EMPOWER GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

August 2026

Updated with live Q&A from our Webinar

I have a question about the grant program. Who can I talk to?
You can contact Melissa Onishi at HE-Grants@leidos.com. You can also reach out to your Energy Advisor for guidance. Don't know who your Energy Advisor is? Visit our team page for a list under *Program Delivery - Commercial*.

Do I need to provide information about the existing equipment being replaced?

Yes! Please submit the existing equipment make, model, and approximate age to Hawai'i Energy with your grant application. JPG photos of the existing equipment and name plate/label(s) are required to confirm the equipment being replaced. Hawai'i Energy reserves the right to conduct an onsite pre-approval inspection before a grant is awarded. *Note; Projects located on TMK/addresses directly impacted by the August 2023 Lahaina and Upcountry wildfire event or 2026 Kona Low Storms will not need to meet the replacement of existing equipment requirement.*

What if there is no old equipment to remove, such as for a roof or window project?
You do not need to show equipment removal records for these types of projects, but you must still substantiate the new installation. Please provide an itemized contractor quote, proposed product specification sheets, and "before" photos of the space.

Do I need to purchase equipment first to have my application considered for a grant?
No! It is **not required** that any purchases need to be made to be considered for a grant. The review process for applications will not factor in if purchases have already been made or not.

How much grant funding will I receive?
Applying for a grant does not guarantee applicant will be offered a grant. If an EmPOWER Grant is awarded, the amount will be listed on the award letter to be sent to grant awardees via email once Hawai'i Energy completes its review process of each application.

How do I know if my energy efficiency project is eligible for the grant program?
This year's program has six tiers of eligible equipment types with six different grant funding caps potentially available for each tier. Please visit the grant program's website for the complete eligible equipment list, including details on the tiers and associated grant funding caps.

Is there an application deadline?
Starting August 5, applications will be accepted, reviewed, and processed on a ***first-come, first-served basis*** until funding is exhausted.

Please email application packages to Melissa Onishi at HE-Grants@leidos.com as soon as possible to be considered for available program funding.

Who can apply?
To apply, a business must meet the following requirements:

- Both the applicant and project must be eligible for the Hawai'i Energy commercial incentive program (see "Eligibility" on the Hawai'i Energy Commercial Incentive Application).
- Applicant must also fall into **one** of the following categories:
  - 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations
  - Small businesses with electric rate Schedule "G"
  - Small business receiving electric service under a commercial rate schedule with demand less than or equal to 30 kilowatts (kW) per month
  - Restaurant
    - ***Independent*****:** Privately owned, owner-operated, and a non-chain establishment
    - ***Local Chain/Franchise***: Independently owned by Hawai'i residents, and explicitly not owned or operated by a national hospitality company or publicly traded corporation.
    - ***Hotel/Resort Location*****:** Operated as an independently owned business located inside a hotel or resort.
  - Small business with less than 5,000 sq. ft. facility

If your utility rate schedule changes, you can still qualify for the program as long as you continue to meet one of the eligibility categories above.

How do you apply?
There are a few steps to apply for the EmPOWER Grant:

1. Choose an eligible energy efficiency improvement project.
2. Obtain itemized quotes from a few Clean Energy Ally contractors and select one. A full list of our Clean Energy Allies is available on our website.
3. Complete and submit the following required documents:

- EmPOWER Grant Application (*available on grant program website*)
- Hawai'i Energy Commercial Incentive Application (*available on grant program website*)
- IRS Form W-9 (*blank form available on grant program website*)
- Itemized quote (*obtain from chosen Clean Energy Ally contractor*). This quote should also include removal and disposal of the old equipment
- Photos of the existing equipment to be replaced and name plate/label(s) (.jpg, .png, or .pdf formats)
- Proposed equipment specification sheets or submittals (*obtain from chosen Clean Energy Ally contractor*)
- For 501(c)3 organizations only: IRS 501(c)3 Determination Letter

Are the EmPOWER Grant funds taxable?
Based on your tax status and grant amount, you may receive IRS Form 1099 from Hawai'i Energy showing tax eligible grant amounts.

Can I work with any contractor?
No. To be eligible for an EmPOWER Grant, you must choose a contractor from our pre-approved list of Clean Energy Allies. To find contractors who are most active in the program, use the filters on the vendor list to narrow your search by location, select "business" for the type, and look for the golden "Pluggy" icon next to a contractor's name — it marks our top-performing Clean Energy Allies, who are highly active and familiar with the program.

I completed a project recently. Can I apply for a grant for that project during this application extension period?
Projects are eligible for EmPOWER Grant consideration if the signed proposal/quote/contract and deposit is dated on or after August 5, 2026.

Purchases made outside of the grant window will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with pre-approval. When will I know if I received a grant or not?
Applicants who are awarded a grant will be sent an award letter via email from Hawai'i Energy upon completion of its review of each application.

When will I receive the grant money from Hawai'i Energy?
Funds from the EmPOWER Grant will be disbursed as a reimbursement after the efficiency project is complete and a copy of the "Paid in Full" invoice for the project is received by Hawai'i Energy. All required documentation must be submitted, verified and approved by Hawai'i Energy before the check can be mailed.

Can I use the grant to pay a third party such as my contractor?
Yes. You may pass on the payment to your contractor after you receive the check in the mail from Hawai'i Energy. Work with your contractor or vendor if you would like the payment to be sent directly to a third party.

What if my energy efficiency project or equipment idea does not fit into the standard tiers on the Eligible Equipment Types list?
You can still apply! Under Hawaii Energy's "Let's Talk!" (Tier 6) initiative, projects that fall outside standard equipment lists are eligible for custom, case-by-case reviews. If your project meets Hawaii Energy's strict energy savings thresholds, it may qualify for an increased grant cap of up to $10,000 (or up to $15,000 for Maui County and Hawaii County facilities).
Please email your detailed project scope directly to Melissa Onishi at **HE-Grants@Leidos.com** to initiate a preliminary review.

How does eligibility work if I'm a tenant, a landlord, or my property has multiple utility accounts?
Tenant businesses are welcome to apply, even if the electric bill is in the property owner's name - the landlord will simply need to sign off on the Commercial Incentive Application. Eligibility is evaluated on a per-commercial-account basis, so separate legal entities on a shared property (such as tenants in a business complex) may apply independently as long as each holds a qualifying commercial rate schedule and secures any required property owner authorization. If a single master meter serves multiple tenants, we review those situations on a case-by-case basis - please contact us at HE-Grants@leidos.com with your specific setup so we can confirm how to apply.

I have a home-based, a farm business, or a non-profit. Can equipment there still qualify?
Eligibility is determined by your Hawaiian Electric (HECO) rate schedule, not by the type of equipment or how your property is laid out. To qualify, your setup must be tied to an eligible commercial account. If your entire property is metered under a standard residential rate (Schedule "R"), it would not be eligible. We recommend checking your latest utility bill or contacting us at HE-Grants@leidos.com so we can help verify your rate code.

Are off-grid systems eligible for the grant?
No. Off-grid systems and equipment do not qualify for this program. All installations must be grid-tied to an eligible HECO commercial account.

Can I combine multiple upgrades - like window film and a cool roof - into one application?
No. Each eligible measure is considered a separate upgrade and requires its own application. Please submit a separate application for each measure, based on the tiers outlined in our Eligible Equipment List.

Do I need pre-approval before signing a contract or paying a deposit?
Yes. We advise against executing binding vendor agreements or paying deposits until you have applied for and receive an EmPOWER Grant Award Letter from Hawai‘i Energy. Committing to projects beforehand risks eligibility, since funding cannot be reserved for your project in advance of applying.

Does the grant cover new or additional equipment, or only replacements?
To be considered for a grant, you must be replacing existing equipment. Please submit the existing equipment’s make, model, and approximate age, along with the required pre-installation photos, with your application to substantiate the project. Building envelope measures, such as roof or window upgrades, are evaluated differently.

If I’m on a residential utility rate, can I change it to qualify for this program?
Hawai‘i Energy is not able to change your utility rate schedule. Rate inquiries must be directed to HECO.