



Remote/Virtual Energy Audit Challenge

Program Opportunity Notice (PON) 4423
\$1,000,000 Available

NYSERDA reserves the right to extend and/or add funding to the Solicitation should other program funding sources become available.

Proposals Due June 9, 2021 by 3:00 PM Eastern Time*

Program Summary:

Under the Climate Leadership and Communities Protection Act (CLCPA) of 2019, New York State has established some of the nation's most aggressive energy efficiency and decarbonization goals. While energy efficiency field work has re-opened after the NY PAUSE resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, NYSERDA seeks to support the efficiency industry by partnering with the home improvement and energy efficiency industry to assist in developing viable approaches for remote and virtual residential energy audits and supporting tools and platforms that will stimulate market activity and improve consumer engagement. For the purposes of this funding opportunity, the following definitions are established:

- **Remote Audit:** Auditors conduct building assessments remotely by engaging with customers using tools such as online screening surveys with customer entered data, video conferencing, phone interviews, photos, etc.
- **Virtual Audit:** Software that collects and analyzes remotely available data sets to prospect for leads, develop a building model, prescreen customers, and/or develop preliminary energy efficiency recommendations.

This solicitation seeks to test tools and approaches in both categories.

Through this initiative, NYSERDA will support the development of safer work practices in the post-COVID-19 era by funding the deployment and testing of remote-access and no-touch energy auditing strategies in the market.

Remote and virtual energy audit product and service providers are invited to apply for acceleration grants up to \$200,000 to support rapidly scaling the deployment of these strategies in the market.

Proposals will be accepted in accordance to the following instructions.

Online submission is preferable. Proposers may submit Word, Excel, or PDF files (file formats include csv, doc, docx, gif, jpeg, jpg, pdf, png, ppt, pptx, pps, ppsx, tif, txt, xls, xlsx, and zip). Individual files should be 100MB or less in file size. Proposal PDFs should be searchable and should be created by direct conversion from MS Word, or other conversion utility. Files should not be scanned. For ease of identification, all electronic files must be named using the proposer's entity name in the title of the document. NYSERDA will also accept proposals by mail or hand-delivery if online submission is not possible. For detailed instructions on how to submit a proposal (online or paper submission), click the link "[Application Instructions and Portal Training Guide \[PDF\]](#)" located in the "Current Opportunities" section of NYSERDA's website (<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Funding-Opportunities/Current-Funding-Opportunities.aspx>).

No communication intended to influence this procurement is permitted except by contacting Bill Keating (Designated Contact) at (518) 862-1090, ext.3089 or by e-mail bill.keating@nyserda.ny.gov (for technical questions). If you have contractual questions concerning this solicitation, contact Elsyda Sheldon (Designated Contact) at (518) 862-1090,

ext.3232 or by e-mail at elsydasolicitations@nyserda.ny.gov. Contacting anyone other than the Designated Contacts (either directly by the proposer or indirectly through a lobbyist or other person acting on the proposer's behalf) in an attempt to influence the procurement: (1) may result in a proposer being deemed a non-responsible offerer, and (2) may result in the proposer not being awarded a contract. * **All proposals must be received by 3pm Eastern Time on the date noted above. Late, faxed, or emailed proposals will not be accepted.** Incomplete proposals may be subject to disqualification. It is the proposer's responsibility to ensure that all pages have been included in the proposal. Please note for online submission, there are required questions that you will have to answer in addition to uploading attachments and you should allot at least 60 minutes to enter/submit proposals. The online proposal system closes promptly at 3pm Eastern Time, files in process or attempted edits or submission after 3pm Eastern Time on the date above, will not be accepted. If changes are made to this solicitation, notification will be posted on the "Current Opportunities" section of NYSERDA's website (<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Funding-Opportunities/Current-Funding-Opportunities.aspx>).

I. INTRODUCTION

Objectives

The **goals** of the Remote/Virtual Energy Audit Challenge are two-fold:

- In the short-term NYSERDA seeks to support contractors and homeowners in identifying efficiency opportunities using methods that reduce time, effort, and in-person contact.
- In the long-term NYSERDA aims to establish a standardized remote energy audit and customer engagement approach which can be used in the future to rapidly scale delivery of energy audits and improve customer engagement process to put homeowners statewide on the path to a clean energy future. This initiative will provide valuable insights and experience to inform the development of processes, systems, and program designs to support that goal.

The initiative seeks to fund multiple projects to address the following **key issues**:

- Determine what types of tools and platforms work best to support remote/virtual auditing strategies across a range of use cases including lead generation, customer acquisition, pre-assessments, virtual assessments, and remote sales.
- Assess the viability and efficacy of a variety of remote customer engagement strategies including online survey tools, phone surveys, digital photographs, video calls, etc.
- Assess the usability, accuracy of measure recommendations resulting from virtual auditing tools and predictive models, and their effectiveness at driving consumer decision-making.
- Provide insights for program process, and systems modifications to support the evolution of New York State's residential programs and achievement of our clean energy, affordability, and environmental equity goals.
- Identify opportunities for future investments to support wide-scale deployment of remote customer engagement and energy auditing and alignment with other efforts to streamline and simplify NYSERDA's processes.
- Develop and test strategies to coordinate with New York State's electric and gas utilities and their customer engagement processes to support remote lead generation for energy efficiency and clean energy projects by providing actionable information to their customers.

Acceleration Grants

In this solicitation, NYSERDA seeks market-ready solutions to accelerate deployment of virtual and remote auditing tools at scale. Market-ready solutions include products that are currently available and can be used as is (i.e. "off the shelf"), or are readily adaptable to meet the needs of the New York market for the proposed project with minimal investment in tool, software, or product development. Funding is available to entities offering tools, products, and services that support remote data collection, virtual energy audits and pre-assessments, and remote sales of energy efficiency and clean energy solutions for residential market.

Proposed solutions are not required to encompass all aspects of a traditional comprehensive energy audit. Solutions may consist of a pre-assessment, data-driven analysis, remote customer engagement or other components that result

in leading customers at scale to actionable recommendations that lead to sales of energy efficiency and clean energy home improvements.

Under this funding opportunity, NYSERDA will provide individual acceleration grants up to \$200,000 for projects that will assist companies in rapidly scaling adoption of remote/virtual energy audit strategies and that lead to sales of energy efficiency and clean energy home improvements in one-to four- family homes. Acceleration grants are meant to support in-market testing of existing tools and deployment strategies with high potential to provide consumers with actionable information about their homes and connect them with qualified contractors rapidly and at scale. Acceleration grants are not intended to be used for software development or market research, nor to fund marginal enhancements to existing operations or products without demonstrating how these modification will directly drive an increase in providing customers with actionable recommendations at scale that lead to clean energy home improvements.

It is anticipated that multiple organizations will receive acceleration grants under this PON. Teaming arrangements and utility partnerships are encouraged. Proposals with firm partnership commitments will be scored more favorably than those that include speculative partnership arrangements. Letters of commitment from proposed partners are encouraged to be included in the proposal package and will not count toward any page limits indicated below.

Projects must be focused on remote and no-touch strategies and should be designed to address the below listed objectives. A detailed description of how Objective 1 would be accomplished is a requirement. Projects that successfully address the other objectives will be ranked higher in the competitive selection process. Responses will be judged based on how well the proposed approach will support meeting the objective(s) identified by the proposer for the project and the reasonableness of the rationale describing the project's potential impact on the desired objective(s). It is not necessary to respond to all four objectives.

- **Objective 1 REQUIRED**– Accelerate market adoption of clean energy solutions (including installation of energy efficiency improvements and heat pump technologies)
- **Objective 2** – Reduce soft costs associated with customer acquisition, work-scope development, bidding/estimating, and closing sales
- **Objective 3** – Increase customer lead-to-sales conversion rates for energy efficiency and clean energy programs and contractors
- **Objective 4** – Promote peak demand and load reduction strategies in addition to reduced energy consumption

The subsequent sections of this PON are as follows:

- II. Program Requirements
- III. Proposal Requirements
- IV. Proposal Evaluation
- V. General Conditions
- VI. Attachments

II. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Acceleration grant recipients will be required, at a minimum, to provide interim and final reports including updates on project progress, milestones achieved, challenges encountered and recommended solutions, and metric reporting and progress toward goals; as well as any other agreed upon deliverables as described in the final contract.

Available Funding, Awards, and Cost Sharing

Up to \$1,000,000 of NYSERDA funding is available through this solicitation. All, some, or none, of the available funds may be awarded. NYSERDA reserves the right to add or reduce time to awarded contracts, add, or reduce funding to awarded contracts, or both.

The awards will be structured as grants with no recoupment obligation to the recipient company. Award proceeds will be paid out on the basis of negotiated milestones. A final payment may be reserved until project completion. If awarded, NYSERDA may choose to negotiate the amount of such payment. Successful proposers will be required to provide cost

sharing. At least 30% of the total project cost is required. The proposer's cost share may be cash or in-kind and may come from the proposer itself or partner organizations. Cost share is valued by NYSERDA not only as a sharing of its financial risk, but also as a tangible commitment on the part of the proposer to the project's success. Consequently, cash from the proposer is the preferred form of cost share. Proposals that fail to meet the cost-share requirement may be disqualified.

Exceptions to Terms and Conditions

In order to ensure NYSERDA is timely with the procurement and contracting of awards under this PON NYSERDA will not allow any exceptions to NYSERDA's standard terms and conditions in the Sample Agreement. All proposers should review these standard terms and conditions in detail before deciding to move forward with a proposal to ensure they do not have any exceptions with them. NYSERDA will terminate contract negotiations with any proposers selected for funding that attempt to retroactively negotiate the terms and conditions during the contracting process.

III. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Through this PON NYSERDA welcomes proposals to support the energy efficiency and clean heating industries to assist in developing viable approaches for remote and virtual residential energy audits that stimulate market activity and improve consumer engagement.

Such proposals must lay out a set of activities ("Scope of Work") that will enable more rapid deployment and expanded market penetration of the proposed solution supporting accelerated adoption of remote/virtual energy audits in New York State.

Proposers should concisely present the information needed to fully address the Proposal Evaluation criteria in Section IV. Proposals that exceed the page limits or fail to follow the format guidelines provided in this section may be rejected as non-responsive. A proposer who believes proprietary information must be submitted to provide an adequate proposal must comply with the Section V instructions for submitting proprietary material.

Proposals should not be excessively long or submitted in an elaborate format. Unnecessary attachments beyond those sufficient to present a complete, comprehensive, and effective proposal may reduce, rather than increase, a proposal's standing per the evaluation criteria. Each page of the proposal should state the name of the proposer, the PON number, and the page number. The proposal must be in the prescribed format, with items in the sequence shown, as appropriate for the funding category under which it is submitted.

State Finance Law Compliance

In compliance with §139-j and §139-k of the State Finance Law (see Section V, General Conditions below for additional information), proposers will be required to answer questions during proposal submission, which will include making required certification under the State Finance Law and to disclose any Prior Findings of Non-Responsibility.

Request for Exception from Public Disclosure

If the proposal includes proprietary or confidential information, a request to except it from disclosure, including a written statement of the reasons why the information should be excepted, should be provided. The proprietary or confidential information should be marked as such within the narrative of the proposal, and the request for exception should refer specifically to this information. See Section V for more detail.

Proposals should provide a narrative that consists of the following sections.

- 1. Executive Summary** – Briefly summarize the proposal by describing the offering and how it addresses market barriers to the deployment remote/virtual energy audits. Briefly describe a demonstrated transaction or use case that provides validity for the proposed approach. Indicate how proceeds of an award will be used and quantify the potential for growing the market for remote/virtual energy audits. **(Limit: 2 pages)**

2. Demonstrated Remote/Virtual Audit Approach – Describe the proposed approach in some detail; indicate how the approach will use “no touch” techniques and provide a detailed description of a real transaction that reveals how the approach works successfully. **(Limit: 8 pages)**

- Describe and, if applicable, quantify the projected impact on each of the key objective categories of the proposed remote/virtual energy audit approach.
 - Objective 1 (Required): Market adoption rates for energy efficiency and clean energy solutions
 - Objective 2: Transactional soft costs
 - Objective 3: Lead-to-sales conversion rates
 - Objective 4: Peak demand and load reduction
- Quantify how long the proposed product or service has been in market, the annual growth of contractors/customer using the product or service and annual company revenue associated with the proposed product or service.
- Describe how customers are made aware of the product/service.
- Describe how the product/service will accelerate the adoption of energy efficiency improvements and clean energy solutions in homes.
- Describe your plan to facilitate partnering with the contractor community and/or NYS utilities as part of the proposed project and provide a list of any past or current energy efficiency contractors and utility partners.
- Describe a plan for replicating and scaling of the proposed product or service beyond the grant period.
- Describe the business model, transaction costs and contractor /customer value proposition of the proposed approach.

3. Market Opportunity and Potential for Scaling – Describe and size the potential market for the proposed remote/virtual energy audit offer. **(Limit: 2 pages)**

- Indicate total available market for your offerings based on the proposing company’s current value propositions. Indicate the available market that the proposing company can reach through existing channels.
- Describe the tasks the proposing company must execute to expand the available market.
- Provide a monthly projection of the number of remote/virtual audits to be completed and the number of audits expected to result in home energy upgrades using the proposed approach. Explain who delivers the remote/virtual audit results to the customer (for example, but not limited to, residential contractors) and how many of those service providers are needed to meet your customer projections.

4. Team Qualifications – Identify and describe the team, highlighting areas of strength and its completeness to execute the business model. **(Limit: 2 pages plus individual bios or resumes)**

- Describe the proposing company and its existing business. Indicate company age, revenues, and key customers.
- Describe how the proposing company has successfully partnered with utilities, contractors, or other relevant market actors in the past.
- Provide a biography of company key executives and team members responsible for executing the business plan. Highlight any experience in the clean energy industry and in the segments that the company is targeting.
- Provide third-party substantiation of the strength of the management team, for example, any awards or endorsements, or investment in the company by institutional or strategic investors.

5. Scope of Work, Budget, Cost Sharing, Reporting and Milestones

Provide a description of tasks that apply to NYSERDA funding. This will form the basis of a contractual Statement of Work. **(Limit: 1 page per task)**

- Describe the tasks that would be financially supported by any award of funds under this solicitation.
- Describe how these tasks will enable the expansion of the business and the attendant greater deployment of remote/virtual energy audits.
- Indicate the total budget for each task, and provide a basis for that budget, such as hours and labor rate, cost of materials, etc. Break down the amount of NYSERDA funding that will be applied to each task and the amount of cost-sharing that will be applied. Indicate the source of the cost-sharing contribution on a

task-by-task basis. If such contribution is "in-kind", describe it and the basis for attaching a cash value to it.

- Proposers must provide a list of appropriate, verifiable milestones and deliverables that signify meaningful progress to be used to initiate the distribution of funds. Any NYSERDA funding awarded under this solicitation will be distributed on the basis of achieved milestones and deliverables.
- Cost Sharing – The proposal should show non-NYSERDA funding of at least 30% of the total cost of the project. Cost sharing can be from the proposer, other team members, and other government or private sources. Contributions of direct labor (for which the laborer is paid as an employee) and purchased materials may be considered "cash" contributions. Unpaid labor, indirect labor, or other general overhead may be considered "in-kind" contributions. NYSERDA will not pay for efforts which have already been undertaken. The proposer or proposing team cannot claim as cost-share any expenses that have already been incurred. Show the cost-sharing plan in the following format (expand table as needed):

	Cash	In-Kind Contribution	Total
NYSERDA	\$	\$	\$
Proposer	\$	\$	\$
Others (list individually)	\$	\$	\$
Total	\$	\$	\$

- Reporting - Proposers will provide a list of key performance indicators that could be used to evaluate the project's impact on the market. Final key performance indicators, metrics, milestones, deliverables, and the schedule for reporting will be agreed upon by both parties and described in the final contract. Include a schedule for when the key performance indicators will be measured and reported to NYSERDA. These key performance indicators will be used for impact evaluation purposes only and not for the purpose of triggering distribution of funding.

IV. PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Proposals that meet solicitation requirements will be reviewed by a Scoring Committee using the Evaluation Criteria below.

At NYSERDA's discretion, proposers may be requested to interview with all or part of the Scoring Committee to address any potential questions or clarifications outlined in the proposals, or provide demonstrations of tools, as applicable. Proposers will be notified if they are requested to attend an interview or provide a demonstration.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects proposed will be competitively selected based on the following scoring criteria:

- Use of remote (no touch) strategies (REQUIRED)
- Market-readiness of the remote/virtual audit technology being used where market-readiness is defined as the degree to which the product or service is fully developed, functional and ready to be introduced into the New York marketplace.
- Projected impact on the key objective categories:
 - Objective 1 (Required): Market adoption rates and scale of energy efficiency and clean energy solutions including targeted number of customers impacted, audits completed, participating contractors, and improvement project completions
 - Objective 2: Transactional soft costs
 - Objective 3: Lead-to-sales conversion rates

- Objective 4: Peak demand and load reduction
- Demonstrated ability of the proposed solution to motivate consumers to engage with contractors and take action to improve their homes
- Potential for replication and scaling of the product or service beyond the grant period
- Demonstrated ability of the vendor to partner with NYS utilities as part of the proposed project
- Demonstrated ability of vendor to partner with the contractor community to complete energy upgrades
- Proposing organizations qualifications and experience in the energy efficiency industry
- Cost-effectiveness of the approach
- Leveraging of funds/resources and cost-share proposal
- Clear explanation on how grant funds will be used to accelerate market adoption of clean energy home improvements

Program Policy Factors

NYSERDA reserves the right to accept or reject proposals based on the following factor(s):

- The degree to which pricing and hourly rates are in line with the rest of the market.
- The degree to which the proposed project, including proposed cost shares, optimizes the use of available funding to achieve programmatic objectives.
- Whether the proposed project will advance the goals of the State Energy Plan and the Clean Energy Fund.
- The degree to which the applicant has the resources (human and financial) to be able to complete the project.
- The degree to which there is significant potential impact of the technology development and implementation strategy, including whether the proposed project will accelerate transformational technological development and/or market deployment in areas that industry by itself is not likely to undertake because of technical and financial uncertainty.

V. GENERAL CONDITIONS

Proprietary Information - Careful consideration should be given before confidential information is submitted to NYSERDA as part of your proposal. Review should include whether it is critical for evaluating a proposal, and whether general, non-confidential information, may be adequate for review purposes.

The NYS Freedom of Information Law, Public Officers law, Article 6, provides for public access to information NYSERDA possesses. **Public Officers Law, Section 87(2)(d) provides for exceptions to disclosure for records or portions thereof that "are trade secrets or are submitted to an agency by a commercial enterprise or derived from information obtained from a commercial enterprise and which if disclosed would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of the subject enterprise."** Information submitted to NYSERDA that the proposer wishes to have treated as proprietary, and confidential trade secret information, should be identified, and labeled "Confidential" or "Proprietary" on each page at the time of disclosure. This information should include a written request to except it from disclosure, including a written statement of the reasons why the information should be excepted. See Public Officers Law, Section 89(5) and the procedures set forth in 21 NYCRR Part 501 <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/About/-/media/Files/About/Contact/NYSERDA-Regulations.ashx>. However, NYSERDA cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information submitted.

Omnibus Procurement Act of 1992 - It is the policy of New York State to maximize opportunities for the participation of New York State business enterprises, including minority- and women-owned business enterprises, as bidders, subcontractors, and suppliers on its procurement Agreements.

Information on the availability of New York subcontractors and suppliers is

available from: Empire State Development
Division for
Small
Business
625
Broadway
Albany, NY 12207

A directory of certified minority- and women-owned business enterprises is available from:

Empire State Development
Minority and Women's Business
Development Division 625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12207

State Finance Law sections 139-j and 139-k - NYSERDA is required to comply with State Finance Law sections 139-j and 139-k. These provisions contain procurement lobbying requirements which can be found at <https://online.ogs.ny.gov/legal/lobbyinglawfaq/default.aspx>. Proposers are required to answer questions during proposal submission, which will include making required certification under the State Finance Law and to disclose any Prior Findings of Non-Responsibility (this includes a disclosure statement regarding whether the proposer has been found non-responsible under section 139-j of the State Finance Law within the previous four years).

Tax Law Section 5-a - NYSERDA is required to comply with the provisions of Tax Law Section 5-a, which requires a prospective contractor, prior to entering an agreement with NYSERDA having a value in excess of \$100,000, to certify to the Department of Taxation and Finance (the "Department") whether the contractor, its affiliates, its subcontractors and the affiliates of its subcontractors have registered with the Department to collect New York State and local sales and compensating use taxes. The Department has created a form to allow a prospective contractor to readily make such

certification. See, ST-220-TD (available at http://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/current_forms/st/st220td_fill_in.pdf). Prior to contracting with NYSERDA, the prospective contractor must also certify to NYSERDA whether it has filed such certification with the Department.

The Department has created a second form that must be completed by a prospective contractor prior to contacting and filed with NYSERDA. See, ST-220-CA (available at http://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/current_forms/st/st220ca_fill_in.pdf). The Department has developed guidance for contractors which is available at <http://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/publications/sales/pub223.pdf>.

Contract Award - NYSERDA anticipates making one or more awards under this solicitation. NYSERDA anticipates a contract duration of approximately one year, unless NYSERDA management determines a different structure is more efficient based upon proposals received. A contract may be awarded based on initial applications without discussion, or following limited discussion or negotiations pertaining to the Statement of Work. Each proposal should be submitted using the most favorable cost and technical terms. NYSERDA may request additional data or material to support applications. NYSERDA will use the Sample Agreement to contract successful proposals. NYSERDA may at its discretion elect to extend and/or add funds to any project funded through this solicitation. NYSERDA reserves the right to limit any negotiations to exceptions to standard terms and conditions in the Sample Agreement to those specifically identified in the checklist questions. Proposers should keep in mind that acceptance of all standard terms and conditions will generally result in a more expedited contracting process. NYSERDA expects to notify proposers approximately 7 weeks from the proposal due date whether your proposal has been selected to receive an award. NYSERDA may decline to contract with awardees that are delinquent with respect to any obligation under any previous or active NYSERDA agreement.

Accessibility Requirements - If awardees from this solicitation will be posting anything on the web, or if the awardee will produce a final report that NYSERDA will post to the web, the following language must be included. NYSERDA requires contractors producing content intended to be posted to the Web to adhere to New York State's Accessibility Policy. This includes, but is not limited to, deliverables such as: documents (PDF, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, etc.), audio (.mp3, .wav, etc.), video (.mp4, .mpg, .avi, etc.), graphics (.jpg, .png, etc.), web pages (.html, .aspx, etc.), and other multimedia and streaming media content. For more information, see [NYSERDA's Accessibility Requirements](#).

Limitation - This solicitation does not commit NYSERDA to award a contract, pay any costs incurred in preparing a proposal, or to procure or contract for services or supplies. NYSERDA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, to negotiate with all qualified sources, or to cancel in part or in its entirety the solicitation when it is in NYSERDA's best interest. NYSERDA reserves the right to reject proposals based on the nature and number of any exceptions taken to the standard terms and conditions of the Sample Agreement. NYSERDA reserves the right to disqualify proposers based upon the results of a background check into publicly available information and the presence of a material possibility of any reputational or legal risk in making of the award.

Disclosure Requirement - The proposer shall disclose any indictment for any alleged felony, or any conviction for a felony within the past five years, under the laws of the United States or any state or territory of the United States and shall describe circumstances for each. When a proposer is an association, partnership, corporation, or other organization, this disclosure requirement includes the organization and its officers, partners, and directors or members of any similarly governing body. If an indictment or conviction should come to the attention of NYSERDA after the award of a contract, NYSERDA may exercise its stop-work right pending further investigation or terminate the agreement; the contractor may be subject to penalties for violation of any law which may apply in the particular circumstances. Proposers must also disclose if they have ever been debarred or suspended by any agency of the U.S. Government or the New York State Department of Labor.

VI.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Sample Agreement and Terms and Conditions

Attachment B – Sample Budget

Attachment C - Covid-19 Addendum