

**ARRA Opportunity: DOE Workforce Training for the Electric Power Sector
September 22, 2009**

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has just announced a funding opportunity utilizing funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to facilitate the development of a well-trained, highly-skilled workforce for the electric power sector to help implement the smart electricity grid. An opportunity for universities and colleges, including community colleges, to develop the next-generation electric power workforce is included as the STEPS (Strategic Training and Educating in Power Systems) program.

Funding: DOE plans to make available up to \$100 million for two initiatives – Topic A: Developing and Enhancing Workforce Training Programs for the Electric Power Sector (\$35 to \$40 million); and Topic B: Smart Grid Workforce Training (\$60 to \$65 million). A sub-program will be funded within the Electric Power Sector initiative focused on Strategic Training and Education in Power Systems, or STEPS. The STEPS program is focused on curriculum development at colleges and universities, including community colleges. Funding will be available for projects up to three years in duration.

Eligibility: Eligibility for grants under this ARRA initiative is open to all domestic entities, including institutions of higher education. Federal agencies, Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) Contractors, and nonprofit organizations under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that engaged in lobbying activities after December 31, 1995, are not eligible to apply. However, other federal agencies, DOE national laboratories, and all FFRDCs are eligible for “supporting” roles in such applications. Power Marketing Administrations (PMAs) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) may apply for a lead or prime role in a proposal.

Cost Share: These proposals all require non-federal cost sharing. For proposals under Topic A, Electric Power Sector Workforce, the cost share must be at least 20 percent of the total allowable cost of the project. For academic institutions, DOE will accept a cost share of not less than 10 percent. For proposals under Topic B, Smart Grid Workforce, the cost share must be at least 50 percent from non-federal sources.

Areas of Interest: DOE is seeking proposals that will support the development and deployment of training programs as well as actually training personnel. Consistent with the goals of the ARRA, DOE would like applications that will support and greatly expand job creation and career advancement opportunities within the utility industry and the electric power manufacturing sector. Job categories include technicians and skilled workers, utility energy efficiency program staff, cyber security experts, transmission planners, and system operators.

DOE expects applications to address how the proposed program positively impacts displaced workers, can increase per capita income, builds career ladders and training opportunities, expands domestic supply chains for smart grid technologies, and/or supports economic growth in economically-depressed regions and communities.

Applications can be submitted in more than one topic area, but they must be separate applications for each award area. Applications are due to DOE by November 30.

Topic A: Developing and Enhancing Workforce Training Programs for the Electric Power Sector. This topic area is targeted to proposals that develop new training strategies and programs for the electric power sector with a focus on implementing the smart electricity grid. This initiative encompasses the entire electricity delivery system (transmission and distribution) and related electrical equipment

manufacturing. Applications should identify specific job classifications to be targeted for training and the skills deficiencies that will be addressed through workforce improvement activities. The proposed training programs must identify and address gaps in training needs. The FOA provides additional details on what must be demonstrated to apply for these funds.

STEPS: Within Topic A, DOE offers an opportunity for colleges and universities, including community colleges, to develop new curricula and training activities in areas needed to achieve the next-generation electric power workforce. The Strategic Training and Education in Power Systems (STEPS) initiative focuses on cross-disciplinary electric power systems training programs that lead to degrees or certificates that span the breadth of science, engineering, social science, economics, etc. to help transform the traditional power system into a national smart grid. Applications under the STEPS program can also focus on developing certificate programs for training technicians and teachers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects with a focus on electric power systems.

Topic B: Smart Grid Workforce Training. DOE seeks applications that provide training for electric power sector personnel that is necessary to achieve the smart grid. The focus is on the electricity delivery system, both transmission and distribution, and the manufacturing of related electrical equipment. Proposals can train workers to increase workforce capacity and the ability of electric power companies and smart grid technology manufacturers to implement the smart grid; to address skills shortages in the power sector (such as transmission planners, systems operators, utility energy efficiency staff, line workers, electricians, technicians and other skilled trades); and/or to provide updated training to support the smart grid. Workforce gaps/challenges must be identified and addressed in the proposals.

Funding Awards: DOE anticipates making 25 to 35 awards for Topic A, Electric Power Sector Workforce Training grants, of which 8 to 10 would be STEPS grants. The federal share of grants under Topic A would be up to \$750,000 per award. The federal share for the STEPS grants would be up to \$2.5 million per award (approximately \$20 million, or half of the \$40 million anticipated program).

DOE anticipates making 15 to 20 awards under Topic B, Smart Grid Workforce Training with a federal share of up to \$5 million per award.

A synopsis of FOA can be found at:

<http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&flag2006=false&oppld=49601>. To view the full FOA, please link to FedConnect at: <https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/?doc=DE-FOA-0000152&agency=DOE>.