



## **NOPEC Energized Community (NEC) Grant 2026 Program Policies**

NOPEC, Inc. and NextEra Energy have established the NOPEC Energized Community Grant Program, which provides grants to existing NOPEC member electric and gas communities. Existing member communities are defined as those with metered accounts enrolled in NOPEC's electric and/or gas aggregation during the previous calendar year. The new grant program year will begin on January 1, 2026, with the primary goal of providing funds to help communities implement energy savings or energy infrastructure measures.

NEC grants are intended to be used by member communities primarily for energy related projects. Member communities will be permitted, on a case-by-case basis, to use grants for purposes other than energy efficiency or energy infrastructure improvements.

The policies governing the grant program have been approved by the Board of Directors. The Director of Economic Development and Community Investment will have oversight and day-to-day management responsibility for the program.

**Deadlines:** NOPEC member communities that wish to accept the grant award must have a completed and approved profile by June 30, 2026. Any grant funds not accepted, with an approved community profile by June 30, 2026, will be returned to the grant pool. Grant funds must be drawn down via disbursement request by November 30, 2028. Funds not drawn down by that date will be returned to the grant pool.

**Eligibility and Notification:** Existing NOPEC member communities enrolled in both gas and electric on January 1, 2026, will be paid cash grants at the rate of [\$4] per enrolled account for gas and [\$6] per enrolled account for electric per year. Existing NOPEC member communities enrolled in the gas program on January 1, 2026, only will be paid cash grants at the rate of [\$3] per enrolled account. Existing NOPEC member communities enrolled in the electric program only on January 1, 2026, will be paid cash grants at the rate of [\$5] per enrolled account. Enrolled accounts will be determined based on an average, using Q2 and Q3, of the metered accounts enrolled for a minimum of three consecutive months will be applied. The minimum grant amount will not be less than \$250.00 for all eligible communities.

Member counties will also receive grants based on the communities and programs enrolled through the county membership. Grants will be calculated using the same averaging method as the community grants. County members will receive [\$1.50] for

gas and [\$2] for electric, per enrolled account per year, in communities enrolled for both programs, and [.50] for gas or [\$1.00] for electric, in communities enrolled for a single aggregation program.

The Chief Elected Official and the Chief Financial Official of member communities and counties will be notified by letter in January 2026 of the grant amount available for its use. Each community must enter into a grant agreement, if required, with NOPEC, Inc. Each year, the community must pass legislation accepting the grant and identifying the position (with person currently holding that position) authorized to conduct on-line program activities on behalf of the community. All grant activities, including the profile and disbursement request processes, will be completed, and submitted online.

Processing: The first step for the NEC grant program is completing the community profile. Returning users may use the same account created in prior years and new grant representatives will create a community profile in the online grant program for a new community.

As part of the profile, all communities will upload a pdf file of the legislation approved by the member community accepting the NEC grant and upload a pdf file of executed Grant Agreement. The deadline to accept the grant and upload the required documents for the profile step is June 30, 2026. Any grant funds not accepted with an approved community profile will be returned to the grant pool.

Communities must complete disbursement requests to draw down their accepted NEC Grant funds. New requests will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Appropriate supporting documents (e.g., invoices, AIA forms, or receipts) must be attached. All disbursement requests must be submitted electronically in the grant system. NEC Grant funds must be drawn down using the first in first out (FIFO) accounting method, meaning communities must draw down previous NEC Grant award balances prior to accessing the 2026 award.

Staff will review each request to determine if it meets the criteria and formally approve each project funded. Communities may begin the work during the review process, but it does not guarantee funding approval. Work that is determined to be emergencies, based on immediate health and/or safety issues, may be eligible to begin without formal approval.

Eligible uses include those that reduce electric and/or gas utility consumption through facility improvements and/or implementing infrastructure improvements. Examples include interior and exterior lighting, windows and doors, insulation, HVAC, geothermal solar, and tree canopy restoration. Streetlights and traffic lights are also eligible if a demonstrated utility savings to the community will result. Examples of ineligible projects would include vehicles or equipment (other than an emergency generator) that are powered by gasoline or diesel, and do not reduce utility costs. Project examples for eligible energy infrastructure include natural gas filling stations, electric vehicle charging

stations and emergency generators. Installing power to a facility such as a gazebo or baseball field are other examples of eligible energy infrastructure.

In addition to the projects listed above, communities may use grant funds for the lease or purchase costs of plug-in electric vehicles. Hybrid vehicles may be eligible in communities where charging station infrastructure cannot support full EVs.

Grant funds may be used to establish a fund within a community for on-going energy efficiency or infrastructure updates. The parameters of the fund and its usage must be detailed and focused. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Grants may also be used to benefit commercial properties. Options include covering the cost of energy audits or set-up costs for establishing an Energy Special Improvement District. Programs benefiting residents are also eligible. Providing residents LED light bulbs or establishing a residential energy audit program funded by the NEC grant program are two examples.

Multi-jurisdictional uses are eligible. Each community must request its own grant funds for a multi-jurisdictional use. Non-NOPEC members may be part of a multi-jurisdictional use but will not be eligible for any grant funds from NOPEC.

If a community completed work that meets the eligibility requirements within the previous calendar year it may submit that project for the grant.

If a member community conducts an energy audit for the proposed work, audit costs may be defrayed with grant funds. The audit must be performed by a credentialed professional.

Once the request is reviewed and approved, the community will receive written confirmation. Each approved request will become an exhibit to the Grant Agreement. A member community must be a member in good standing of the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council, as defined in the NOPEC, Inc. Grant Agreement with the community, at the time of written confirmation and at the time of disbursement to receive a 2026 NEC Grant award.

**Project Completion and Funds Disbursement:** Communities are responsible for contracting all work to be completed for community-owned facilities or work, in accordance with local requirements, with qualified professionals. Disbursements will be made until funds have been depleted. All disbursements will be made by Automatic Clearing House (ACH) process to an account designated by the community. For existing NOPEC communities 2026 NEC Grant awards will become available for disbursement after the community has an approved 2026 profile.

This is not a reimbursement grant, i.e., communities are not required to pay the invoice prior to submitting it for a grant disbursement. Communities create the Disbursement Request(s) with appropriate supporting documents submitted on-line. Appropriate

supporting documents include invoices or AIA forms for work completed or signed contracts that specify an advance prior to the start of the project. Quotes or proposals are not acceptable documents for Disbursement Requests.

The Director of Economic Development and Community Investment will review all disbursement requests and submit them for processing to the NOPEC CFO. All disbursements are approved by the Executive Director or other authorized person. NOPEC will close out a community's grant when all grant funds have been disbursed or any remaining funds are returned to the grant pool.

Reports: Communities using grant funds for energy efficiency projects will submit an annual report to NOPEC for two years following project completion, if the project is selected for measurement and verification. The report will provide information on the energy saved (measured by units and dollars) in the previous year resulting from that project. This report will be prepared by a third-party consultant contracted by NOPEC, Inc. The community will agree to authorize NOPEC to provide the appropriate utility account information for the designated project site to the consultant for the purpose of completing the annual reports.

The Director of Economic Development and Community Investment will track all open grants and provide periodic status reports to the NOPEC Executive Director and to both the NOPEC and NOPEC, Inc. Boards of Directors. Reports will include the number of communities with open grants available and the total funds disbursed to date.

All determinations made by NOPEC, Inc. and NOPEC in administering the NEC Grant Program, including whether a community is a member in good standing of NOPEC, shall be final, conclusive, and binding on all grant recipients.