

SEEL Program FAQs (updated 2-24-21)

Programmatic and Process Questions:

When is the application due?

This program is offered on a first come first serve basis, so we will be accepting applications on a rolling basis until the funding has been exhausted.

Is this a recurring program?

If we have adequate funding to continue the project in the future years, it is our intention to continue the program. However, there is no guarantee that we will have the SEEL program in 2022.

What is a letter of commitment?

A letter of commitment states your organization's intent and commitment to complete a project of at least \$5,000. A draft letter is included at www.bloomington.in.gov/sustainability/seel.

What happens after we have signed a letter of commitment?

We will work with your organization and a third-party energy auditor to fully understand the needs of the building and to ensure that your organization will be able to undertake the project. The auditor will go through your facility and put together a report with recommendations about potential energy efficiency improvements to your facility. This report will help us narrow down on the projects your organization wishes to pursue and also help compile a cost estimate. The cost estimate will help us understand the amount of subsidy your organization will receive and the amount of additional dollars required through lending. If your organization needs lending, you may work with IFF to reach a lending agreement. If your organization does not have lending needs, you will move forward with selecting a contractor and pursuing the project.

What will you look at during the energy audit?

Energy audits will vary in depth, depending on the potential for energy reductions. However, you can generally expect a review of electricity and natural gas bills and cost data, energy use analysis and a report detailing low-cost or no-cost measures and recommendations for potential capital improvements for further study. Audits will be subsidized for eligible applicants.

How will organizations choose what vendors to use? Can organizations use any vendor they want for the project work?

The City of Bloomington will release an open RFQ at www.bloomington.in.gov/rfp to companies interested in participating as a vendor. Those companies will then submit their qualifications for review. All companies that have responded and are qualified to complete the type of work relevant to your project will be listed as recommendations. The vendors you then select are your decision, but the qualified vendor list will help provide relevant, qualified vendor suggestions.

Project Questions:

What is the minimum project amount?

\$5,000 is the minimum overall project amount.

What if I am not sure what energy efficiency or solar improvements to pursue?

That is perfectly fine! You can reach out to us first to address any questions that require clarification. Next, we recommend filling out an intake form and submitting a letter of commitment. On the intake form, there are questions about the types of facility improvements you are initially interested in pursuing. Check those that you initially think are the most relevant for your facility.

Once the commercial energy audit is completed for your facility, we will review the results of the audit with you and you can make a final determination what combination of improvements you would like to move forward with, as well as financing options.

Eligibility Questions:**Are faith-based or religious nonprofit organizations able to apply for this program?**

Churches (including temples, mosques, synagogues, and other houses of worship), integrated auxiliaries of churches, and conventions or associations of churches and other faith based nonprofits, are eligible for the City of Bloomington-funded grant and audit so long as those organizations are considered to be tax exempt, are located within Bloomington city limits, and have a qualifying project.

After verification of the organization's eligibility, completion of the intake form and commitment letter, and completion of the audit, we will work with the organization to determine the final project proposal. The City of Bloomington will notify the organization about what grant amount the project proposal qualifies for.

IFF is not able to provide lending to churches or faith based nonprofits. Since the grant cannot exceed 50% of the project cost, if the faith based nonprofit requires a loan to cover the remainder of the project then the organization can use an existing lending relationship or work with Brian Payne to determine an appropriate lender based on the financial structure of your organization.

If you have questions about your lending eligibility please contact cdfriendly@cfbmc.org.

Financial Questions**What are the minimum and maximum loan sizes through IFF?**

The minimum loan is \$10,000 and the maximum loan size is \$6 million.

Can I receive a grant without a loan?

Yes--your organization is not obligated to apply for a loan through IFF, it is just an option available through this program. IFF is a mission driven lender focused specifically on nonprofits and can be a resource to address your financing needs, especially for larger projects. If your project costs do not exceed \$10,000 or if your organization has the means to cover the remainder of the project costs that are not covered by the grant through assets an existing banking relationship, then no IFF lending is necessary.

Keep in mind that the City of Bloomington grant can not exceed 50% of total project costs and the maximum grant amount from the City is \$10,000. If your project cost exceeds those amounts, your organization may want to consider working with IFF to evaluate whether a loan is an appropriate option.

Can I take the loan through my local bank instead through IFF?

IFF is only a partner of the City of Bloomington through this project, and you are not required to take a loan through IFF. If you have an existing relationship with your local bank and would prefer to use them for financing this project, that is absolutely fine.

What kind of collateral will be required against the loan?

The collateral ask will depend on the kind of project undertaken by your organization. If you are looking to simply install solar panels on the building, we will hold collateral on the equipment purchased with the loan funds. If you are looking at a remodeling or reconstruction project, then we might consider the building itself as the collateral.

Is there a prepayment penalty on IFF loans?

No, there is no prepayment penalty.

What is the typical payback period for a solar panel project?

The payback period for a solar panel project will depend on the project size. We will be able to determine this after the energy audit has been completed. For a typical commercial project, an expected payback period is about 5-10 years.