



Community microgrids bloemfontein

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Electricity (OE) today announced the launch of the Community Microgrid Assistance Partnership (C-MAP). This initiative is designed to assist remote, rural, and electrically isolated communities in developing resilient microgrid systems that enhance energy reliability and security, particularly in historically underserved and/or Indigenous areas.

Microgrids provide a solution to electrical grid disruptions, such as severe weather events, via localized grids that can operate while connected to the traditional grid or "islanded," as in the case of many remote and Indigenous communities.

Starting October 2, 2024, eligible communities can submit proposals for technical assistance and funding to support the design and implementation of a microgrid project, or to optimize existing microgrid systems for improved performance. Interested participants can find comprehensive guidance on the OE website. The application deadline is December 20, 2024 with selections announced in the spring of 2025.

"Through the Community Microgrid Assistance Partnership, DOE plans to work closely with rural and Tribal communities to develop microgrid technologies that will lead to more reliable, affordable energy in isolated regions," said Dr. Geri Richmond, DOE Under Secretary for Science and Innovation. "Remote communities are well-positioned to demonstrate optimized microgrid technologies, including those that generate renewable energy locally. With the right design and innovation, microgrid solutions will help lower energy costs, improve energy resilience, and spur economic opportunities."

The C-MAP pilot program focuses on Alaska, Hawaii, and Tribes in the Southwest and the Great Plains, where regional organizations are positioned to provide long-term engagement and wraparound services to sustain the microgrids deployed in the program. Addressing resource gaps for underserved communities is critical to ensure low-cost, clean energy is available to every American.

"Individual projects will be tailored to local conditions, needs, and goals, yet each one presents validated solutions and valuable lessons for the market at large," said Gene Rodrigues, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Electricity. "I am proud that these projects will provide much-needed assistance and support for the participating remote communities and Tribes, but I'm also excited to see what they will teach us about using microgrids as building blocks for reliability, resilience, and affordability in an increasingly complex energy system."

Target participants are governments overseeing energy systems, local power companies, independent energy suppliers, and community support organizations that provide energy services to remote underserved, and/or Indigenous communities.

Diesel-powered microgrids remain the most common mode of supplying electricity to isolated areas. Off-grid communities are well-positioned to demonstrate microgrid innovation as a path to emancipating their energy economy from a dependence on imported fuels, harnessing power from inexhaustible supplies of renewable energy, and mitigating power disruptions.

C-MAP brings together organizations and energy sector actors that are working to understand, improve, and implement advanced microgrid technology, facilitating a new forum for collaboration and knowledge sharing. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory administers the program for OE's Microgrid R& D Program, and the partnership network includes additional national laboratories, DOE's offices of Arctic Energy and Indian Energy, university partners, and non-profit organizations dedicated to supporting sustainable energy development in under-resourced communities.

Wraparound support from the regional partners could entail workforce development for clean energy jobs, raising capital, networking your system with neighboring villages, planning for long-term maintenance, or other hurdles communities face in developing and maintaining microgrid systems. There is also support available for developing a proposal that fits the program parameters, is technically feasible, and matches local interests.

A Community Microgrid is a coordinated local grid area served by one or more distribution substations and supported by high penetrations of local renewables and other distributed energy resources (DER), such as energy storage and demand response.

Community Microgrids represent a new approach for designing and operating the electric grid, relying heavily on DER to achieve a more sustainable, secure, and cost-effective energy system while providing indefinite, renewables-driven backup power for prioritized loads. Community Microgrids provide communities unparalleled economic, environmental, and resilience benefits.

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