Using RFIs to build project pipelines for clean energy

In January 2024, as part of its implementation of the Build Public Renewables Act (BPRA) the New York Power Authority (NYPA) issued a request for information (RFI) to "collaborate with renewable developers, contractors, and companies to develop, own, and operate renewable energy generating projects and storage systems, including solar photovoltaic energy, wind energy, and battery energy storage."[1] Passed in 2023, New York's BPRA authorized NYPA to develop, own, and operate renewable generation and storage projects in pursuit of the state's decarbonization goals. In preparation, NYPA sought information on developers interested in partnering with it to build renewables. The RFI is simple, containing no more than a few pages of questions designed to identify projects primed for NYPA's particular authorities. Furthermore, the RFI contained questions designed to identify both one-off and systematic barriers to project development in the state—including any specific challenges that NYPA could help overcome with its expertise, risk tolerance, and bonding authority. On the basis of that information, NYPA published a series of strategic plans which, to date, have resulted in a 5.5 GW pipeline of storage and generation projects that NYPA plans to develop.[2]

NYPA's active solicitation of projects and financing needs from the private sector offers lessons for clean energy initiatives, public finance institutions, and development efforts nationwide. NYPA used its RFI mechanism to conduct market research and incentivized responses with specific actionable results for participants willing to share information. NYPA created a pipeline, a running queue of projects meeting specified criteria. This pipeline allows NYPA to strategically plan cost effective uses of its development and financing authorities.

This brief by the Center for Public Enterprise and the State Support Center focuses on how RFIs can be used as a procurement strategy for public agencies with project finance, development, and/or ownership authorities. RFIs are solicitations for information that are useful to public sector entities looking to drive investment, seed projects, and otherwise make the best use of their money and capacities. RFIs can be a valuable tool for state and municipal instrumentalities to (1) gather information about the sectors they hope to influence; (2) find and pre-qualify developers and firms with which they might work; and (3) construct a "pipeline" of projects through which they can more rapidly facilitate their desired investments. The brief will provide examples of recent "best practices" RFIs and it will provide an updated Model RFI with language that state and local agencies can use to develop pipelines of projects.

[1] New York Power Authority. 2024. "New York Power Authority Issues RFI on Renewable Energy Development Opportunities in New York State."
[2] New York Power Authority. 2025. "NYPA Board of Trustees Approves Updated Renewables Strategic Plan, Detailing Opportunities Totaling Nearly 5.5 GW of Combined Capacity."

What are RFIs?

Requests for information (RFIs) are a common public procurement device in the United States. Strictly speaking, they are not formal solicitations for proposed projects—those would be requests for proposals, or RFPs—nor do they necessarily connect to a process for pre-qualifying bidders or firms—known as requests for qualifications, or RFQs. **Rather, RFIs are early-stage invitations for stakeholders of all types to provide information on a topic of interest.**

Why should public finance agencies use them?

Over the last fifteen years, a host of new public and nonprofit financing agencies have proliferated across the United States. Many are newly established "green banks" designed to provide low cost financing to clean energy, building retrofits, and charging infrastructure. They are empowered with authorities to make loans, take equity stakes in projects, and/or provide other kinds of concessional financing to projects of interest. Other state agencies exploring their capacity to finance clean energy include long-standing agencies such as state energy offices, bond banks, public power agencies, economic development agencies, and various other entities with bonding authority.

Regardless of how long these entities have been in existence, deploying capital or operational expertise in new projects may be a daunting prospect. The entity may need new staff, and they may not have strong relationships with developers, suppliers, or local communities in the areas or sectors where they hope to grow their activities. They may not immediately know how their authorized financing tools could make the most immediate impact. What these agencies need is a **project pipeline**: a running queue of projects and development opportunities that the agency can use to strategically plan their activities. Establishing this pipeline can be challenging—and this challenge is what RFIs are meant to surmount. RFIs offer a number of unique advantages:

1. **They are open and transparent**, available to everyone in and out of the state.
2. **They are cost effective.** Writing an effective RFI does not take large amounts of staff-time, particularly if agencies have developed programs and clear understanding of the information they require.
3. **They establish relationships between respondents and the host agency.** These relationships can prove fruitful for both respondents and agencies as programs evolve.
4. **They do not lock the state or agency into any immediate commitments.** States can be frank about their intentions and the kinds of information they are interested in. They can use RFI responses to modify program design or pivot tactics.
5. **They allow the state to ask detailed questions and secure a formal reply** which can then be integrated into other public or confidential inter-agency processes. Because

many state and local entities engage in informal conversations with stakeholders, getting key details on paper is vital to prepare governments for subsequent work.

6. **They signal the state's interest and intentions.** Many public and private stakeholders may never have imagined the state could provide financing for their projects. They might not have examined their own project or risk appetites with that possibility in mind. Further, an RFI may spur stakeholders to conceive of new, additional projects that align with the state's goals.
7. **They educate developers, investors, communities, and other critical stakeholders** about programs and facilities available from state and municipal agencies.

How should agencies use them?

Agencies that are looking to co-develop, co-finance, or otherwise support investment projects require specific kinds of information that can help them best use their tools. **RFIs should aim to acquire that information while encouraging respondents to investigate and articulate the obstacles they would face when engaging in a development process with the state or public entities**, insofar as public-private collaborations may face regulatory, legal compliance, and financial structuring complexities.

As a best practice, successful RFIs will ask specific, open-ended questions about:

- Potential projects in a respondent's pipeline
- Existing financing that respondents have or could expect to secure on their own
- Financial and non-financial obstacles to undertaking investment
- What the respondent wants or expects from state assistance. For instance, would any particular form of state assistance help the project get across the finish line and/or reach completion more quickly or cheaply than otherwise?

State agencies should gather information in order to improve their ability to fill market gaps through financing tools and other policy interventions. State agencies may have a variety of financial products, investment promotion policies, and tools at their disposal. Public financial and development products all vary. Some provide project financing directly. Others insure the project, provide purchasing assistance, or establish a "one stop shop" entity within a state office for permitting support or as a go-between with the federal government. In order to determine the best interventions, states should use RFIs to gather information about the gaps in the existing market. The state can then understand what gaps the state's tools are currently addressing, and which gaps they are failing to address.

Respondents are more likely to participate if the state can articulate its goals, intentions, and metrics for success in any RFI process. In particular, if the state has a particular product (e.g., a loan, tax credit, co-development participation, role in securing federal financing) that they are trying to promote with the RFI, that product and its requirements should be described alongside

the state's current understanding of the potential beneficiaries and their projects. Ideally, participation in the RFI should be integrated into the process of eventually qualifying for that program. However, states should be flexible enough in their terms that they can use the RFI process to gather feedback on how best to integrate these products or programs into those specific project development processes. The RFI language should articulate that the purpose of gathering information is to make the program or project serve the target market and that it can be modified based on responses. In addition, states should articulate what, if any, follow-up respondents can expect after an RFI process is complete, either bilaterally with the agency or in the form of actions the agency intends to take with the full set of responses.

RFIs should also be a space for respondents to be fairly critical about state or regulatory processes they feel hinder their ability to proceed with investment. Such critical feedback should be welcomed and encouraged. Especially in cases where public agencies managing these RFIs may have close relationships with officials that guide the use of public funds, these agencies can work together with developers to make the case to their governments for necessary changes to their programs and authorities in the interest of achieving their shared project development goals.

A project pipeline that sees an increasingly standardized array of projects utilizing widely understood tools aimed at surmounting specific financing gaps is a recipe for faster and cheaper investment. It will also enable these authorities to take faster action with the tools at their disposal and have more immediate impact on clean energy deployment in their respective states or localities, particularly given the uncertainties being created by federal policy. Moreover, RFIs can also provide vital information for modifying existing programs or soliciting legislative support for new authority, increasing entity capitalization, or removal of market or regulatory barriers to agency action.

What are examples of successful RFIs, RFQs, and RFPs undertaken by public developers and public finance agencies?

There are numerous successful examples, some of which are listed below.

The New York Power Authority (NYPA) ran an RFI process (mentioned above) and a follow-up RFQ process to identify and pre-qualify developers that could work with NYPA in deploying renewables.[3] The RFI asked developers for general company information; the role they played in the market, including their typical role in project delivery; and their upcoming project development pipeline. It went on to ask whether the responding firm had interest in working with NYPA, what role they thought NYPA could play in supporting them, and what concerns such a

[3] New York Power Authority. *Renewable Energy Opportunities Request for Information*. (Appended to this document).

collaboration might raise. A copy of that now-completed RFI is appended to this memo. The follow-up RFQ process in particular also engaged those developers to identify projects already in development that might benefit from NYPA's participation and financial stabilization tools.

The Connecticut Green Bank posts a number of RFPs.[4] In particular, the following have no fixed termination dates:

- An open RFP for energy and environmental infrastructure which supports projects that would not happen "but for" the Connecticut Green Bank's participation. It is available "any technology, method, or business model that is able to help the Green Bank achieve its statutory mandate as voiced through its Comprehensive Plan."[5] In turn, the Bank promises to make available a number of financial tools that could best maximize its ability to support the proposed project. These tools include senior and subordinate loans, loan loss reserves, loan guarantees, loan participation, and equity. A copy of that RFP is appended to this memo.
- An open RFQ for lenders to register with the Connecticut Green Bank to participate in its commercial property-assessed clean energy (C-PACE) program as loan originators and funders.[6] A copy of that RFQ is appended to this memo.

The Colorado Energy Office (CEO) published an RFI[7] in March 2025 for developers interested in participating in either the Department of Energy's Loan Program Office (LPO) lending process, via the State Energy Financing Carveout, or looking to pursue specified development in the areas of energy, housing, or industry using financing programs available at the state level.[8] The RFI asked, among other questions, what projects respondents were interested in developing, descriptions of how the CEO might assist with financing, project siting considerations, potential markets, pricing outlooks, and information on other obstacles to development. A copy of this now-closed RFI is appended to this brief.

The Minnesota Climate Finance and Innovation Authority (MnCIFA) The Passing of H.R. 1 (2025)—the so-called One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBBA)—reshaped the renewable energy financing landscape. The Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority (MnCIFA) replied to these challenges by partnering with the Minnesota Commerce Division of Energy Resources to issue an RFI to better understand how their state's developers were affected and with the intention of

[4] Connecticut Green Bank. "Open and Ongoing RFPs."
[5] Connecticut Green Bank. *Open Request for Proposals for Clean Energy & Environmental Infrastructure Investment*. (Appended to this document).
[6] Connecticut Green Bank. *Request for Qualifications from Interested Capital Providers: Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Program (C-PACE)*. (Appended to this document).
[7] Colorado Energy Office. 2025. *EFAA RFI 2025000042: Colorado Energy Office Clean Energy Finance Investigation*. (Appended to this document).
[8] The Center for Public Enterprise was contracted with the CEO to assist with this RFI's process, including the language prior to its publication, and the evaluation of responses.

adjusting their programs to developer needs.[9] As a result of the RFI, MnCIFA and the Commerce energy team were able to gather information from 19 respondents. A summary of the RFI findings was presented at MnCIFA's October 2025 board meeting.[10] As a result of the RFI, MnCIFA has been working with partners in the public, nonprofit and private sectors to address issues raised by the RFI. One action by MnCIFA has been to issue this 2026 Call for Applications as the next step forward.[11]

Do you have model text for an RFI?

Yes. The Center for Public Enterprise first published a model RFI for project developers seeking to work with the Loan Programs Office and state agencies on securing financing under the State Energy Financing Institute (SEFI) carveout to the Department of Energy's Title 17 loan facilities.[12]

For state agencies looking to deploy financing or development capacities toward catalyzing investment into critical projects, we have provided the following model RFI text. It is designed to be a template that agencies or other interested parties should modify as they deem necessary to suit their policy objectives and vendor procurement policies. Some states have already used a previous version of this template to great success. We encourage interested parties to reach out with questions and feedback. This Model RFI can be tailored to meet the specific needs of individual partners.

What should agencies do after publishing an RFI?

Agencies should also dedicate time and resources to advertising their RFIs as widely as possible. The goal is to solicit information from any potential parties that might participate in a future development process with the state, a demarcated yet still-wide universe of actors. Dedicated webinars, public events, social media engagement, and easy access public websites are all important. There should be clear instructions for submission and capacity dedicated to answering queries in advance of the RFI, as well as after.

Agencies should dedicate time and resources to engaging with RFI respondents during and/or after the RFI submission process is complete. These dialogues can save both parties time by helping agencies identify critical areas for the respondent to gather information, helping the respondent understand the state's needs, and otherwise exploring opportunities and building relationships between the staffs of public agencies and respondent organizations.

---

[9] Minnesota Climate Innovation and Finance Authority and the Minnesota Department of Commerce. 2025. *Request for Information*. (Appended to this document).
[10] Minnesota Climate Innovation and Finance Authority. 2025. *October 15, 2025 Board Meeting*.
[11] Minnesota Climate Innovation and Finance Authority. 2026. "MnCIFA Call for Financing Applications."
[12] Arun, A. 2023. *The SEFI Carveout*. Center for Public Enterprise.

Upon reviewing RFI responses, agencies should begin building a project pipeline. This involves a number of steps:

- Identify projects that currently meet the qualifications for particular products. Connect those projects and their sponsors to agency staff who can immediately begin disbursing financing under current rules.
- Identify projects that are likely to meet the qualifications for upcoming or yet-to-be-developed products that are within agency authority. This process should draw from ongoing conversations with potential and actual RFI respondents as well as intra-agency discussions on future programs and authorities. Use this information to inform program development so that projects and sponsors can move towards investment.
- Identify projects that have needs that cannot be met by current or imminent programs. For these projects, conduct a "gap analysis" of their financing needs. This kind of analysis identifies what barriers stand between various projects and securing the financing to proceed with construction.
    - Determine if those gaps could be addressed by current or imminent agency authority. If yes, use this information to inform program development so that projects and sponsors can move towards investment.
    - If identified gaps cannot be addressed, determine if the agency should seek modification of its capitalization or authorities to address these gaps for future projects.
- Consider follow-up steps to ensure a project pipeline constantly moves projects from identification to completion:
    - Can you post a version of your RFI with no fixed termination date so that projects can continually be identified?
    - Can you pre-certify or pre-qualify borrowers or contractors in a project pipeline?
    - Can you connect projects ineligible for your own pipeline with the pipelines or programs of other state and municipal instrumentalities? This step could be used to offer assistance to projects deemed outside the scope of your agency's mission. But it can also be a means to reinforce the importance of your particular pipeline and information gathering efforts, by allowing your agency to "qualify" projects for other programs.

These steps are not designed to be comprehensive. RFIs are an important intermediary step in program implementation. It is up to agencies to use the information creatively and to decide how or if it applies to their particular goals. This brief is designed with the assumption that deployment, scaling investment, and cultivating clean energy continue to be important public policy goals at the state and local level. RFIs can serve that purpose. A host of organizations, including the Center for Public Enterprise and the State Support Center, stand ready to help agencies make best use of this tool.

Appendix: Model RFI—VERSION 2

Instructions

Note the issuer will be known as **"the agency"** in this RFI.

The agency is soliciting information from potential public- and private-sector partners on potential opportunities to support projects using **[summarize financial or development tools offered]** which advance state-level **[INSERT sectors: energy, housing, transportation, industrial, infrastructure resilience, adaptation, etc.]** goals with public financing from **the agency** . This Request for Information (RFI) is for information-gathering purposes only and should not be construed as a solicitation or obligation on the part of **the agency** to provide funding. We are especially interested in projects which advance **[INSERT examples connecting above sectoral goals to the agency's policy goals]**.

Respondents do not need to address every question and should focus on those where they have views or relevant expertise. Respondents may provide detailed responses and examples.

All comments received, including attachments and other supporting materials, are part of the public record and subject to public disclosure. Respondents should only submit information that they wish to make available and should not enclose any information considered confidential or inappropriate for public disclosure.

Responses must be received by **DATE**, at **TIME**. Written responses must be submitted via one of the following options:

- Email: [**address**], as a PDF with the subject line [**subject line**]
- Regular United States mail to: [**address**]

Background

The agency is seeking to solicit projects as part of the process of deploying its financing facilities. **The agency** is examining a variety of options to provide meaningful support including but explicitly not limited to:

- Concessional loans
- Construction bridge loan financing
- Loan loss guarantees
- Equity financing
- Grants

- Tax credit incentives
- In-kind project development contributions

The agency, in examining all options for providing meaningful support, asks applicants to provide input into the kinds of project financing arrangements they might prefer.

The agency seeks applications from private industry, public entities (including but not limited to school districts, municipalities, counties, public power organizations, special districts), and non-profit organizations to better understand the kinds of projects they may be interested in developing and would need state and federal support for.

Project Types

The agency is seeking opportunities to partner with project developers to establish financing for projects which **[refer to sectoral and policy goals above; *e.g.*, "reduce emissions and increase the resiliency of our energy system."]**. **The agency** is seeking to gauge private, public, and nonprofit interest in developing and operating projects in a subset of these categories that align with **[INSERT X or Y agency priority]**.

- Target sectors include but are not limited to:
- Renewable energy systems, utility- and rooftop-scale
- Energy storage technologies
- Other clean electrical generation
- Electricity transmission and distribution
- Efficient end-use energy technologies
- Industrial decarbonization technologies
- Industrial, manufacturing, and logistics site development
- Zero-emissions transport
- Residential and commercial building decarbonization and weatherization
- Multifamily housing: mixed-income, market-rate, or affordable

Illustrative examples of projects **the agency** looks favorably upon include:

- Deep building retrofits, prioritizing energy efficiency upgrades, weatherization, and fuel switching to renewable and/or electric sources, for the existing building stock—encompassing residential, commercial, industrial, medical, educational mixed-use, and other public and private community-serving facilities
- Renewable energy installation, including utility-scale and distributed-scale resources, and potentially virtual power plants
- Transmission and distribution grid upgrades that allow for better grid reliability, limited grid congestion, and smoother integration of variable resources; upgrades include but

are not limited to smart transformers, reconductoring, and other grid-enhancing technologies (GETs)
- Electrification of transportation fleets and related infrastructure, with a focus on options for decarbonizing mass transit (rail and bus) and trucking fleets
- Net-zero housing, with a focus on multifamily units

Response

The RFI is intended for anyone planning to invest in clean energy and looking for attractive financing options, or with ideas for moving the state forward in deploying clean energy and expanding the clean energy economy at scale. This includes but is not limited to:

- Businesses of all sizes
- Economic development organizations
- Local units of government and other community leaders
- Community organizations
- Public and community institutions such as universities, hospitals, and school systems
- Financial institutions, including community development financial institutions
- Energy infrastructure owners and developers

Please provide the following information in your response:

- The applying organization's name, and a brief description of the organization's business, mission, or governing mandate
- Description of potential projects you are interested in developing and securing financing for
- The project lead and project team's existing development experience
- Project siting considerations, including whether the organization has secured rights to the site
- Public benefits of project development, including labor and emissions-reduction benefits
- Current financing prospects, and capital stack to date, if possible
- A description of how **the agency** can assist with improving project viability and preferred investment mechanisms
- Status of existing project pipeline and project progress
- Domestic content outlook, including a description of your potential supply chain and subcontractors and your ability to engage in a domestic content or "foreign entities of concern" attestation insofar as your project may be eligible for federal support
- Other technical assistance capabilities and/or needs