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## **General Information**

### **1. How do the GSA and DOE programs differ?**

The U.S. General Services Administration's Proving Ground (GPG) program and the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) both aim to provide actionable data to transform the market for sustainable, cost-effective, high impact building technologies.

The GPG program focuses on providing information that can inform investment decisions throughout GSA's real estate portfolio. GSA has jurisdiction over 1,500 federally owned real assets across the nation, spanning over 180 million rentable square feet. GPG leverages this portfolio to serve as a "proving ground" for promising emerging building technologies. When a technology is selected for evaluation, the program will match the technology with one or more federal buildings for real-world testing, and directly oversee its installation and evaluation. Findings from measurement and verification (M&V) through the program are intended to first and foremost provide deployment recommendations relative to GSA's building portfolio, which includes buildings that, on average, are larger and more energy efficient than the typical commercial building in the U.S.

DOE programs support the adoption of emerging and cost-effective building technologies through partnerships with the commercial buildings industry. DOE will facilitate matchmaking of technologies with commercial building partners (which may include privately owned buildings, federally owned buildings outside of GSA's jurisdiction, and institutional buildings), but will not directly provide the test bed in the same way that GSA does. DOE will support third party verification of technology performance, including a final technical report and case study to be deployed throughout DOE's stakeholder networks. For more information about each program, please visit [gsa.gov/gpg](https://gsa.gov/gpg) and [energy.gov/eere/office-energy-efficiency-renewable-energy](https://energy.gov/eere/office-energy-efficiency-renewable-energy).

### **2. Why are you issuing this RFI jointly?**

The issuance of the joint RFI demonstrates one way the U.S. government is committed to sustainability and interagency collaboration, following the February 2015 [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between GSA and DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE). By drawing from a single pool of applications, GSA and DOE can coordinate their program selections to streamline programmatic offerings for industry and to offer the greatest value to the federal government, the U.S. taxpayer, and the commercial building industry.

### **3. Can I be considered for both programs or only one?**

All applications will be reviewed by both GSA and DOE for their eligibility and suitability for each program. Applications may be selected for one program, both programs, or neither. If you believe your technology to be better suited for one program over the other, please include your preference and reasoning in your application.

### **4. Is it a requirement to be on GSA Schedule in order to apply to this RFI? Will GPG help a company get on schedule?**

No, being on schedule is not a requirement. Most technologies that have been selected for these programs were not on schedule when they were selected. GPG can provide you with resources to help you get on schedule during your evaluation or upon its conclusion.

**5. Are there any resources that potential applicants can use to see if their technology meets GSA or DOE's requirements prior to submitting an application?**

Please contact [gpg@gsa.gov](mailto:gpg@gsa.gov) with information about your technology and we will provide guidance specific to your inquiry.

## **Technology Eligibility**

### **1. What are the key capabilities you are looking for in this year's RFI?**

This year's RFI is focused on three broad categories of resource-efficient technologies:

- Integrated solutions that manage indoor air quality without compromising energy efficiency
  - Example technologies of interest include multi-zonal sensing and control, higher performance filtration, and improved air sealing in ducts.
- Technologies that extend passive survivability and support continuity of operations during grid disruption
  - Technologies of interest include advanced opaque retrofit envelope technologies that support passive heating, cooling and ventilation; window retrofit approaches; phased control or load coordination; software solutions to enable control and prioritization of power to critical loads; and water conservation technologies that support continued facility operation when the water supply is disrupted.
- U.S. manufactured technologies that support the production of electrical energy through photovoltaics (PV)
  - Technologies of interest include high-efficiency PV with improved materials construction, fabrication process and/or installation methods, building-integrated photovoltaics, and innovative PV and storage systems.

### **2. Does this year's RFI include both new and existing technologies?**

Yes. We anticipate that responses to this year's RFI will include existing proven and under-utilized technologies as well as new technologies and services that integrate and optimize energy use across multiple building systems.

### **3. What technology maturity level are you expecting? Will you consider a technology that is in the prototype stage? What about a technology that is already fully commercialized abroad, but not in the U.S.?**

Both programs are interested in technologies that represent the full continuum of product development and market readiness, including those that have been commercially available for several years but are still developing their market and supply chain in the U.S., and late-stage pre-commercial technologies that are still defining their value proposition through product development. DOE focuses on technologies that are one year or less from being market-ready, which can be defined as available for purchase through normal market channels.

We consider many factors when choosing to evaluate a technology, including innovation, anticipated performance, cost and energy savings, technical risk, and deployment potential for GSA's portfolio or commercial applications. For early-stage technologies, it is important to bear in mind that evaluations are conducted in tenant-occupied environments. Stable technologies that are deemed safe for real-world operation will fare better than those that are not.

For technologies that have seen full commercialization abroad but not yet in the U.S., your application should include barriers to entry in the U.S. and how an evaluation would help to overcome those barriers.

#### **4. Are you looking at both new construction and retrofits?**

GSA is focused on retrofits, because this is the majority of what we do, and where the primary opportunity is. DOE also emphasizes retrofit, though new construction is growing and may be more appropriate for certain technologies.

#### **5. Does acceptance into either program require results from prior third-party evaluations? If so, what is the minimum level of test results that is needed for a technology to be considered for the program?**

We are looking for some measure of validation. We encourage you to submit anything that helps us understand your technology and gives us confidence of where you are in the innovation cycle. If your technology has already undergone other third-party studies, you should submit those results with your application.

If you do not have third-party studies completed or underway, your application should include sufficient information to validate the functionality of your technology when operating at scale.

If you have a technology with well-documented real world performance and that is ready for the market, you should express clearly in your application what the value of a test-bed assessment will be.

#### **6. What are the IT security requirements for IP-enabled technologies, cloud-based analytics, and information management systems?**

Technologies considered for inclusion in the GPG program must comply with GSA IT Policy and Governance, available at [gsa.gov/gpg](https://gsa.gov/gpg). If your technology has any wireless or IP-enabled components, cloud-based analytics, or requirements for gathering data from the building automation system, please be prepared to engage in information sessions with GSA IT Security prior to selection. If your technology is selected for M&V, you will be expected to work closely with GSA IT Security to arrive at an approved technical solution to your network and communications infrastructure.

IT security requirements for technologies piloted through DOE will be considered on a case-by-case basis. While DOE does not have a strict set of guidelines for IT security, it should be noted that host sites are often owned, operated, or occupied by companies and organizations with significant security requirements. Generally, your ability to demonstrate your technology's compliance with stringent IT security standards will increase your technology's likelihood of being matched with a host site.

#### **7. Will technologies be considered that are not listed on this RFI?**

Yes, but applications must still fall broadly within this year's request for technologies that either maintain healthy indoor air, increase building resilience or improve onsite PV. If your technology does not fit within this year's request for resource-efficient technologies that improve building health and resilience, we encourage you to check back next year to see how our targeted technologies may have changed. Outside of this RFI, you can always submit your technology through the DOE Building Technologies Office Prioritization Tool, which can open up other opportunities—find more information at <http://energy.gov/eere/buildings/building-technologies-office>. You may also look into opportunities through the Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP)—<https://www.serdp-estcp.org>.

## **8. How do GSA and DOE treat non-energy objectives, such as occupant comfort and satisfaction?**

Both GSA's GPG Program and DOE's Office of EERE are building technology programs that place heavy emphasis on energy performance and cost-effectiveness. That said, we recognize that non-energy benefits can be important drivers of adoption for even the most energy efficient, cost-effective technology. Both programs include market factors as part of the third-party measurement and verification evaluation.

GPG evaluations also include user satisfaction and other non-energy metrics such as indoor environmental quality and human wellness, as relevant to each technology. GPG will work with you to develop evaluation objectives and success metrics that, if realized, can be seen as compelling arguments for deployment through alignment with or improvement on standards set by guidelines such as the P-100 Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service or the WELL Building Standard.

## **9. Do GSA or DOE consider cloud-based technologies?**

Yes, GPG has evaluated an increasing number of IT-enabled and cloud-based technologies in recent years. All technologies considered for inclusion in the program must comply with GSA IT Policy and Governance, available at <http://www.gsa.gov/gpg>. Please be prepared to engage in information sessions with GSA IT Security prior to selection.

## **10. Will GPG or DOE consider a technology that is similar to one that has already been piloted and tested by the GPG program?**

Yes, especially if there has been a significant improvement to the technology, or if the technology was still pre-commercial or in late-stage development when it was first evaluated. We also encourage you to consider that the opportunity for deployment may be broader in the commercial building sector; while GSA deals primarily with office buildings, DOE considers a much wider array of building types, including multi-family, supermarkets, food-service, retail and schools, which may be a better market for many technologies. Finally, additional demonstration data can help to supplement risk evaluation and streamline adoption incentives.

## **[RFI Application](#)**

### **1. Can information be released about the typical number of applicants and the number of finalists?**

Historically, GSA has identified between five and ten technologies for study in a given year, and DOE has demonstrated between three and ten technologies in a given year. Capacity for both programs varies based on need and funding levels. Ultimately, the number selected depends on a variety of internal and external factors, including scope and quality of submitted proposals, budget and resource constraints and project siting opportunities.

## **2. Should the RFI submission include the method of the M&V and who will be responsible for the M&V?**

You know your product better than anyone else. If you can outline an M&V process and explain how it will benefit your technology, you may be more likely to make it to the second round of selection. Previously published reports on the GPG website may provide guidance in framing the M&V process.

## **3. I am having trouble or technical issues submitting my response. Can you help?**

The following recommendations are based on queries we've received from respondents who have experienced problems filling out our online [RFI application](#).

1. We recommend developing your responses in a Microsoft Word (or any word processor) document before transferring the information to the appropriate RFI field. This will help you retain information if you encounter submission glitches.
2. You must fill in ALL fields. If there are fields for which you do not have information, type in "n/a" or another approximate placeholder value.
3. Avoid common issues with specific fields:
  - Phone: Use a valid 10-digit U.S. phone number. Do not include hyphens, parentheses, or any other symbols.
  - State: Use the two-letter state abbreviation with ALL CAPS.
  - Country: Use the three-letter country abbreviation with ALL CAPS.
  - Zip Code: Use a valid 5-digit U.S. zip code.
  - DUNS: Use a valid 9-digit DUNS number. If you do not have a DUNS number, please visit the [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) website to find out how to create one in one business day, or contact [gpg@gsa.gov](mailto:gpg@gsa.gov) to be assigned a placeholder number.
1. Character count limits are inclusive of spaces.
1. When you click the Submit button, you should advance to a confirmation screen. If you do not, please review the document to confirm that all fields have been completed. Incomplete fields will be labeled with an error message. In the event of a connection time-out or reset, please refresh the form and re-submit your information.
1. After a successful submission, the e-mail address you provided as a point of contact will receive a confirmation for your records. The message will contain all the information that was captured from your RFI form, as well as a reference number, or GPGA-#, that identifies your submission. Use the GPGA-# when corresponding with either program.

## **4. Are non-U.S. companies allowed to apply?**

Yes. If your long-term goal is to sell to the federal government, there will need to be an established trade agreement with the U.S. Your application should indicate relevant trade agreements, and/or plans to expand into U.S. markets.

## **5. Can organizations submit a joint application?**

Yes, different organizations, scientific disciplines and technology sectors can form interdisciplinary and cross-sector teams.

## 6. What email address should we use for additional questions?

Please send all inquiries—including those about the DOE programs—to [gpg@gsa.gov](mailto:gpg@gsa.gov). Questions will be internally directed to the appropriate contacts for response.

## 7. Does the character limit on the RFI Webform include spaces?

Yes, it includes spaces.

## Program Participation

### 1. Are universities and national labs eligible for this RFI?

Yes. If your solution includes pre-commercial technologies, you must demonstrate a path to commercialization.

### 2. How will testbed sites be selected?

GPG identifies federally owned buildings within GSA's portfolio that will be best suited for a pilot evaluation of each technology. We work with the vendor, National Labs and our internal technical committee to come to a consensus on which locations will represent the best testbed opportunity for deployment. Considerations may include state of the incumbent technology, tenant, building size, building location, and other factors relevant to the technology being evaluated.

DOE will facilitate matchmaking between technology providers and interested host sites. DOE may provide assistance through the National Labs in the identification and selection of appropriate host sites. Once the host site and technology provider have negotiated and finalized the details of the demonstration, DOE will support third party M&V.

### 3. Most innovative technologies require some level of influence over the building operators to be successful... how will the vendor/provider be able to influence the facility operator if they do not have direct authority over them?

The buildings that have been pre-selected to host the testbed evaluations all have engaged facility managers. If you propose a different facility, make sure that you have buy-in and that the facility operator is aware of both the opportunity and the commitment. Once M&V begins, national lab researchers will help facilitate engagement between the vendor and the facility manager.

### 4. What is the timeline for a study? How long will the evaluation process take?

Finalists are anticipated to be selected in late winter/early spring. Specific dates and times vary depending on the volume of applications received, interest from potential host sites, and other coordination factors.

GPG projects are typically slated for installation in fall. The duration of a GPG measurement and verification (M&V) study can vary depending on the type of technology in question, the complexity of the test-bed location and site preparation, the technology installation process, and the M&V study's objectives. For planning purposes, respondents to this RFI should assume

that the GPG program's project planning and design will start in June, and that the M&V will take approximately one year to complete. The final report is typically published approximately six months following the completion of M&V.

Timing of DOE demonstrations will vary based on host site interest and M&V objectives. DOE may assist with host site suitability evaluation and site selection criteria; once a host site is identified, technology providers and host sites will need to negotiate and finalize demonstration details. The timeline for baseline data collection and technology performance verification will then be included in the M&V plan, which will be reviewed and concurred upon by the host site, DOE, the technology provider, and, if applicable, GSA. DOE will publish preliminary results prior to the completion of the demonstration project.

Both programs strive for the most efficient path and timeline to provide actionable results to accelerate deployment of effective technologies.

#### **5. Is there a cap on the number of projects that are chosen for on-site evaluation?**

We want to present as many opportunities to our partners as possible, based on our available resources. However, technologies that meet cost and savings thresholds are more likely to be selected for demonstration and deployment by commercial partners. Our emphasis is on cost-effective technologies that present large-scale energy savings opportunities for commercial buildings.

#### **6. What is considered an acceptable payback period for DOE and GSA projects? How is this time frame determined?**

DOE: Payback is key in getting projects to move forward, and DOE typically looks for payback periods within 2-5 years. Building owners are competing for funds, and according to our partners in DOE's Better Buildings program, even 5 years can seem like a long payback period. Outside of simple payback, other measures of cost effectiveness can include benefits like extended life and operations and maintenance savings.

GSA: A unique characteristic of GSA is the duration for which we hold our buildings; approximately one-third of our owned portfolio is listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Since our buildings are long-term investments, GSA is open to longer simple payback periods, assuming the technology is life-cycle cost-effective. In recent years, GSA has increasingly considered energy savings performance contracts and other sources of third-party financing. Generally, ESPCs require paybacks of less than ten years, though there are some authorities that increase that to twenty years.

#### **7. Are there specific methods provided to establish payback?**

Payback should incorporate the incremental cost difference between the demonstrated technology and the baseline technology (what would normally be done, e.g. a normal roof, window or wall retrofit) and the energy cost savings associated with the demonstrated technology.

#### **8. Are there any costs to participate? Does GSA or DOE provide grants to participants in their programs?**

Grants or any other source of funding will not be offered to technology suppliers by either program. There are no direct fees associated with either program, but participation is an investment. Initially, there is the time you invest in completing the RFI and supplying information about your technology to the RFI selection team.

If you are selected to participate in the GPG program, you will be expected to gift the core technology or arrange financing via an alternative funding mechanism such as a Utility Energy Service Contract (UESC) (see more information in Questions 10, 11 and 12 below). You will also be expected to dedicate time to providing input to and reviewing project plans, installation and operational guides, and draft reports. You may also be expected to travel to the site for a limited number of coordination meetings; GSA will not cover the cost of travel.

DOE will not provide funding for technology suppliers or host sites; any technology purchases must be negotiated directly between supplier and host site. DOE will facilitate host site development and pay for third party M&V by the National Laboratories.

#### **9. Is there going to be a small business advantage?**

There is no formal carve-out for small or disadvantaged businesses in either program, but both programs have evaluated technologies from vendors spanning a wide spectrum of scale and establishment. GPG recognizes that technology gifting may be more challenging for small businesses, but the program always aims to work within each vendor's means. Additionally, DOE supports small businesses through the [Small Business Innovation Research and Technology Transfer programs](#), as well as the recently launched [Small Business Voucher program](#).

#### **10. Can we seek market or utility company financing independently?**

Usually, financing is not an option for emerging technologies because the risk is too high, which is one of the reasons we support technology demonstrations. Utility programs may be one exception to this rule. If financing is available for your technology demonstration, please identify the program and provide a solid commitment from the financing partner as part of your RFI submittal. On-Bill Recovery Financing, Performance Contracting or Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Financing could help pay for some measures and would help us deploy faster.

#### **11. Do we maintain ownership of our intellectual property?**

Both programs operate under counsel to protect your intellectual property. Neither GSA nor DOE will violate, modify, or directly contribute to your intellectual property.

#### **12. Would we be able to keep the data acquired during the evaluation period?**

The vendor retains ownership of any data collected by the vendor during the evaluation but will be expected to share demonstration data as necessary to support the evaluation and final market-facing resources. Vendors also have access to any data collected by the national labs and published publicly. See examples in previously published reports on the GSA Proving Ground website at [gsa.gov/gpg](https://gsa.gov/gpg).

#### **13. With respect to the gifting process for GPG, what quantity of technology would be expected to be transferred to GSA?**

The quantity of units for gifting to GSA is mutually agreed upon in discussions with the manufacturer, the research team and the GPG program team in consideration of the M&V study objectives. The set quantity depends on the technology type and the number of agreed-upon M&V study sites. GSA looks for the minimum quantity to yield test results that enable a conclusive recommendation for deployment. In addition, there are at times aesthetic considerations, as might be the case with a

technology such as light fixture replacements, where a certain number of units might be required to create a coherent sense of design in tenant-occupied spaces.

GPG will respect any restrictions you may have on the quantity of technology you are reasonably able to gift. However, GPG will NOT, under any circumstances, consider any application that is unable to gift their technology for evaluation.

**14. Are the terms of "technology gifting" to the government indefinite or are there provisions allowing for purchase of technology transfer after program evaluation?**

The technology needed for assessment under the GPG program must be provided as an unrestricted gift to the American people, in perpetuity. This has benefits for the vendor; because it's an unrestricted gift, we are prohibited from doing anything that will reveal your intellectual property, and we are able to work with you outside the limitations of standard procurement.

**15. Our technology provides a service as part of our revenue model. Would we be expected to provide this service for free?**

A great number of the technologies we have assessed have involved some kind of IT component and quite a few have a software-as-a-service (SaaS) model. GSA's gifting authority doesn't accept services, so we look at the service as a license. The gift for these technologies lasts only for the period of the study.

**16. Our solution incorporates more than one technology and some portions are further along in testing/deployment. How will you evaluate when all components of a vendor's solution are not at the same stage of market readiness?**

All components do not need to be at the same stage of market readiness; we are looking for innovative pre- and early commercial technologies. That said, we need to feel confident that your technology will be operable and safe in a real-world, tenant-occupied space. Any critical components that are still in the earlier stages of R&D should be discussed in your application, with a description of the path forward to stable performance and market commercialization.

**17. Does DOE buy our technology?**

No. DOE is not a purchaser of technology. Technology purchases must be negotiated directly between the technology supplier and the host site.

**18. Is it possible to request and receive specific information (e.g., total square footage, roof square footage, number of parking lots) on GSA buildings?**

Publicly available information about GSA properties can be found at several sources, including the [Inventory of Owned and Leased Properties](#) and the [GSA Properties Overview](#). We are not able to provide details beyond what is publicly available at this time.

**19. If selected, are applicants required to participate in the program?**

No, they are not required to participate.

**20. If your proposal is accepted but your technology does not prove out, will the results be released?**

GSA and DOE publish all findings. An exception to this rule occurs when the M&V process does not deliver definitive or relevant results.

**21. Can you tell us what the end benefit is for a company that is participating in these programs?**

The primary benefit, assuming your technology proves out, is market acceptance. Both programs help overcome some of the barriers associated with new, unproven sustainable building technologies by providing detailed, technical reports on their value and functionality, as installed in real, operating conditions.

GPG results will be made publicly available on [GPG webpages](#) and aim to provide actionable data that can inform public- and private-sector investment decisions for sustainable building technologies. Notable findings from the GPG program may inform decision-making within GSA through the evolution of performance specifications for the GSA portfolio or through indication of technology readiness for incorporation into ESPCs (Energy Savings Performance Contracts).

DOE publishes final technical reports and disseminates through existing stakeholder networks, [including Better Buildings](#), and develops case studies, in order to drive national adoption and energy savings. Follow on market transformation activities include incorporation into building evaluation tools, support for national voluntary adoption initiatives, and collaboration with utility incentive programs. DOE may incorporate the results of successful technology demonstrations into the above listed market transformation activities based on the predefined strategy determined for that technology.

It is important to note that both GSA and DOE programs are intended to provide real-world performance data that can accelerate market uptake, but it is not common practice for either program to fund deployment beyond the initial demonstration project. Participation in either program does not guarantee deployment.