

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Nuclear Energy Voucher Program?

A: The Nuclear Energy Voucher Program, sponsored by the United States' Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Nuclear Energy (NE), is a program to assist industry applicants seeking access to the nuclear energy-related knowledge and capabilities available across the DOE complex.

Q: How much funding is available?

A: For the current cycle, the amount to be made available is contingent upon Congressional appropriation. It is anticipated that a funding level of approximately \$4M - \$5M will be available each fiscal year.

Q: What is a voucher, and how much will each voucher be worth?

A: The voucher is like a coupon that can be redeemed for work at selected facilities. Vouchers provide funding to a DOE national laboratory to conduct research or technical support activities to help businesses overcome critical technology and commercialization challenges. Vouchers are not financial awards made directly to businesses. The final value of each voucher will be negotiated but will range from \$50,000-\$500,000 with requests for awards larger than \$500K possibly considered in cases with a clear need and involving a truly exceptional technology or innovation. Vouchers cannot be used to obtain a service or use equipment that is available in the private sector.

DOE-NE anticipates awarding up to 20 vouchers. A selected business will be required to provide a minimum of 20 percent cost-share, which can be in the form of cash or in-kind work, etc.

The Department intends that the vouchers be used within 12 months from the date the agreement is executed. It is **not** taxable income for your business.

Q: Can vouchers be used to support fundamental R&D or irradiation experiments?

A: Proposed work should be of an applied nature for an identified technology or system, i.e., beyond the stage of establishing the fundamental scientific principles. Proving out a fundamental scientific hypothesis or development of a new constitutive model for a physical phenomenon is not aligned with the voucher program (there are other DOE programs such as the Consolidated Innovative Nuclear Research (CINR) FOA or ARPA-E opportunities that are focused on fundamental science or research and development). Data generation intended to be utilized in a previously proven constitutive model in support of technology development or validation of system behavior (i.e., practical use) is more appropriately aligned.

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Applications requesting neutron irradiation (test reactor) capability will only be considered for award if the nature of the proposed work utilizes a previously designed irradiation capsule or no capsule (i.e., pool access for gamma exposure, etc.) and adheres to the principles described in the above paragraph. In general, the DOE Nuclear Science User Facilities (nsuf.inl.gov) are the preferred pathway for irradiation experiments.

Q: Who is eligible to apply and what is required?

A: An eligible requester is a business that (1) is majority (51%) owned by a U.S. citizen or lawfully admitted permanent resident alien, or a U.S. based corporation; (2) is organized according to the laws of any of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, or any US territory or possession; and (3) operates primarily within the U.S. Products embodying intellectual property developed under the assistance must be substantially manufactured in the United States. Requestors must certify that they will accept one of the NE Voucher Program Agreements and they will provide the required 20 percent (or more) cost-share upon selection for a voucher.

Universities and national laboratories are not eligible to apply.

Q: What agreements will be used for the NE Voucher Program?

A: DOE has developed two standard agreements to be used under the voucher program, including a standard Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) and a GAIN Small Business Voucher CRADA. All voucher recipients will sign one of these two standard agreements, depending on their classification. Both templates are available at <https://gain.inl.gov>

- **GAIN Small Business Voucher CRADA:** Small Business/Non-Profit voucher requesters with NO foreign ownership/control/influence. The GAIN Small Business Voucher CRADA will be the agreement mechanism for requesters that qualify as small or Non-Profit entities as defined in section B and are not determined to be owned, controlled, or influenced by a foreign government, agency, firm, or corporation.
- **DOE-Standard CRADA:** Large Business and all eligible voucher requesters with foreign ownership/control/influence. The DOE-Standard CRADA will be the agreement mechanism for requesters that do not meet the requirements for Small/Non-Profit businesses and/or are determined by DOE to be owned, controlled, or influenced by a foreign government, agency, firm, or corporation.

The transfer of technology and data resulting from the work done under an NE Voucher award by any recipient to a foreign entity will be subject to U.S. Government export control laws and regulations.

Q: Can the CRADA terms and conditions be negotiated?

A: DOE-NE is committed to reducing the processing time and expediting the conduct of work to support the business community under the voucher pilot; therefore, standard terms and conditions in the CRADAs will not be negotiated unless DOE determines that it is necessary in exceptional cases.

Q: Can you clarify whether intellectual property (IP) remains with the applicant?

A: Generally, inventions created under the program will be owned by the party making the invention. The applicant also has a nonexclusive license in the Lab's inventions under a CRADA and an option to negotiate an exclusive license. Data produced under a CRADA may be protected for a period of five years and may be copyrighted at the applicant's option. The government will have a nonexclusive license in any inventions or copyright. Please refer to the specific agreements for further details.

Q: Should I include proprietary information in my Request for Assistance (RFA)?

A: No. Please do not provide any proprietary information in your RFA, or in supporting documentation or resumes.

Q: Can I submit more than one application?

A: Each eligible entity may submit only one application since it is DOE-NE's intent to hold the call open for the entire year with approximate quarterly review and award periods.

Q: If I received a voucher under the previous call, am I eligible to submit an RFA in this call?

A: Yes, recipients of vouchers in the previous call are eligible to receive a voucher under the current NE Voucher program. However, each applicant is allowed no more than \$975,000 (not including cost share) in active voucher funding awards resulting from this RFA. Applications for additional voucher funding will be considered if an active voucher(s) for the applicant is anticipated to be completed within three months of submission of the new application, as long as the total voucher funding will remain below \$975,000 with the new award.

Example 1 – Entity has no current active vouchers. Entity can apply for one voucher per cycle and awards may be made until the funding (not including cost share) reaches the \$975,000 active voucher limit. The limit on each voucher of approximately \$500,000 (Section C) is still applicable.

Example 2 – Entity has three active vouchers each worth \$300,000 for a total of \$900,000. Option 1 – Entity would be eligible to apply for a \$75,000 voucher. Option 2 – If one of the \$300,000 vouchers is anticipated to be complete within three months of submission of the new application, then entity could apply for a voucher up to \$375,000 (not including cost share).

Q: Can you explain the concept of cost-share and in-kind services?

A: Cost-share of no less than 20% is required. Requesters may provide cost-share in the form of cash or in-kind contributions for things such as personnel costs; indirect costs; facilities and administrative costs; rental value of buildings or equipment; and the value of a service, other resource, or third party in-kind contribution; etc. The 20% cost share is calculated based on the

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total cost of the project, including the cost share (i.e., the sum of the government cost and the voucher recipient cost equals the total cost of the project).

Cost-share contribution must be reasonable, allowable, and allocable under the applicable Federal cost principles. In addition, cost share must be verifiable during the process to finalize scope, cost and schedule following selection. Requesters may use funding or property received from state or local governments to meet the cost-share requirement, so long as the funding was not provided to the state or local government by the Federal Government. The following sources may NOT be used by the requester to meet its cost-share obligations, including, but not limited to, revenues or royalties from the prospective operation of an activity beyond the project period; proceeds from the prospective sale of an asset of an activity; federal funding or property (e.g., Federal grants, equipment owned by the Federal Government); or expenditures that were reimbursed under a separate Federal Technology Office. For example, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)/Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) funding cannot be used to provide in-kind or direct cost-share. Small businesses with SBIR/STTR funding can make a request for assistance under the NE Voucher Program, but the scope of work must be distinct from existing SBIR/STTR projects.

For more information on allowable cost-share, please refer to the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Part 31 at <http://farsite.hill.af.mil/reghtml/regs/far2afmcfars/fardfars/far/31.htm>).

Q: If I already have Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) funding for a similar project, can that money be used as cost-share?

A: No. SBIR funding, even if from another agency, cannot be used as cost-share. Federal funding cannot be considered cost-share.

Q: What labs, partner facilities are available and how can I learn what capabilities exist?

A: Our goal is to improve access to the capabilities that exist across the complex of DOE National Laboratories. A description of capabilities available within the DOE complex may be found by visiting respective laboratory websites. Information on accessible facilities and experimental capabilities can be obtained by utilizing the Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Database (<https://nsuf-infrastructure.inl.gov/>).

Q: Is voucher work performed to NQA-1 standards?

A: Generally speaking, voucher work will be conducted at a research and development quality level. However, the DOE laboratories are capable of accommodating full NQA-1 standard work and may be requested to do so with the understanding that extra cost is associated with higher quality level.

Q: Are Nuclear Science User Facility partner university facilities available for use of a voucher?

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A: In general, the vouchers are intended to be used at facilities available at DOE national laboratories. However, NE reserves the right to refer voucher work to any NSUF partner as needed. These needs will be reviewed and decided upon by GAIN and NE staff.

Q: What are the selection criteria and how are they weighted?

A: The three criterion and their weightings are

- Technical Merit (50 Points)
- Business and Market Impact (40 Points)
- Qualifications and Experience (10 Points)
- Note: Small businesses (those who have less than 500 employees) will receive extra consideration in the form of 5 bonus points added to their review score.

For additional information on the Merit Review Criteria, see Section E of the NE Voucher Program Request for Assistance (RFA).

Q: What information will I be asked to provide in the Request for Assistance (RFA), and how long does the RFA submission process take?

A: NE Voucher application instructions are available on the GAIN Website. You will be required to create an account using the link to the application page. You can access this page up to the time quarterly voucher applications are due to add information and make changes as long as you click the SAVE button. A technical narrative document is required, which will be uploaded to the application site. A short resume document is optional. The application process should take less than 30 minutes to complete, assuming all of your information is readily available.

Q: How do I submit a Request for Assistance (RFA)?

A: If you are interested in submitting an application, please access the NE Voucher Program on the GAIN Website at <https://gain.inl.gov>.

Q: How long after I submit my request will I know whether or not I will receive a voucher?

A: The notional schedule (depending on annual appropriations) for the program is (starting from each quarterly due date):

- 0 weeks – 5:00 P.M. ET, application submissions are collected for review.
- 6 weeks – Expected notification of quarterly awardees
- 12 weeks – Planned finalization of statement of work, budget, and cost share with DOE facility
- 18 weeks – Expected finalization of agreements
- 19 weeks – Voucher work expected to begin

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Quarterly voucher application due dates will be January 31, April 30, July 31, and October 31 on an annual basis. If a due date happens to fall on a Saturday or Sunday, the due date is the following Monday.

This schedule anticipates evaluating all applications and making preliminary selections within roughly eight weeks. Selected recipients would be notified at this time to begin working directly with the GAIN point of contact in order to finalize the work scope, cost (including cost-share) and schedule.

In the event, that the scope, cost, and schedule parameters become inconsistent with the voucher program parameters, or are not mutually agreeable, the preliminary selection for that recipient will be cancelled and an alternative selection will be made.

Q: Can I team with a national laboratory to develop an application?

A: Yes, such a teaming arrangement will be helpful in determining feasibility and cost for proposed work scope, but it is not required. The application form provides an opportunity to identify the specific capability that you are interested in (e.g., facility, capability, and point of contact), if known, but this is not mandatory. It should be noted that the application belongs to the business applicant alone and will be judged based on the merit evaluation criteria, which are focused on the business and the merits of its application.

A business that desires assistance with locating applicable capability in the national laboratory complex may contact the GAIN office or the points of contacts listed in the Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Database to explore the available capabilities and how they may address your needs.

Q: Can multiple businesses teams submit a common Request for Assistance?

A single entity (i.e., eligible business) will be the recipient of the voucher, will enter into the appropriate agreement (i.e., GAIN Small Business Voucher CRADA or DOE Standard CRADA) and will be obligated to provide the required cost share. This does not preclude an eligible business from entering into external agreements with other businesses as appropriate to share the cost and benefits of a proposal. If, for example, the market impacts/benefits extend beyond the business that is applying, that could be discussed in the application as a favorable element.