

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR CSI RD&D GRANT SOLICITATION #3

Primary Area: PV Grid Integration

Secondary Areas: Production Technologies and Business Model Development and Deployment

PROCESS

- Q1. What is the role of Itron? Will they examine all the proposals?
- A. In 2008, the CPUC selected Itron to serve as Program Manager for the CSI RD&D Program. In this role, Itron administers competitive grant solicitations and oversees the grant evaluation and selection process. The CPUC provides direction to Itron and makes all decisions regarding the CSI RD&D Program, including final selection of grant recipients for consideration at a CPUC public meeting. Itron then enters into a grant agreement with grantees of the selected projects. In addition, Itron provides ongoing oversight and project management for each grant project and reports progress to the CPUC on an ongoing basis. Yes, Itron will review each proposal in the initial screening process and also will be involved in the technical review and scoring processes.
- Q2. Who are the evaluators? Is Itron an evaluator?
- A. Technical reviewers and the scoring team members are from academia, industry, and/or government. Proposals will be assessed for technical feasibility, likelihood of success, connections to the market, capabilities of the proposed team, and overall strengths and weaknesses of the proposed approach. Itron will conduct the initial screening using the criteria listed in Table 4-1 of the solicitation document. Itron staff will also be involved in technical reviews of the proposals as well as the scoring and selection process.
- Q3. Are there guarantees that proposals will not end up in the hands of competitors?
- A. The CPUC will not post or publicly distribute the proposals; however, it is recommended that applicants not submit confidential or proprietary information as all proposals become public documents. If a grant applicant believes certain portions of its proposal are confidential or contain sensitive information, it may file for protection under seal of those sensitive portions under General Order 66-C2 using proper CPUC protocol. Grant applicants should use the seal discriminately and only when necessary.
- Q4. How can a proposal be designed to streamline the grant agreement process, should the proposal be selected to receive an award?
- A. Please review the solicitation document thoroughly with your team and provide a scope of work and budget in your proposal that is clear and detailed. Once the CPUC provides approval, Itron will work with each grantee to refine the scope of work and budget and those documents become part of the grant agreement. Understanding all aspects of the grant agreement (Exhibit C of the Solicitation document) by your project team will speed up the post award process.
- Q5. Do you provide a debriefing for unsuccessful proposals?
- A. Yes, feedback on unsuccessful proposals is available on request.
- Q6. What must be done to secure an additional year on the contract?

- A. The CPUC established the 2 year grant term to bring the research results into the market as quickly as possible. The agreement may be extended for an additional year, upon approval by the CPUC and Itron.

ELIGIBILITY

- Q7. Companies and organizations are permitted to submit multiple proposals; however, each must be submitted by a single principal investigator (individual person). Is this correct?
- A. Yes.
- Q8. Is it OK to be a subcontractor on multiple proposals as long as there is a different principal investigator for each one?
- A. Yes.
- Q9. Can a principal investigator for one proposal serve as a team member on another proposal?
- A. Yes.
- Q10. Can public-owned utilities apply for CSI RD&D funds?
- A. Yes.
- Q11. Will solar or thermal cooling projects be acceptable?
- A. Yes, but keep in mind that this is an RD&D Program, so the project must have a research element and the demonstration component must be of reasonable size to be competitive.
- Q12. Are hybrid solar technology projects acceptable?
- A. Yes.
- Q13. Would the total cost of a project that integrates both solar and wind generating resources with storage be eligible?
- A. Since the CSI RD&D program has a focus on solar technologies, only the solar portion of the project is eligible for funding.
- Q14. It appears the grant agreement allows a proposal that demonstrates the commercial feasibility of using patented or proprietary software or hardware, without requiring the release of the software or hardware itself to the CPUC/Itron or public domain. Such a project could be used to demonstrate a commercially viable business model for example. Any algorithm or software developed within a CSI funded proposal would, I presume, be the property of CPUC/Itron, but that would not necessarily preclude it from also being used in future endeavors by project team members. Please confirm.
- A. Yes, this is correct. To reiterate, any work associated with a project that uses CSI RD&D funds will be made available to the public.

UTILITY PARTICIPATION

- Q15. Can we propose a project with a non investor-owned utility such as a publically-owned utility partner?

- A. Yes. It can be a municipal entity or even from a different state as long as the results and outcomes will benefit California.

Q16. Is any preference given to proposals from IOUs vs. publically-owned utilities (POU)?

- A. Not necessarily. IOUs represent more customers and a greater share of the market. Because the program is focused on benefits, proposals that address a larger market share should receive a higher score (all other things being equal). Proposals that include a POU are certainly welcome; additionally, it might be worth noting the reasoning behind the choice of partnerships.

Q17. What are you looking for in utility involvement?

- A. Utilities are seen as the major stakeholder or audience for the grid integration projects, so partnering or getting firm engagement of a utility is essential and proposals will be scored accordingly in the related criteria. Utilities are not necessarily the key stakeholder for the production technology or innovative business model topic areas; however, utility partnerships can support the research results, findings outreach, and information dissemination.

Q18. Does a photovoltaic production proposal require a utility partner?

- A. Lack of a utility partner certainly can be explained in the proposal if it is not relevant to the particular project. The proposal may not necessarily receive a score of 10 for this criterion. It will be up to the scoring committee to assess the appropriateness of utility participation for a given proposal.

FUNDING

Q19. If a startup company hasn't secured matching funds up front, can it apply anyway and work on the matching funds later on?

- A. Match funding is a requirement for participation in this solicitation. A commitment of match funding must accompany the proposal or it will not pass the initial screening process and will not be scored. A proposal that includes a firm commitment of match funding along with complete documentation will receive a higher score.

Q20. Can funding be requested for a project that has already been sub awarded, though the work has not started?

- A. If the proposal is requesting funds for work that is part of that proposed project, then yes. However, any expenses that are incurred prior to the award and the fully executed grant agreement cannot be reimbursed using CSI RD&D funds. CSI RD&D funds can only be used for work conducted during the term of the grant project and directly relevant to that project.

Q21. Can we use DOE ARRA funds as cost share (match) money?

- A. Yes.

Q22. Is there an advantage to using DOE ARRA funds as cost share money?

- A. Not necessarily; it depends on what the match contributes to the overall proposal. The match should be as strong as possible and substantiated with supporting documentation.

- Q23. Can in-kind funding come in the form of funds put into past products?
- A. No. Past projects are not acceptable as match funding for current projects. Match funds must be provided in the time-frame and in support of the currently proposed project. Match funds must be accrued during the term of the project.
- Q24. Do SGIP rebates qualify as match funds?
- A. No. Funds from any state incentive programs (CSI, NSHP, SGIP etc.) do not qualify as match.
- Q25. Can funding from previous CSI RD&D solicitations be used as matching funds?
- A. No. Matching funds must be accrued and expended within the time frame of the current grant project.
- Q26. Can we use PIER grant funding as match?
- A. Yes. Please provide supporting documentation on the award and relevant scope.
- Q27. Is the purchase of licenses for software used in the project eligible as an in-kind match?
- A. Yes.
- Q28. Are equipment rentals or leases for the project acceptable options for funding? In the case of renting or leasing equipment, Exhibit C Section 5.3 does not apply, is this correct?
- A. Yes.
- Q29. Can utilities expenditures that are part of the project count as match funds?
- A. Yes.
- Q30. Do innovative inverters and storage equipment fall within the equipment category?
- A. Yes, any equipment (hardware or software) over \$5,000 will be subject to Section 5.3 requirements in the grant agreement. In your proposal, you must demonstrate how the equipment contributes to the end result and cannot be cost effectively leased or rented.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

- Q31. Do you have a Microsoft Word format file available for Exhibit A (Grant Application Cover Page) and an Excel file format for Exhibit B (Proposed Budget Summary)?
- A. Yes, you can find Exhibits A (cover page) and B (budget summary) in a Word document on the CSI RD&D Program website at: <http://www.calsolarresearch.ca.gov/Current-Solicitations/solicitation-third.html>
- Q32. Are there any technical or size limitations for submitting proposals?
- A. A single PDF file, no larger than 20 MB in size is required and must be submitted through the online submission form, which can be found at: <http://www.calsolarresearch.ca.gov/Current-Solicitations/submit-proposal.html>

Please do not send hardcopies or email files and allow adequate time to complete the proposal submission process. If you encounter a problem with the submission process, please contact us for assistance through the CalSolarResearch web site at:

<http://www.calsolarresearch.ca.gov/forms/Contact-CSI-RDD.html>

GENERAL

Q33. Will signing the agreement cause us to lose rights to our technology?

A. All products resulting from the use of the CSI RD&D funds will become public so it is important to structure your proposal accordingly.

Q34. What exactly do you mean by proprietary information?

A. Proprietary information is information that is internal to your group or organization and is typically not disclosed without a confidentiality agreement. Please do not submit any information that you consider proprietary or confidential. Any proposal (in part or whole) marked as “confidential” or “proprietary” will be screened out and not evaluated or given consideration of an award.

Q35. How does the solicitation address intellectual property rights?

A. The intellectual property rights provisions can be found in Section 12 (Rights of Parties Regarding Deliverables, Data and Intellectual Property) of the grant agreement. The agreement can be found in Exhibit C of Solicitation #3 and on the CSI RD&D web site at:

<http://www.calsolarresearch.ca.gov/Current-Solicitations/solicitation-third.html>

Q36. The sections of the agreement dealing with patent rights to inventions and copy rights appear advantageous to Itron. Please explain.

A. The intent of the language in these sections is to enable Itron, as Program Manger, to act on behalf of and in the interest of the CPUC and the State of California. These sections do not provide any special advantages or rights to Itron for use of information or products any more than they would be available to anyone in the public. Itron will not be patenting or copyrighting any materials or products that come from the research projects. Itron works on behalf of the CPUC and all work supported with CSI RD&D funds is distributed as widely as possible

Q37. When does the RD&D program sunset?

A. The program was established to run through 2016

Q38. Where can I get copies of this presentation and other pertinent documents?

A. All pertinent documents are posted on the Cal Solar web site at: www.CalSolarResearch.ca.gov
Questions can be directed to: info@CalSolarResearch.ca.gov

Q39. Will this webinar attendee list be made available?

A. Yes, the list is available on the web site.