

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Sarah Cottrell Propst, Cabinet Secretary
Dylan Fuge (Acting), Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Rebecca “Puck” Stair, ECMD Division Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Sidney Hill
Public Information Officer, EMNRD
sidney.hill@emnrn.nm.gov

November 8, 2023

**EMNRD seeks \$250 million in federal funding to bring solar energy
to low-income New Mexicans**

A Solar for All Program can alleviate inequities in access to clean energy

SANTA FE, NM – The New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) is requesting \$250 million from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to fund solar energy projects that would benefit low-income households across the state. EMNRD is applying for the maximum amount for which New Mexico is eligible based on population.

If the bid is successful, New Mexico will receive one of an estimated 60 grants the EPA will disperse under its \$7 billion Solar for All competition. States, territories, municipal and tribal governments, as well as certain nonprofit organizations, are eligible to compete for Solar for All grants.

The EPA’s stated goal in funding this competition is to give millions of low-income households access to affordable, resilient, and clean solar energy. Without this funding, many low-income households would be left out of country’s transition to clean, renewable energy.

The EPA anticipates announcing grant awards in March 2024.

If awarded, EMNRD’s Energy, Conservation and Management Division (ECMD) will administer New Mexico’s Solar for All program, which is expected to benefit an estimated 34,850 low-income households. Under EMNRD’s proposed models, the New Mexico Solar for All program would add 123 megawatts of solar energy capacity to the state’s power grid. The

program also would produce 13.5 megawatt hours of stored energy that could be deployed when there is not sufficient sunlight to generate solar power. Where possible, ECMD hopes to install storage alongside solar, to aid the grid and build resiliency.

ECMD estimates this program will save New Mexico residents more than \$499 million in energy costs over a 20-year period, while also avoiding the release of 194,380 tons of carbon-dioxide into the atmosphere.

To reach New Mexico's underserved communities most effectively, ECMD wants New Mexico's Solar for All to focus on supporting shared solar access projects in rural and tribal communities. Such projects—sometimes referred to as community solar—entail creating a solar-powered system from which multiple households, including renters in multifamily units, can draw power. The plan also calls for working with the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) to allocate funding to local utilities for upgrades to the power infrastructure that might be necessary to guarantee that a community solar system will function properly in areas that historically have not had reliable electric service.

The proposal also envisions providing support for residents of areas where community solar is not viable, such as households on tribal lands that are not connected to a power grid. Such households will be served by battery backup power; they also will be able to have roofs repaired to accommodate solar panels when necessary.

“New Mexico has laid a strong foundation for a clean-energy future, as we advance toward a statewide goal of 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045,” said ECMD Director Rebecca “Puck” Stair. “However, many of our state’s low-income residents, particularly in rural and tribal communities, have not had access to renewable energy resources. With Solar for All, we can help remedy that inequity.”

END

The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.
<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov>