

Appendix A: Interview Guides

Program Participants

Introductory Questions

1. Did you apply for funding under a Program Opportunity Notice (PON)?
 - a. If yes, which one?
 - i. (If *not* PON 2606) Did you receive follow-on funding?
 - b. If no, are you aware of PONs?
 - i. How did you go about acquiring funding from NYSERDA?

Stage-Gate Process

1. When you applied for funding, were you aware that you would be eligible to receive subsequent funding from NYSERDA to either develop or demonstrate your product/process? Did anyone at NYSERDA explain the stage-gating process to you?
 - a. If yes, how?
2. Does the stage-gating process make sense to you?
 - a. If not, in what areas do you need more information/clarification?
3. Have you applied for more than one phase of funding for your project?
 - a. YES: Which stages did your project move between?
4. Within your contract, were milestones or Go/No-Go tasks set up?
 - a. YES: Did NSYERDA tie funding allocations to these milestones?

If “YES” to either 3 or 4:

5. Did you plan to take advantage of stage-gating (either as separate application or within one contract) at the time of your proposal? Or did this evolve as you worked with your project manager to finalize your contract?
6. Did stage-gating make the funding process easier or harder for you? Why?
7. What is your impression of the effectiveness of stage-gating for moving new technologies into markets?
 - a. Strongly favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Neither favorable nor unfavorable
 - d. Somewhat unfavorable

- e. Strongly unfavorable
- f. No awareness of stage-gating

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If “NO” to *both* 3 and 4:

8. Are there any particular reasons why you have not taken advantage of stage-gating opportunities?
9. Are you aware of agencies or organizations that have successfully and/or effectively integrated solicitation and stage-gating processes?
10. Have you or your organization applied for other funding sources that were stage-gated? If yes, explain.
11. In your experience, are there certain types of programs, technologies, markets or strategies where stage-gating is more effective?
12. Do you have thoughts on how NYSERDA’s solicitation process could effectively implement stage-gating moving forward?
13. Do you think that stage-gating is a helpful strategy for the Advanced Buildings Program to apply? Why or why not?
14. Are you likely to take advantage of stage-gating opportunities in the future? Why or why not?

Solicitation Process [FOR PARTICIPANTS THAT RECEIVED FUNDING FROM PON 2606 ONLY]

15. How did the solicitation process go for you?
16. Do you prefer a fillable form proposal, which the Advanced Buildings Program uses to guide applicants through the proposal, or do you prefer an open narrative format? Please explain.
17. When you submitted your NYSERDA proposal, did you read the full terms and conditions before selecting “Yes” or “No”?
18. Did you select “Yes” you accepted the terms and conditions? Or did you select “No” you did not accept the terms and conditions?
 - a. YES: Were there terms and/or conditions that you would have wanted to negotiate?
19. What was your understanding of the implications for your application if you selected “No”?
20. Is it your understanding that you could select “No” and negotiate these terms and conditions with NYSERDA at the time of your proposal? Or after award?
21. Is there a certain person(s), other than yourself, in your organization authorized to designate your acceptance or exception to the terms and conditions of the proposal?

Technology Readiness Level and Commercial Readiness Level Calculators

22. What is your general view of TRLs and CRLs as concepts?

23. Do your other funders, outside of NYSERDA, ask for information from your organization relative to TRL and/or CRL?
24. Does your organization use the TRL or CRL concepts for internal planning purposes?
25. Do you think that a TRL and/or CRL calculator developed by NYSERDA could be valuable to you? Why or why not?
26. Do you foresee feasibility issues in NYSERDA developing a TRL and/or CRL calculator? If yes, please elaborate.
27. Do you have any suggestions for NYSERDA as they design a TRL and/or CRL calculator?

Program Staff

Stage-Gate Process

1. What has your general experience been with stage-gating to date?
2. Which Technology Development projects have been stage-gated?
 - a. Which stages did these projects move between?
 - b. Why were these projects stage-gated?
3. In your experience, are there certain types of programs, technologies, market or strategies where stage-gating is more effective?
4. What is your impression of the effectiveness of NYSERDA's stage-gating for moving new technologies into markets?
 - a. Strongly favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Neither favorable nor unfavorable
 - d. Somewhat unfavorable
 - e. Strongly unfavorable
 - f. No awareness of stage-gating
5. What are the current barriers to stage-gating?
6. Are you aware of agencies or organizations that have successfully and/or effectively integrated solicitation and stage-gating processes?
7. Do you have thoughts on how NYSERDA's solicitation process could better ensure successful implementation of stage-gating moving forward?
8. Do you think that participants in the Technology Development Program have a thorough understanding of stage-gating?
9. How has NYSERDA communicated the stage-gating concept to participants?

Omnibus Solicitation

10. How much time did you spend reviewing each proposal, on average, under the current PON (2606)? How much time did you spend in meetings about this PON?
11. How much time did you spend reviewing each proposal, on average, under prior PONs that were specific to one technology category? How much time did you spend in meetings about these PONs?
12. Do you think that the omnibus solicitation caused you to spend more or less time on administration overall? Why?
13. Were more awards made concurrently under the current PON (2606) than under prior PONs that were specific to one technology category? If so, did this impose a burden on Contract and Legal staff?
14. Did the omnibus solicitation streamline outreach activities?

Technology Readiness Level Calculator and Business Readiness Level Calculator

15. What do you see as the potential value of a TRL calculator to NYSERDA, and specifically to the Technology Development Program?
16. Do you think a TRL calculator could support stage-gating? If so, how?
17. Do you foresee feasibility issues in developing a TRL calculator for the Technology Development Program? If yes, please elaborate.
18. Do you think a TRL calculator would be of value to participants? Why or why not?
19. Do you have any suggestions on how NYSERDA should develop or implement a TRL calculator?
20. What do you see as the potential value of a BRL calculator to NYSERDA, and specifically to the Technology Development Program?
21. Do you think a BRL calculator could support stage-gating? If so, how?
22. Do you foresee feasibility issues in developing a BRL calculator for the Technology Development Program? If yes, please elaborate.
23. Do you think a BRL calculator would be of value to participants? Why or why not?
24. Do you have any suggestions on how NYSERDA should develop or implement a BRL calculator?

Proposal Scoring Method

25. What is the process for making fund/do not fund determinations for proposals?
 - a. Is scoring for merit conducted separately from an evaluation of project costs relative to the program's budget?
26. Does the Technology Development Program typically have more technically meritorious proposals than they have money to fund?

- a. Do you think this may change under the CEF?
27. What do you think are the potential advantages and disadvantages of changing the Technology Development Program's current approach to proposal scoring (categorizing as fund/do not fund) to adopt a three category system (must fund, may fund, do not fund)?
 28. Could the "may fund" category give program staff leeway to fund additional projects?
 29. One potential advantage often discussed is that if the "may fund" category is defined as proposals that are technically meritorious but for which resources are not available, communicating this information in some formal way to applicants may assist them with securing other sources of funding. The current higher level PON/Reputation Effect evaluation is asking applicants and potential applicants about this potential benefit. Do you know of past proposals where this "seal of approval" may have been helpful to applicants?
 - a. Do you have thoughts on how this "seal of approval" approach could work?
 30. In terms of disadvantages, do you think that a three category system would be more complex and/or costly to administer?

TEP Members

Proposal Scoring Method

1. What is the process for making fund/do not fund determinations for proposals?
 - a. Is scoring for merit conducted separately than an evaluation of project costs relative to the program's budget?
2. Does the Technology Development Program typically have more technically meritorious proposals than they have money to fund?
3. What do you think are the potential advantages and disadvantages of changing the Technology Development Program's current approach to proposal scoring (categorizing as fund/do not fund) to adopt a three category system (must fund, may fund, do not fund)?
4. In terms of disadvantages, do you think that a three category system would be more complex and/or costly to administer?
5. Do you foresee legal barriers to the above approach?
6. One potential advantage often discussed is that if the "may fund" category is defined as proposals that are technically meritorious but for which resources are not available, communicating this information in some formal way to applicants may assist them with securing other sources of funding. The current higher level PON/Reputation Effect evaluation is asking applicants and potential applicants about this potential benefit. Do you know of past proposals where this "seal of approval" may have been helpful to applicants?
 - a. Do you have thoughts on how this "seal of approval" approach could work?

Legal Staff

Administrative efficiencies

1. Can you briefly explain your role in the solicitation process (review and/or awards)?
2. Are there other staff in your department that work with the Advanced Buildings program?
3. From your perspective, how did the solicitation process differ under PON 2606 (with one, combined solicitation) versus prior PONs for this program (solicitations specific to product categories)?
 - a. Your role?
 - b. The amount of time you spent?
 - c. The outcomes/process for awards?
4. Were more awards made concurrently under the PON 2606 than under prior PONs that were specific to one technology category? In other words, do you have more awards to process at one time with the new approach, rather than more staggered awards under the old approach?
 - a. If so, did this impose a burden on you and/or your staff?
5. Are there any other factors that influence the amount of time you and/or your staff spend during the solicitation process?
 - a. Did these factors change under PON 2606? If so, how?

Proposal Scoring Method

6. What do you think are the potential advantages and disadvantages of changing the Technology Development Program's current approach to proposal scoring (categorizing as fund/do not fund) to adopt a three category system (must fund, may fund, do not fund)?
7. In terms of disadvantages, do you think that a three category system would be more complex and/or costly to administer?
8. Do you foresee legal barriers to the above approach?

Round Six Proposers

1. Under which technology area and project category (research, development, demonstration) did you apply for the most recent round of PON 2606?
 - a. Did you submit multiple proposals? If so, under which areas and categories?
2. Did you apply for funding under a previous round of PON 2606?
 - a. If yes, did you receive an award?
3. Have you received any other funding from the Advanced Buildings program under other PONs?

4. What is your general familiarity with the concepts of TRLs and CRLs?
5. Do your other funders, outside of NYSERDA, ask for information from your organization relative to TRL and/or CRL?
6. Does your organization use the TRL or CRL concepts for internal planning purposes?
7. How did the application process go for you, in general?
8. Did the TRL/CRL calculator help you decide which project category (research, development, demonstration) to apply under?
9. Did you have any difficulty filling in the options in the calculator? Were the descriptions of each option clear?
10. Did you receive any feedback from program staff at NYSERDA about your TRL/CRL determination? Please describe any feedback you received.
 - a. If yes, did they agree with your determination?
11. Do you think the options in the calculator applied to your technology? Please explain.
12. Do you think the options in the calculator adequately described your technology's readiness level? Please explain.
13. Do you think the calculator provided an accurate score for your technology?
 - a. Do you think you could have scored the TRL and CRL levels for your technology without the calculator?
14. Do you find NYSERDA's TRL/CRL calculator to be valuable to you?
15. Do you have any suggestions for improvements to NYSERDA's TRL/CRL calculator?
16. Do you have any other thoughts you want to share with us about the application process or the TRL/CRL calculator?