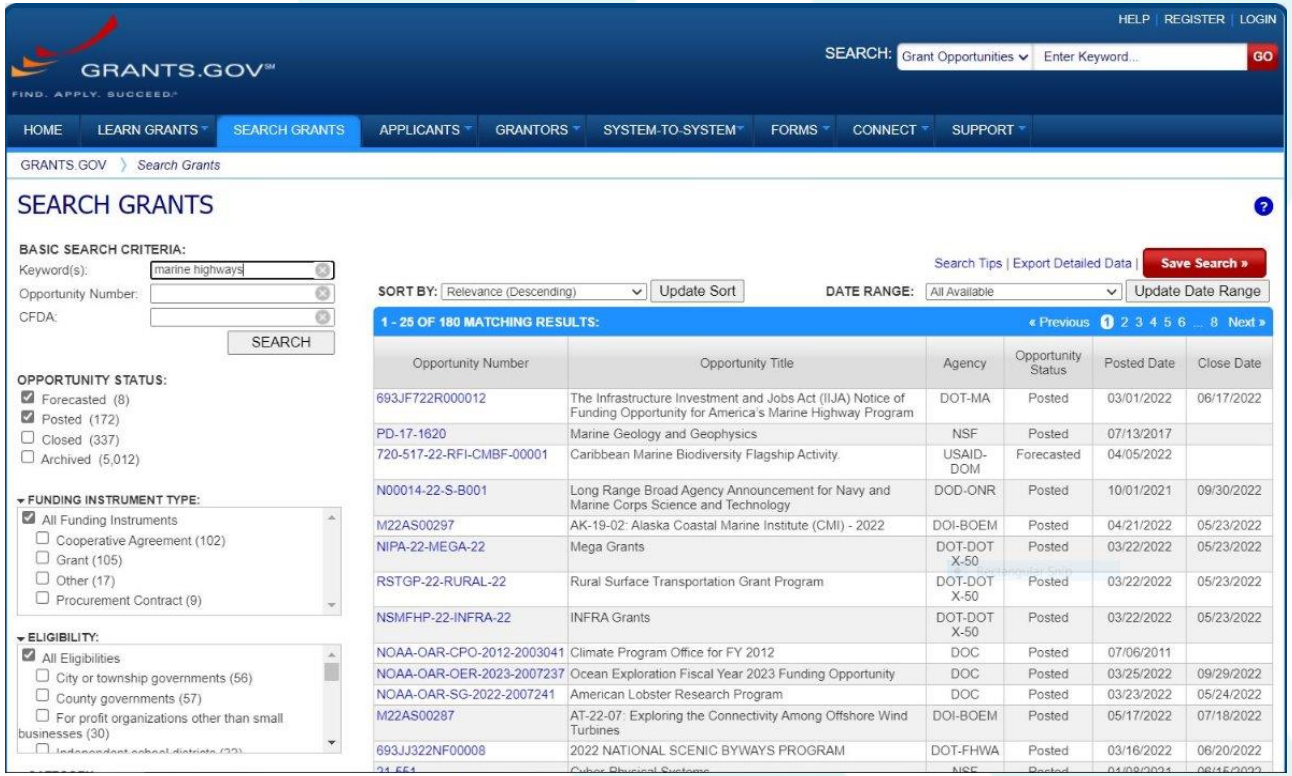
- Publicly announced with clear application instructions
- Transparent eligibility & application evaluation criteria, typically in the form of a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
- Aims to accomplish legislative goals and priorities through each program
- Typically higher award amounts

CONS

- Lots of planning needed to meet bureaucratic requirements (registrations, portal access, etc.)
- Application requirements tend to be more involved and time consuming
- Cost share (or another supplemental source of funding) is often required
- Federal compliance can be a heavier lift post-award
- Current uncertainty around announcements & terminations

Finding federal grant opportunities

- **Grants.gov**
- You can search for grant opportunities without a Grants.gov account
- Forecasted and posted grant opportunities
- Sign up for email notifications regarding grant announcements

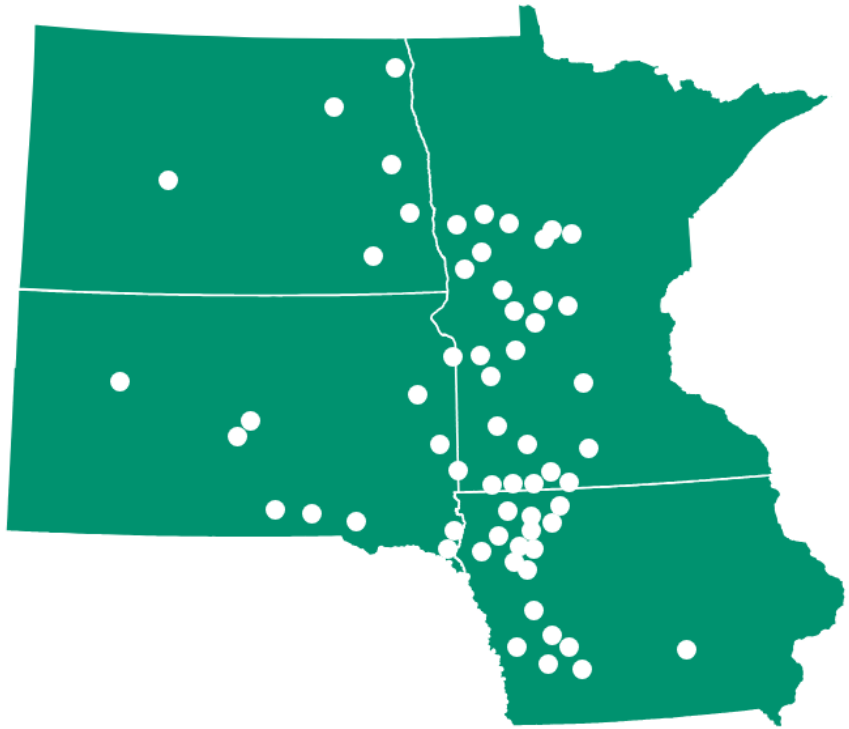


State opportunities

- Federal passthrough: The state is awarded funding through a federal grant and opens up a subaward competition for eligible applicants within their state
- State government: the state budget allocates non-federal funds to grant programs
- Aims to accomplish legislative goals and priorities through each program or meet an identified constituent need
- Cast a wide net in your search terms

PROS

- Publicly announced with clear application instructions
- Applications and compliance are typically a lighter lift, unless there are specific passthrough requirements



CONS

- States often don't have a one-stop shop platform like grants.gov for announcements, so opps can be harder to locate
- Award amounts are typically much smaller and less well suited to solely fund large infrastructure

North Dakota state grants

- North Dakota's state government has a website, with pages for each office that often include grant program opportunity information and announcements: Community Services | Commerce | North Dakota
- Some DOE agencies also include information and resources on incentives and other opportunities available by state, such as the Alternative Fuels Data Center here: Alternative Fuels Data Center: North Dakota Laws and Incentives

State Energy Program

The State Energy Program (SEP) promotes energy efficiency and conservation and is

Energy Conservation Grant

The Energy Conservation Grant, administered by the Division of

Ethanol Production Incentive

The Ethanol Production Incentive has been replaced with the Ethanol/Low Carbon Fuel Fund

Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant

In 2024, the US Department of Energy (DOE) provided grant funds

Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund

Funded by a grant from the US Department of Energy, the State of

Home Energy Rebate Program

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has established requirements for the Home Energy Rebate

South Dakota state grants

- South Dakota does not have a department-wide site for grant announcements, but the Governor's Office of Economic Development often announces funding or incentives for infrastructure: South Dakota Local Infrastructure Improvement Program - South Dakota
- The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources has some environmentally focused opportunities that could apply to renewables, EVs, etc: South Dakota Air Quality - Clean Diesel Program
- The South Dakota Utilities Commission has some resources: Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Tax Incentives
- Think creatively beyond project type to potential

Minnesota state grants

- Minnesota's Department of Commerce runs a webpage that is regularly updates for federal opportunities for energy funding: Energy-Specific Funding Opportunities / Minnesota Department of Commerce - Energy, as well as state grants for funding Request for Proposals (RFP) / Minnesota Department of Commerce - Business

Title Electric School Buses: Application for Vehicles and Equipment

Reference Number COMM-ESB04-20250811

Publication Date 8/11/2025

Description of Work

The Minnesota Department of Commerce seeks proposals to purchase and begin operations of electric school buses for the student transportation needs of eli districts throughout Minnesota. This grant program is for applicants to fund electric school buses and needed charging infrastructure to serve eligible school dis RFP will be posted publicly online beginning Monday, August 11, 2025, and will close Tuesday, October 7, at 5pm CST.

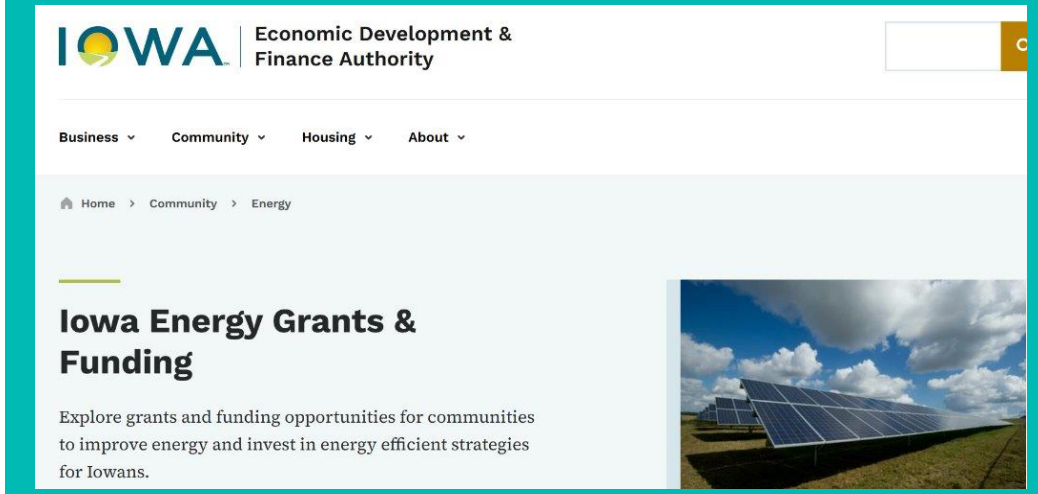
Download the RFP for more information and to access the grant portal to complete and submit a proposal. Please see important deadlines below.

Deadlines - RFP Issued: Monday, August 11, 2025

- Q & A Period Begins: Tuesday, August 12, 2025
- Q & A Period Ends: Tuesday, September 23, 2025
- Last Q & A Posted: Tuesday, September 30, 2025
- Applications Due: Tuesday, October 7, 2025
- Anticipated Notification: Mid-November 2025
- Anticipated Full Execution & Work Begins: December 2025

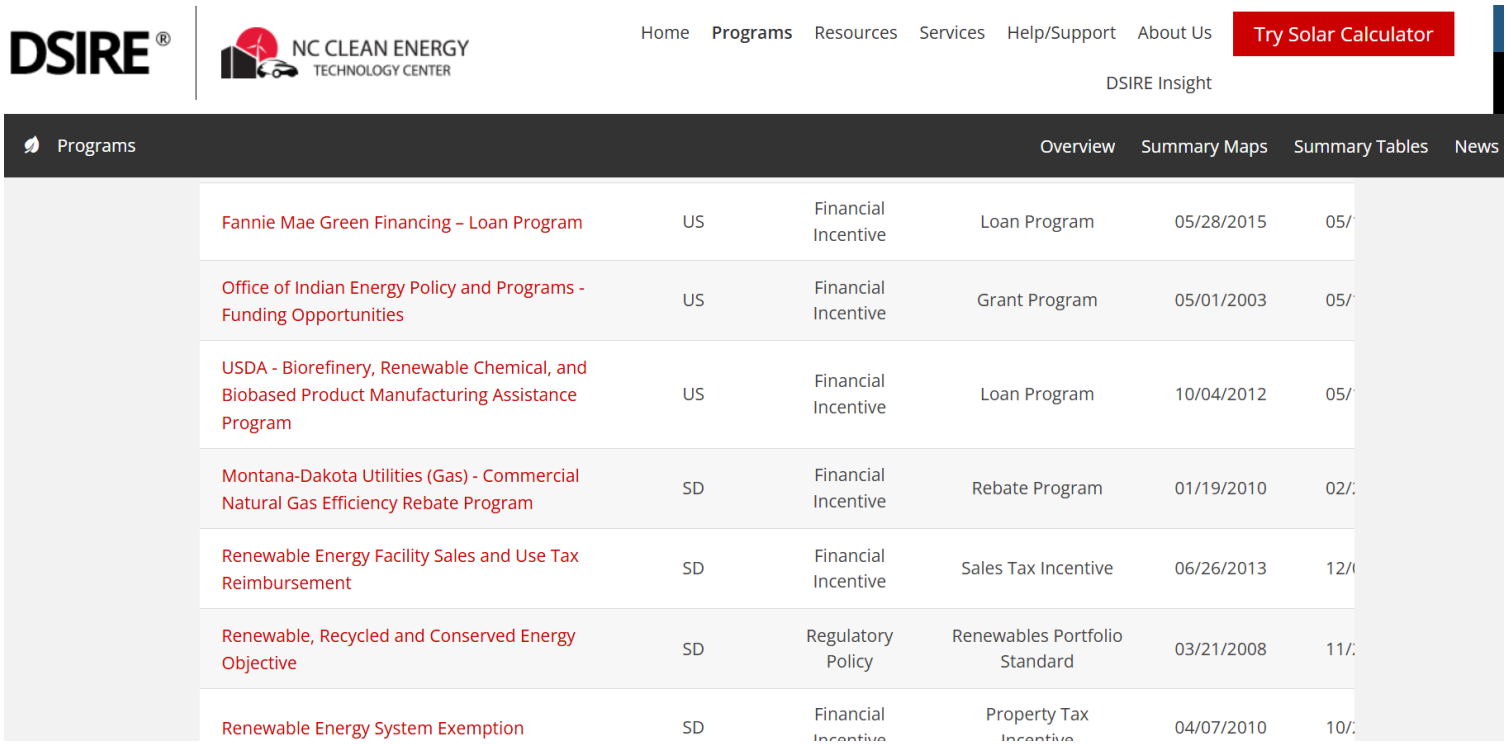
Iowa state grants

- Check out the Economic Development & Finance Authority's page for state energy grants and funding:Iowa Energy Grants & Funding | Economic Development & Finance Authority
- You can also subscribe to their newsletter on federal funding updates that impact the state: Iowa Energy and Infrastructure Funding Hub – The Iowa Energy & Infrastructure Funding Hub provides updates and information on how to access key Federal programs available to Iowans



RESEARCHING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Database for State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (DSIRE)



- Run by the NC Clean Energy Technology Center, DSIRE is the "most comprehensive source of information on incentives and policies that support renewables and energy efficiency in the United States"
- It compiles information on state grants, loans, tax credits, rebates, and other incentives
- It is searchable by state, incentive type, and program name

County & community foundations

- Typically need a 501(c)(3) non-profit status to apply
- Orient projects around community-driven missions for economic development, community development, etc.
- Serve states, regions, or counties depending on the foundation

Northwest Minnesota FOUNDATION

Donors & Giving | **Grants & Scholarships** | Business Support & Loans

Open grants

NMF provides the following listing of grant opportunities offered through our family of funds, as well as own mission-

- **GREENBUSH AREA COMMUNITY FUND**
- **TWIN VALLEY-GARY AREA COMMUNITY FUND AND JOSEPH URDAHL MEMORIAL FUND**
- **HUBBARD COUNTY COALITION OF LAKE ASSOCIATIONS**
- **PROMISE ACT: ROUND 2**

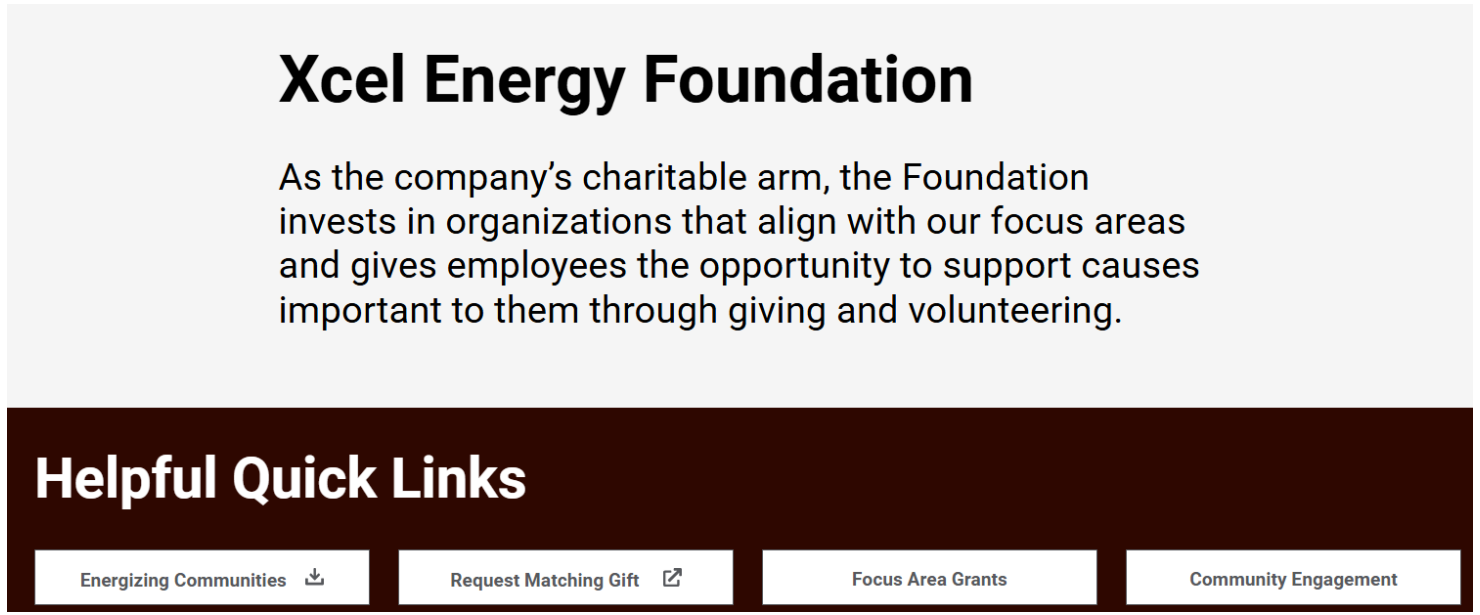
NDCF NORTH DAKOTA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Receive

Grant Programs & How to Apply

Private foundations

- Typically need a 501(c)(3) non-profit status to apply
- Private foundations or corporate foundations
- Orient projects around community-driven missions for economic development, community development, etc. Some directly address energy needs, renewables or efficiency in these priorities
- Serve more local regions and communities where there is a physical presence
- Can be invitation only



Databases & tools for non-federal funding

- There are numerous subscription services for non-federal funding sources and announcements, including Instrumentl and GrantStation
- Publicly available options include Candid (Research nonprofits, funders, and grants | Candid) and search engines using key words or alerts
- Foundation Directory Online can be available through local library subscriptions.
  - This tool is unique in that you can search organizations like yours and see which foundations have funded their projects, as well as searching specific foundations for missions and service populations.

Identifying strong prospects

Grant opportunity vetting

The process of examining a potential funding opportunity to determine whether your entity and project fit the announcement's funding priorities. Vetting optimizes effort and increases grant application success.

Questions to ask:

- Is your organization eligible for the opportunity?
- Type of grant: competitive vs. non-competitive?
- Does the funding maximum and minimum meet your needs?
- Does the grant require a match or cost share?
- Do the funding priorities meet your needs?
- How competitive is this grant? Consider total funding versus number of anticipated awards.
- How much work will the application take? And when is the deadline?

Grant opportunity vetting (Con't.)

South Dakota Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources

SECRETARY'S OFFICE CONTACT US STATE FAIR PRESS

AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES RESOURCE CONSERVATION & FORESTRY FINANCE & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OFF

CLEAN DIESEL GRANT PROGRAM

DANR Announces Round 17

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announces Round 17 of funding under the South Dakota Clean Diesel Grant Program. There is approximately $571,450 of Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) funds, $380,967 of VW category 10 DERA funds, any leftover funds from round 16, and additional VW category 2 bus funds available for the projects. *Note - a project funded with DERA funds cannot also be funded with any other federal funds unless expressly allowed by the other federal program.

The program provides rebates to assist in purchasing new buses to replace old, high-emitting diesel buses. The primary goals of the programs are to reduce your school children's exposure to both fine particulate and smog-forming pollution and to facilitate the improvement and protection of the ambient air quality throughout South Dakota.

The South Dakota programs will provide rebates to help public schools, non-public schools, state special schools, other educational programs, shuttle or transit system providers, and school bus contractors purchase new buses to replace old, high-emitting, diesel buses. Total rebate per replacement bus will be up to 25% of the purchase price of a new bus with an engine certified to EPA emission standards, 35% of the purchase price of a new bus with an engine certified to meet CARB's Low-NOx standards, or 45% of the purchase price of a zero tailpipe emissions bus. DANR intends to award funds to as many eligible applicants throughout the state as possible.

FORMS (Note: If the Word document does not open for you, try the save option instead.)

Tentative Schedule for October 2024 - September 2025

Date	Activity
November 4, 2024	Call for Round 17 Projects Opens
December 13, 2024	Call for Round 17 Projects Deadline
December 16, 2024 - January 3, 2025	Evaluate Select Round 17 Projects
January 8, 2025	Post Round 17 Selected Projects List. Email rebate agreements to selected applicants.
January 2025 - April 2025	Recipients will order buses and email DANR copies of purchase orders.
September 2025	Deadline for all invoices and paperwork to be submitted to DANR for Round 17.

Section 1 – Introduction

The primary goal of the South Dakota Clean Diesel Rebate Program is to reduce school children's exposure to fine particulate and smog-forming pollution; and the primary goal of South Dakota's VW Environmental Mitigation Trust is to facilitate the improvement and protection of the ambient air quality throughout South Dakota. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) administers these programs. The programs provide rebates to help purchase new buses that replace older in-use higher emitting diesel buses to reduce diesel particulate matter and smog-forming emissions.

Program information will be posted on the Clean Diesel Grant Program website at https://danr.sd.gov/Environment/AirQuality/CleanDieselProgram/default.aspx. For additional information, please contact: **South Dakota's Clean Diesel Program** at 1-800-GET-DENR (1-800-438-3367) or barb.regynski@state.sd.us.

Section 2 – Background

While South Dakota's air quality is cleaner than many states and currently meets the federal National Ambient Air Quality Standards, reducing emissions from diesel engines is one of the most important air quality challenges facing the country. The South Dakota programs provide rebates to help public schools, non-public schools, state special schools, approved educational programs, shuttle or transit system providers, and school bus contractors purchase new buses to replace old, high-emitting, diesel buses.

Buses are a safe and effective way to transport children, the elderly, and others; but they emit pollution. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), exposure to diesel exhaust, even at low levels, is a health hazard that can aggravate respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis and possibly increase the risk of lung damage.

Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of diesel exhaust since their lungs are not yet fully developed, and they breathe twice as much air as adults per pound of body weight. Diesel fuel contains 40 chemicals listed as hazardous air pollutants under the federal Clean Air Act. You don't have to ride the bus to breathe in these fumes. The air quality in and around bus stops is compromised by idling buses during drop off and pick up, exposing not only the riders, but also those outside the bus to unhealthy diesel emissions.

Purchasing newer buses with better emissions controls is a health benefit to the passengers and to the environment by helping keep the air in South Dakota clean.

Section 3 - Eligible Participants

South Dakota public schools, non-public schools, state special schools, other educational programs, shuttle or transit system providers, and school bus contractors that provide transportation services are eligible to participate.

Section 4 - Eligible Projects

DANR will provide a rebate for the incremental cost of a newer, cleaner bus up to 25% of the purchase price of an EMY 2023 or newer engine certified to EPA emission standards, 35% of the purchase price of an EMY 2023 or newer engine certified to meet CARB's Low-NOx Standards, or 45% of the purchase price of an, zero tailpipe emissions replacement vehicle.

For replacements, the engine being replaced must be scrapped or rendered permanently disabled. Drilling a three-inch hole in the engine block and disabling the chassis is the preferred scrapping method. The replacement vehicle must not be in a larger weight class than the existing vehicle.

No funds used under this program shall be used to cover expenses incurred prior to the project period set forth in any assistance agreement. Projects may include the diesel emissions source types defined below:

School Buses	Includes diesel powered school buses of Type A, B, C and D. A "school bus" is defined as a passenger motor vehicle designed to carry a driver and more than 10 passengers, that the Secretary of Transportation decides is likely to be used significantly to transport preprimary, primary, and secondary school students to or from school or an event related to school.
Transit Buses	Includes Class 5+ diesel powered medium-duty and heavy-duty transit buses. Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) as defined below: Class 5 (16,001 -19,500 lbs GVWR); Class 6 (19,501 -26,000 lbs GVWR); Class 7 (26,001 -33,000 lbs GVWR); Class 8 (33,001 lbs GVWR and over)

Projects must include bus replacement. Buses can be replaced with newer, cleaner vehicles. Eligible replacement vehicles include those powered by diesel or clean alternative fuel engines (including gasoline), hybrid engines, and zero tailpipe emissions power sources.

Read the grant guidance/announcement carefully

Grant guidance documents – called Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs), or Requests for Proposals (RFPs), etc. = the textbook for the grant. This is an incredibly important document that provides guidance on the grant opportunity, including the grant's history, purpose, required sections, supporting documents, and deadlines. A NOFO may also be accompanied by separate instructions.

Pay Close Attention to:

- Deadlines – these are FIRM
- How to apply – email or grant portal
- Scoring criteria/application sections
- Required documents (often a good place to start)
- Key words and phrases and/or special priorities
- Create an outline/template and a checklist to keep yourself on track

Guidelines and Applications (PDF) or (DOCX)

Checklist for Bus Replacement Application (PDF) or (DOCX)

Bus Replacement Application (PDF) or (DOCX)

Request for Reimbursement Form (PDF) or (DOCX)

Certificate of Disposal Form (PDF) or (DOCX)

Example Disposal Photos (PDF) or (DOCX)

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Read the grant guidance carefully (cont.)

Section 8 – Program Application Process

The application and program participation process is as follows:

1. Program applications are attached to this document and are also available from the website at https://danr.sd.gov/Environment/AirQuality/CleanDieselProgram/default.aspx
2. Applications must be submitted to DANR by 5:00 PM, December 13, 2024, for initial consideration. Applications are to be submitted by email to barb.regynski@state.sd.us or by mail to:
   Bus Rebate Programs
   SD DANR – AQ Program
   523 E Capitol
   Pierre, SD 57501
3. DANR will evaluate applications.
4. DANR will post selection list.
5. Selected applicants will be emailed rebate agreements.

Section 9 – Program Requirements

Successful project applicants must enter into an agreement with DANR setting forth specific performance criteria to ensure compliance with statutory and audit requirements. Agreement preparation will begin immediately upon DANR selection of a project. The agreement will include further details on complying with program requirements. All services or work carried out under an agreement awarded as a result of this call for projects must be completed within the scope, time frames, and funding limitations specified by the agreement. Upon signature and execution of the agreement by DANR, a copy of the executed agreement will be returned to the applicant, at which time the project will be considered awarded.

Replacement Bus Requirements

- Ordering of new buses may not occur prior to both parties signing the agreement. Rebates will be made on a reimbursement basis for eligible expenses incurred and paid by the recipient. A cost may not be considered incurred until the replacement bus has been received and accepted by the recipient.
- Program funds must only be used to purchase a bus that is equipped with essential or standard equipment.
- The applicant must submit a copy of the Purchase Order to DANR.
- The applicant must ensure that the replaced bus is permanently disabled or scrapped and maintain documentation on how the replaced bus was permanently disabled or scrapped.
- The applicant must provide DANR with an original Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification Form W-9. A copy of the IRS Form W-9 can be downloaded at www.irs.gov or by calling 1-800-829-3676.
- The applicant submits a Request for Reimbursement Form, evidence of final bus purchase price, Certificate of Disposal Form, photographic evidence of disposal, and if requesting the 35% rebate, a copy of the engine certificate showing it meets CARB's Low-NOx Standards. DANR will review the information for compliance with all grant requirements.
- Rebate will be issued upon verification (documentation and/or DANR staff site visit).
- The applicant agrees that program criteria and requirements may be reviewed, as new information becomes available, and can be revised at the discretion of DANR.
- DANR maintains the right to monitor the project periodically.
- The applicant must maintain ownership of the replacement bus for three years after receipt of the rebate.

Section 10 - Verification Procedures

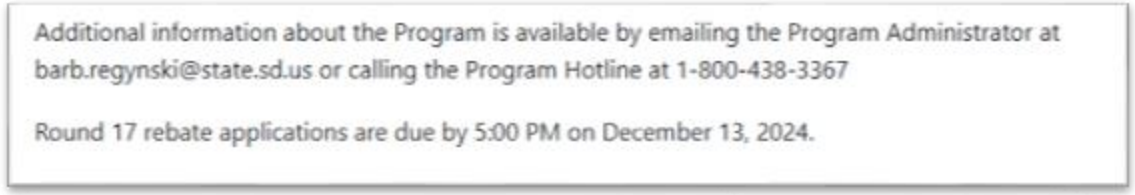
Any applicant that receives Bus Replacement Rebate Program funds may be subject to verification of each program or project funded. The verification may be conducted by staff from DANR and/or EPA. Grant documentation, records, and referenced materials must be available for review during monitoring visits.

Upon the completion of verification, DANR will determine if the funds were used for the approved project and make the verification available to the applicant and to the public upon request.

If DANR determines that the funds were expended in a manner contrary to law or not in accordance with provisions, DANR will notify the applicant of the determination, and may, at its discretion, seek re-payment of funds misappropriated, spent for non-eligible activities, or otherwise inappropriately expended.

Ask questions and use your resources

- The appropriate points of contact are listed in the guidance
- Connect with key stakeholders to leverage all networks
- Find a list of previous grant awards – many funders will have these listed on their website or will have a record of announcements
- Some programs have technical assistance
- Set up a meeting with the awarding program/agency, especially if it's philanthropic/private funding


Additional information about the Program is available by emailing the Program Administrator at barb.regynski@state.sd.us or calling the Program Hotline at 1-800-438-3367

Round 17 rebate applications are due by 5:00 PM on December 13, 2024.

- Take advantage of offered assistance, such as draft feedback

Differences between types of grants

Federal	State	Private/Philanthropic
• Larger awards • Much more competitive • Complicated application processes • More complex compliance requirements • Politically influenced & align with administration priorities • Looking for bigger impacts • Combination of narratives & forms – templates not always provided	• Typically less competitive than federal grants • Often includes a financial and organizational review prior to grant award • Politically influenced & vary drastically by state • Sometimes federal passthrough funds & subject to both state & federal requirements • Can be underfunded or inconsistent • Often provides templates	• More flexible funding • Relationship based • Easier application processes • Often smaller award sizes • More focused on grassroots and start ups • Less predictable • Often provides templates • Not always available to public entities – more common in non-profit spaces

Consider diversifying your capital stacks – with some limitations, you can creatively combine different types of grant funding along with loans and tax credits to support larger initiatives

What do funders look for?

- Meets basic eligibility
- Aligns with mission & priorities
- Clarity & quality of the proposal
- Budget & cost-effectiveness
- Impact & plan to evaluate that impact
- Organizational capacity & experience
- Innovation & scalability

Evaluation metrics & merit criteria

b. **Readiness Path projects**

For Readiness Path projects, EDA will apply the evaluation criteria with each category weighted equally:

1. **Disaster Recovery and Community Need** – *How well do you understand the community's disaster recovery needs?*
   a. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates an understanding of the damage and economic impacts in the region due to the eligible natural disaster and pre-disaster economic conditions in the area.
   b. The extent to which the applicant has a preliminary idea of the post-disaster assets and interventions that could address disaster recovery in the region.
   c. The degree of economic distress experienced in the project area.
2. **Project Strategy** – *How well does your project address your capacity needs to better prepare you to meet the community's needs in the future?*
   a. The extent to which the proposal clearly identifies **how** the proposed activities prepare and increase capacity in the applicant organization or the region to identify, implement, and secure future funding for disaster recovery.
   b. The extent to which the project demonstrates strong community engagement including the responsiveness to public feedback and subsequent support from regional stakeholders (private, public, and nonprofit entities, etc.) so that the needs of all affected communities are considered in strategy development.
   c. The project's alignment with the regional CEDS or other CEDS equivalent EDA-accepted economic development strategy, including the extent to which the project is aligned with and integrated into other public or private investments currently ongoing or planned for the community and region. Note: this criterion is not applicable to Readiness projects for Strategy Development that propose foundational planning in regions that do not currently have a CEDS or CEDS equivalents.

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- The grant guidance will likely include a section that outlines the review process and what evaluation metrics, or merit criteria will be used to score each application
- Merit Criteria = what makes your grant proposal "good" and worth funding
- Review these PRIOR to determining go/no-go and writing the application to determine your competitiveness and to help you focus on what is most important

Considering match requirements

Cost share, also known as “non-grant share” or “match,” is the portion of the costs of a grant assisted project or program not covered by the grant program

Each program outlines specific grant and non-grant share requirements

20%-50% non-grant share of total project costs has been a common range for DOE and many other grants for utilities and local governments

Determining the source for cost share should be an early priority in grant pursuit planning

You cannot use federal funds for one grant as the match for another federal grant. Often the same for state grants.

However, match can be supplied in a variety of other ways: in-kind support like salaries, supplies and equipment, cash match, partner or subrecipient support, and state or private grant

Some grants require cost share certifications. Engage leadership early to approve cost share sources and, if supplying a cash match, incorporate the planned spending in annual budgets relevant to the project.

Some grant programs provide funding upfront or during established intervals throughout the grant period. However, many distribute funding as reimbursements.

Writing grants for different audiences

Building a strong team

- Grant applications are not designed to be completed by one person, working alone. Make use of your available resources.
- Will you write these grants internally? Do you have a grant department on which to rely? Will you outsource the grant writing?
- To apply for a grant, leadership, SMEs, HR, finance and grant writers must all work together.
- Consider which internal staff members will be involved in executing the grant if it is awarded and involve them directly in the project planning and grant writing processes.
  - Who will be managing the project?
  - Implementing the technical work?
  - Performing financial management?
  - Hiring for new roles or procuring subcontractor services?
- You may need to indicate project leads and participants and provide resumes to demonstrate their expertise.

Aim for holistic project design

- **Grant programs are mission-driven.** They exist to meet needs in the communities they serve, but they also have clear goals, priority populations or geographies, and desired outcomes. Successful project design marries your needs with the program's goals.
- **Get creative with your storytelling** by translating technical outputs into short- and long-term impacts.
  - i.e., *Replacing this aging infrastructure will create more reliable power for 20,000 families. More reliable power will improve overall well-being and attract new economic opportunity to this underserved area.*
- **Consider what sets your project apart or makes it innovative.** Using new technologies? Building with materials that will improve climate resilience? Leveraging funds to finance the project in a unique way? Creating a model others in your region could adapt and use?

Consider the full grant lifecycle

COMMON REQUIREMENTS	
APPLICATION	**COMPLIANCE**
Project workplan	Performance (technical) reports
Budget narrative	Financial reports
Community benefits or public engagement plan	Public engagement evidence (meeting attendance/minutes, survey results, etc.)
Supporting documents	Impact data collection
Resumes	
Letters of support	
Indirect cost rate agreement	

Projecting timelines

- Most grant proposals require workplans with objectives and milestones or tasks. These workplans will become the blueprints for award performance reports and will also help determine yearly budgets for multi-year projects.
- Sit down with the staff who would be managing and/or implementing the project to get their input on the typical timeline and list of needed tasks to complete proposed work.
- It's tempting to load in as many project components as possible within the award ceiling but first consider if they can be completed and if they tell a cohesive story.

Write a persuasive grant proposal

Common project narrative sections:

- Executive summary
- Statement of need/problem statement
- Project goals & objectives
- Project description & methodology & timeline
- Organizational background & capacity
- Outcomes & Metrics / Evaluation Plan
- Sustainability plan

Writing the grant (con't)

Author

You are the expert on your organization and your projects. Convince your audience of your expertise by writing a clear, persuasive, and thorough proposal.

Audience

Assume that the reviewers are well-educated but not necessarily experts in the field. Don't rely too heavily on technical jargon. Speak in plain language and explain foundational concepts.

Goal/Purpose

To persuade the reviewers that your organization has a need, that the project is sound and well-thought out, and that you have the expertise and administrative skill to complete the project.

Context

There is money that the granting agency has that they need to administer to eligible and competitive applicants.

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Think about and carefully develop

Needs statement

This is where you persuade the reviewers that you need funding. Focus on a clear message and compelling narrative. Tell a story and use data to support that story.

Goals

Broad, big picture, and connected to the mission of the organization. What you strive to achieve but will most likely not be able to accomplish entirely. The thing you are working toward and what keeps your organization going. Goals can be long-term and project specific. Sometimes an application will ask for both.

Objectives

Measurable steps your organization will take to work toward your goal. Objectives should be SMART: Specific, Measurement, Attainable, Results Oriented, and Time Bound. A good rule of thumb is 1-3 objectives per goal.

Outcomes

The change you expect to see as a result of achieving your objectives. Uses verbs like “increase” and “improve.” There will generally be one outcome for every objective. You can measure the success of outcomes with indicators (the measurable element of the objective).

Anticipating and addressing methods for overcoming challenges. Dynamic project management, such as plan-do-check-act.

Address grant priorities

- Grant opportunities often award extra points if the project meets certain grant priorities, such as addressing the unique needs of underserved populations or promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Design your projects to meet such priorities and be sure to specifically address how your project meets those priorities in the grant narrative.
- Be very clear and mirror the language of the grant guidance.
- Remember that reviewers will be reviewing several grant applications. Make yours extremely accessible for them to read. Clear headings and subheadings. Use bold font, underlining, and italics to emphasis important information.

Submitting the grant

- Before uploading the final grant files, be sure to re-read the NOFO and review your grant materials to ensure you have met all requirements, down to the most specific, such as font size, line spacing, and page limits.
- Proofread carefully. A well-written, error-free proposal communicates expertise.
- Send to the agency for review, if they are offering such guidance.
- Convert all files to PDF files prior to uploading into Grants.gov or another portal.
- Save all forms and final files for your records.
- Press submit & save the confirmation notice, which will include the application tracking number.
- Make sure that the application shows as submitted & received.
- Note when the program expects to deliver decisions. Sometimes the NOFO will have this information. Sometimes you need to ask the grant agency. It usually takes months.

Remember

- If your initial grant application is not awarded funding, request feedback, if not already provided
- Develop a strategy for improving the project and application
- Apply again next year
  - Many grant programs are announced annually or at other predetermined intervals
- Resubmitting an application to a grant program means less lift and a higher chance of pay off

Questions?

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