



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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REPORT

Department: Department of Environment & Sustainability

Report Title: Cook County Solar Schools Grant Program Board Report

Report Period: 5/21/2020 - 9/30/2020

Summary: As required by Resolution Number 20-2567 Establishing the Cook County K-12 Solar Schools Initiative that was approved by the Board on 5/21/2020, the following is the annual report for Cook County Solar Schools Grant program.

Program Information

The Cook County Solar Schools Grant program officially launched on 8/3/2020. The Cook County Solar Schools Grant provides supplemental funding to grantees of the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation's (ICECF) K-12 Solar Schools Program, a program that supports the installation of 1kW photovoltaic (PV) systems throughout Illinois institutions serving grades K-12. To receive supplemental funding through the Cook County Solar Schools program, applicants must serve the K-12 population in Cook County, Illinois; be a recognized public school by the IL State Board of Education (ISBE); and be a grantee of the IL Clean Energy Foundation's K-12 Solar Schools Program. Preference is given to Title-1 school-wide funded and Title-1 school-wide eligible schools, in which children from low-income families make up at least 40% of the enrollment.

The Cook County Solar Schools program will award up to \$4,999 per school including:

- Up to 10% of the remaining costs of the 1kw PV system, not covered by ICECF, including supplies, installation and labor, not to exceed \$2,000
- An award of up to \$1,500 to the school for the purposes of setting up an operations and maintenance fund for the PV system to ensure its long-term operation for the school community
- Up to \$1,500 towards the costs of the Solarbration and educational resources related to renewable energy, and/or signage for the installation.

Program Promotion

DES advertised this program between the program launch and the application deadline. The following methods were used for promotion:

- Sent out emails to DES's newsletter list
- Sent out an email to a list of Chicago Public School administrators and a list of Suburban Cook public school administrators
- Communicated with the ISBE's Regional Offices in Cook County who shared the information in the following manner:
 - North Cook sent to their principals and shared at a Curriculum and Instruction Networking meeting
 - West Cook sent to their superintendents, principals and curriculum directors
 - South Cook sent it out via their normal communication with their schools
- Held a webinar on August 11th with the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation to discuss program details with 29 registrants
- Notified Commissioners and asked to share with their communities

- Listed as a resource link on the ICECF's K-12 Solar Schools grant website
- Posted relevant information to DES's social media

Completed Applications Status

The original application deadline was August 27, 2020, but it was then extended to September 4, 2020 to match ICECF's grant application deadline extension. DES received 3 applications for the Cook County Solar Schools Grant this cycle to date.

Solar Installation Repair Funds

Additionally, the Cook County Solar Schools Grant program can address necessary repairs of ICECF grantee schools' solar installations that are no longer working as they should. ICECF has alerted DES that there are 10 schools in Cook County that fall into this category and that in total the repairs would cost between \$8-10,000. DES is working with ICECF to determine what is the best process to work with these schools to get these repairs made so that the solar panels are again functional and can be used as a learning instrument.

Upcoming Program Schedule

The program schedule moving forward is as such:

November: ICECF finalizes awards. Schools have 30 days to sign agreements. ICECF lets County know which schools were accepted.

December: DES reviews eligible Cook County Solar Schools grant applications and accepts schools into grant program.

Nov - Nov: Schools have one year to install PV installation and host the Solarbration.

When schools have proof of installation, curriculum in use, photos, system online, etc., that is acceptable to ICECF, ICECF pays, and schools can submit appropriate documentation to Cook County for payment.

As not all funds were allocated this grant cycle-

November: DES starts another round of outreach, for the ICECF's next (February) bi-annual award cycle.

Reappropriation of Funds

DES is recommending re-appropriating the full amount of the original \$120,000 in funds in the Department's FY2021 budget request made to the Department of Budget and Management Services, since the funds will not be spent during FY2020.