

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DE 09-054

**RESIDENTIAL RENEWABLE ELECTRIC
GENERATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

Order Modifying Program Application Procedures

ORDER NO. 25,766

March 3, 2015

In this Order, we approve a modification of the application procedures for the existing residential renewable electric generation incentive program to permit an alternative on-line application process for use by program applicants. This change will increase the efficiency of program administration for both applicants and Commission Staff.

I. PROCEDURAL HISTORY

In 2009, the Commission approved initiation of the residential renewable electric generation facility incentive payment program provided for under RSA 362-F:10, V (Incentive Program). In October of that year, the Commission established a two-step application process for the Incentive Program, and approved the forms of paper applications required to be submitted in each step of the Incentive Program application process. *See* Order No. 25,020 (October 2, 2009).

In an order of notice issued on December 30, 2014, the Commission described the proposed alternative on-line application process modification, and sought comment on the procedures and timing for implementation of the proposal from various stakeholders, including prospective applicants, residential energy project developers, equipment vendors and installers, utility representatives, and state and regional experts on the residential renewable energy market.

The order of notice contained a link to a test web site to permit prospective applicants and other interested stakeholders to gain experience with the proposed on-line application process. A public comment hearing regarding the proposed modification was held on February 5, 2015, and written comments were accepted until February 12, 2015.

II. POSITIONS OF COMMENTERS AND STAFF

Only one person offered public comment at the hearing. Paul Button of Energy Audits Unlimited expressed support for the proposed application process modification, and stated that he had used the test web site and found it worked fairly well. Staff described the efficiency increases expected to result from the proposed modification, in terms of both applicant time and effort, and effective utilization of Commission resources. According to Staff, the proposed modification represents the first step in a larger initiative to use current technology to streamline application procedures for Commission rebate, incentive, and grant programs, and should also facilitate the approval of renewable energy certificate (REC) eligibility for projects receiving incentive payments. The proposed alternative electronic application process would either be in addition to, or in replacement of, the current paper application process.

III. COMMISSION ANALYSIS

We note at the outset that the Incentive Program approved in this docket is supported by the renewable energy fund (REF) created by RSA 362-F:10. Pursuant to RSA 362-F:3, providers of electric service must serve a certain percentage of their load with renewable energy, which is represented by RECs. One REC is assigned for each megawatt-hour of renewable power generated. If the electric service provider is unable to acquire a sufficient number of RECs to meet its compliance obligations, then the provider must make an alternative compliance payment (ACP) into the REF pursuant to RSA 362-F:10, II.

The REF monies thus collected are to be used for the purposes of supporting thermal and electric renewable energy initiatives, including the Incentive Program, RSA 362-F:10. Under RSA 362-F:10, X, the Commission must, over each biennial period, reasonably balance the overall amounts expended, allocated, or obligated from the REF between the residential and nonresidential sectors, based on the amount of retail electricity sales made to customers in each sector.

We believe the proposed on-line electronic application process represents a substantial improvement to the Commission's existing application procedures, and should result in more efficient and timely approval of qualifying rebate applications. These efficiencies will benefit applicants and their installers, and make more effective use of limited Staff time and resources. It is encouraging that, as Staff has indicated, this is merely the first step in a larger initiative to make productive use of current technology to streamline and modernize the application and approval processes for a range of renewable energy programs.

We direct Staff to implement the modified on-line electronic application procedures for the Incentive Program as soon as reasonably feasible. The new procedures should be provided as an alternative to, and not in replacement of, the current paper application process for a period of at least six months. Retaining the paper application process as an option for six months or more should give applicants the opportunity to transition to the new procedures without significant disruption. Finally, to facilitate the ongoing efficient administration of the Incentive Program, we authorize Staff to make clerical, administrative, and other modifications to Incentive Program application forms, processes, and procedures without further Commission approval, provided that such modifications are consistent with the approved terms and conditions of the Incentive Program.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED, that the Commission's residential renewable electric generation incentive program shall be modified to permit an alternative on-line application process for use by program applicants; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the existing paper application process shall be maintained as an option to be used by incentive program applicants for a further period of not less than six months; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that Staff is authorized to make clerical, administrative, and other modifications to incentive program application forms, processes, and procedures without further Commission approval, provided that such modifications are consistent with the approved terms and conditions of the incentive program.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this third day of March, 2015.



Martin P. Honigberg
Chairman



Robert R. Scott
Commissioner

Attested by:



Kimberly Nojin Smith
Assistant Secretary