



Illinois Clean Energy

community foundation

Net Zero Energy Building

FAQs

What does the NZEB program fund?

The NZEB program funds project costs and building components related to maximizing energy efficiency and self-generation. In addition, NZEB grants will also help defray a portion of the costs associated with certification, measurement and verification, and educational displays and signage. The Foundation will steer its support to hard costs first.

How long will the grant application process take?

Once you have submitted the Pre-Proposal Application, the process is expected to take 4 months or longer.

How does the grant application process work?

1. Once you have committed to pursuing your Net Zero Energy Building (NZEB) project, have basic project details in place and have determined what type of certification you would like to pursue, you are ready to submit a Request for Ideas (RFI) Form. This form, which is for informational purposes, will only be accepted if it is submitted by the project owner. The RFI is not a request for funding but starts the conversation about your project. The Foundation will follow up within two weeks and work with you if you decide to apply for a NZEB grant. RFIs can be submitted at any time but are due no later than 9 weeks before the competitive grant cycle for which you would like to apply.
2. The Foundation will invite promising ideas to apply for funding based on alignment with program guidelines, criteria, and Foundation interest. To officially start the grant application process, you must submit a Pre-Proposal Application during one of the competitive grant cycles. When ready to apply, eligible applicants will receive Pre-Proposal application links via e-mail prior to the competitive grant cycle. Your project must have completed schematic design and should be in design development. Phius projects should have completed their Feasibility Study. The Foundation will notify you within 2 months of your submission with a status update on your application. Some projects will be invited to submit a Full Proposal (FP) while others may be declined.
3. Projects selected to proceed in the grant application process will be invited to submit a FP. At the time of the FP submission, the project must have:
 - a. completed design development
 - b. obtained Phius pre-certification (if seeking Phius certification)
 - c. registered with the International Living Future Institute (ILFI) and completed the Development Design Review (if seeking ILFI Living Building Challenge (LBC) certification)
 - d. final documentation and specification for educational displays and signage

- e. final measurement and verification specifications and plans.

The project must be ready to proceed with construction if a grant is awarded.

How will the grant be paid?

NZEB program grants will be paid in two installments:

- Up to 60% once the building is occupied and building performance monitoring has begun; and
- Up to 40% after 12 consecutive months of site net zero energy performance and completion of at least one of the following certifications – Phius CORE, Phius ZERO, ILFI Full Living Building Challenge, Petal (Energy) or Zero Energy.
- In allocating support, the Foundation gives priority to hard costs.

Are displays and signage eligible for grant funding?

Yes. An essential component of the Foundation's NZEB program is education. Projects seeking Foundation support should showcase building elements, technologies, design strategies, etc. that contribute to the NZE operation of the building. 2.5% of the grant is reserved for this purpose. Use it or lose it.

If my project is seeking Phius and ILFI certification, will the grant pay for both?

No. Grant support is limited to one certification (Phius CORE, Phius ZERO, ILFI Full Living Building Challenge, Petal (Energy) or Zero Energy). However, this does not preclude the project from seeking additional certifications, including LEED.

Does project ownership affect eligibility?

Yes. In order to be eligible for funding, the project has to be 100% owned by an eligible applicant (501 (c) (3) or local government).

How should my NZE Project be metered?

The NZE project, as submitted to ICECF for grant consideration, needs to have separate utility meter(s). For example, if you have a multi-building project but only one building is applying for the Foundation's NZEB program, the building for which you are seeking funding needs to have its own, separate utility meter(s). If you have questions about how to meter your project for the NZEB program, please contact the Foundation. The NZE project also needs to have real-time load-specific data monitoring that needs to be available on a public website.

Can the NZEB be an addition to a current structure?

Yes. The NZEB can be an addition, but it must have a separate utility meter(s) and install sufficient new renewable energy generation on site to offset its annual energy consumption.

Can I use renewable technology that has previously been installed on the site?

No. A NZEB project must install sufficient new renewable energy generation on site to offset its annual energy consumption.

Why do I need to retire the environmental attributes for my project?

There is a market for environmental attributes (also called green tags, RECS, emission offsets, etc.). However, when you sell the environmental attributes from your project, you can no longer claim the associated environmental benefits. The benefits now belong to the buyer. Foundation-funded projects

may not sell their environmental attributes so they can retain and claim the associated environmental benefits of the project.

Does the NZEB program help to pay for land acquisition?

No. However, you may want to review the Foundation’s Natural Areas Programs to determine possible funding opportunities if you are looking to purchase and protect natural habitat areas.

Do I need to obtain LEED certification for my project?

No. You may obtain LEED certification for your project, but it is not required for participation in the Foundation’s NZEB Program. Grant funds may not be used to pay for LEED certification.

When should I register my project with one or more of the required certification programs?

As early as possible. The NZEB Program requires that your project obtain at least one of the following certifications: Phius CORE, Phius ZERO, ILFI Full Living Building Challenge, Petal (Energy) or ZeroEnergy. Evidence of project registration must be provided at the Full Proposal stage but we encourage applicants to begin the process as early as possible.

How do I obtain Phius Feasibility Study and Pre-Certification documents for my project?

If you decide to build your project to Phius standards, please contact Lisa White at certification@passivhouse.us. **Start early!** The Phius Feasibility Study is due with the Pre-Proposal Application. Please **allocate at least 8 weeks** for this task. Pre-certification documents, which must be submitted with the Full Proposal, require several months (or longer) to prepare. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

What is the Phius Feasibility Study and why is it required?

This **applies only to** projects seeking one of the **Phius certifications**. The Phius Feasibility Study is an initial energy model created by Phius for the project. It allows the project team and ICECF to determine if Phius certification is reasonable for the project and it is a requirement for any Phius project submitting a Pre-Proposal grant application. The cost of this Feasibility Study ranges from \$2,000 to \$4,000, depending on the size of the project. Although this is an additional expense, the study lowers the work and cost of the CPHC (Certified PassiveHouse Consultant) and includes up to 1 hour in phone consultation to discuss the energy model and any other up-front questions.

If the project team includes a CPHC (Certified Passive House Consultant), the team can create the WUFI Passive model and have Phius review it. (This service is considered a red-flag review by Phius rather than a feasibility study. A description of this service is provided in the Phius Certification Guidebook in section 5.4.1.)

What is the Design Development Review Report and why is it required?

This **applies only to** projects seeking one of the **ILFI certifications**. The ILFI’s Design Development Review Report is an initial review to determine compliance with certification requirements. It allows the project team and ICECF to determine if the project is on track to obtain certification and it is a requirement for any project pursuing ILFI certification and submitting a Full Proposal. The cost of this Design Development Review Report starts at approximately \$1,500 for Zero Energy Certification. The cost is \$3,000 and higher for projects seeking Petal or Full Living Building Certification. Although this is an additional expense, the report includes 4 hours in phone consultation to discuss overall strategies and feedback to achieve net zero (or net positive) energy performance based on other similar certified projects, and overall certification document requirements.

What is the Energy Performance Certification Letter and why is it required?

The Energy Performance Certification Letter should come from the Design Team Lead and should certify that the project, if constructed and occupied as designed, will achieve site net zero (or net positive) energy performance.

Grant Reporting

If you are awarded a grant, the full reporting requirements will be outlined in the grant agreement. You will be required to provide the Foundation with updates throughout the project. Reports are due 1) six months after award of the grant, 2) at building occupancy and start of performance monitoring, and 3) after 12 consecutive months of net zero energy performance.

When can I request payment?

You can request payment when your project has reached the following project milestones:

1. Building Occupancy and Start of Building Performance Monitoring
2. ILFI Full Living Building Challenge/Petal (Energy)/Zero Energy and/or phius CORE/phius ZERO certification and 12 consecutive months of documented Net Zero Energy Performance. Building occupancy must be at 80% (or more) during the 12 month net zero energy performance period.

What is the EcoCat IDNR Information Request Form?

If your project includes wind turbines and/or ground mounted solar arrays, you must submit an Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Information Request Form with your Pre-Proposal Application. Please go to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' [EcoCat](#) website, enter your project information, and EcoCat will generate a 1-2 page Information Request Form with the inquiry results. This form will tell you about your project's potential adverse impacts on natural areas, wetlands, and endangered species. Complete this as early as possible, in case your project will require a full consultation with IDNR.

What is a Project Requirements Document?

This is a document that fully describes the owner's requirements for the project – what is considered important and must be included in the project. The document must include the project's site net zero energy or positive net energy goal. You may also want to set an energy use intensity (EUI) target you want the building to meet.