



CITY OF HARRISONBURG PUBLIC WORKS

320 EAST MOSBY ROAD, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

OFFICE (540) 434-5928 • FAX (540) 434-2695

TO: Ande Banks, City Manager
FROM: Keith Thomas, Sustainability and Environmental Manager
DATE: February 16, 2024
RE: Project Consideration Using EECBG Funding

Summary:

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program, established under the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, aims to assist states, local governments, and Tribes in enhancing energy efficiency and reducing fossil fuel emissions. The City has been granted \$117,870 for eligible activities, spanning from strategy development to renewable energy technologies. Recommendations from the Department of Energy suggest localities under 250,000 population opt for vouchers to reduce workload. Prioritizing public visibility and greenhouse gas reduction, the Environmental Performance Standards Committee (EPSAC) endorsed projects like solar installations, with a 50kW solar system at Turner Pavilion being their top choice.

Background:

As per the provisions outlined in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program aims to support states, local governments, and Tribes in implementing initiatives to curtail energy consumption, reduce fossil fuel emissions, and enhance energy efficiency. The City has been allocated a direct formula grant of \$117,870 earmarked for eligible activities.

Grant Overview:

- **Grant Type:** Formula grant with options for either a grant or a voucher application.
- **Eligibility:** Open to local governments without the necessity of cost matching.
- **Project Period:** A 2-year Project and Budget Period.
- **Extensions:** Recipients can request a no-cost time extension.
- **Recommendation:** The Department of Energy suggests localities with a population under 250,000 opt for the voucher process due to reduced reporting requirements and workload.

Eligible Activities Include:

1. Strategy Development
2. Technical Consultant Services
3. Building Energy Audits
4. Financial Incentive Programs
5. Energy Efficiency (EE) Retrofits
6. EE and Conservation Programs for Building and Facilities

7. Development and Implementation of Transportation Programs
8. Building Codes and Inspections
9. Energy Distribution Technology for EE
10. Reduction and Capture of Methane and GHGs
11. Traffic Signals and Street Lighting
12. Renewable Energy (RE) Technologies on Gov't Buildings
13. Programs for Financing, Purchasing, and Installing EE, RE, and Zero-Emission Transportation Measures

Eligible Equipment for Vouchers:

1. HVAC equipment
2. Water heater equipment
3. Weatherization materials
4. Renewable energy technology
5. Metering/traffic management equipment
6. Micromobility equipment
7. Alternative fuel vehicles
8. Electric vehicles charging stations

EPSAC Priorities:

During a presentation to the Environmental Performance Standards Committee (EPSAC), staff solicited input on the utilization of EECBG funds. The committee prioritized projects based on the following criteria:

- **Project Visibility**
- **Commitment/Demonstration to Sustainability**
- **Reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Top Five Projects Identified by EPSAC:

1. Turner Pavilion Rooftop Solar- 50kW (Voucher)
2. Solar on Lucy Simms Center- 30kW (Voucher)
3. Municipal Buildings Energy Audit (Voucher)
4. Programmable Thermostat Rebate (Grant)
5. Turner Pavilion Rooftop Solar- 9kW (Voucher)

Turner Pavilion Rooftop Solar- 50kW Project Description:

The project would install a 50.0 kW rooftop solar system on the entire Turner Pavilion's south-facing roof generating approximately 71,000 kWh/year of solar power. This installation is projected to offset the entire electrical usage of the Turner Pavilion, which is approximately 15,000 kWh/year, and contribute a significant portion of excess energy back to the grid as "community solar." Based on 2022 electricity prices, this initiative is anticipated to yield approximately \$1,700 in annual electricity savings.

Key Issues:

Sustainability, Environmental Action Plan, Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Environmental Impact:

Promote environmental action in our community.

Fiscal Impact:

Selecting Turner Pavilion would require additional General Funds to complete. Once installed, the project would offset approximately \$1,700 in electric utility costs each year.

Prior Actions:

- Community Goals #3- Promote adoption of clean, renewable energy
- EAP Focus Area 1, Goal 1 & 3- Identify opportunities to increase carbon free sources and consider generating on-site energy.
- Harrisonburg's Transition to Renewable Energy by 2035 (2020 Council Resolution)

Alternatives:

1. Choose an alternative location where the total solar installation cost aligns with or falls under the EECBG funding level.
2. Opt for a different project type from the list of eligible activities that fits within the allocated budget.
3. Decide to return the funds if none of the available alternatives are deemed suitable for current needs or financial considerations.

Community Engagement:

N/A

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that City Council endorse the voucher path for equipment rebates, specifically for solar installations on City facilities, aligning with the Department of Energy's recommendation for smaller communities (under 250,000).

In April 2023, EPSAC voted unanimously to recommend City Council utilize both EECBG funds and General Funds for the installation of a 50kW solar system at the Turner Pavilion site due to its high public visibility and large greenhouse gas reduction potential.

Attachments:

1. Proposed Project Overview

Review: