CalTestBed

FAQs

General Questions About CalTestBed

What is the primary purpose of CalTestBed?
The primary purpose of CalTestBed is to increase access to world class testbeds for entrepreneurs to test and de-risk their innovations, in order to bring new clean energy technologies to market. CalTestBed unifies an ecosystem of 70 testbeds across the University of California system and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab and conducts a solicitation, review, and selection process to match qualified applicants with laboratory capabilities, in effect streamlining and accelerating the process for entrepreneurs to bring their technologies to market.

Where does the funding for CalTestBed come from?
The CalTestBed initiative is funded through the California Energy Commission's Electric Program Investment Charge (EPIC) Program. The purpose of EPIC is to accelerate the development and adoption of new low-carbon technology solutions for California's electricity sector. To find out more about EPIC and other Energy Commission activities and funding opportunities for research and development, please visit: http://www.energy.ca.gov/research.

How does CalTestBed differ from other funding opportunities through EPIC?
CalTestBed vouchers address a critical gap in access to world-class testing for prototypes, which is necessary to bring new energy innovations to market. The entrepreneur receives a voucher for testing services provided by a CalTestBed laboratory facility, and the facility invoices for the cost of the testing provided. To find out more about other EPIC funding opportunities, visit: https://www.energy.ca.gov/funding-opportunities/solicitations

How much are the vouchers worth?
CalTestBed vouchers can be worth up to, but not exceed, $300,000. Individual voucher amounts are determined by the agreed upon and CEC-approved Statement of Work. Funds are paid to the testing facilities for delivery of testing services. CalTestBed entrepreneurs receive testing services and do not direct funding.

General Questions About CalTestBed

How often do you accept applications?
Generally, the solicitation cycle lasts 12-15 months and is dependent on CEC funding.

Should I reach out to a Regional Energy Innovation Cluster?
You are encouraged to take advantage of our regional cluster partners (LACI, Activate, BlueTech Valley and SCEIN), but you are not required to do so for the CalTestBed application and your relationship with clusters will not affect the scoring of your application.

Should I reach out to a participating testbed?
NO. It is advised that applicants NOT reach out to participating testbeds. Applicants are not required to have an active relationship with a participating testbed. Lab officials are instructed not to help applicants with their applications due to conflict-of-interest concerns which might result in applicants being disqualified. Voucher applicants should consult the detailed CalTestBed Facilities Directory to determine their top three testbed choices in the application process. Taking preference into consideration, voucher recipients will be matched with appropriate testbeds through a deliberative process by the CalTestBed team in collaboration with the labs.

Does CalTestBed have an office?
CalTestBed is administered by New Energy Nexus. New Energy Nexus works with multiple partners throughout California to manage the application process and provide professional development services to entrepreneurs.

Eligibility

Do I have to be in California?
Yes. You must have a California address at time of application to be eligible. You must list your official CA business address or, if applying as an individual, the personal address of the lead applicant. You also must be able to sufficiently describe how your innovation will benefit CA IOU ratepayers, and your market strategy for the state. The EPIC funds used to support this program come from a small charge on ratepayers' bills, so the benefits of the vouchers are intended to benefit CA ratepayers through lower cost, increased safety and greater reliability. To be eligible, businesses must be registered with the California Secretary of State and should apply with the company name as registered with the state to enable our eligibility due diligence.

Do I have to be a US citizen?
No.

Can I apply for funding without being a company?
Yes. CalTestBed is open to individuals, businesses, and non-profits.

Am I eligible to apply for CalTestBed if I have already received an EPIC award through another program?
Yes, however if the applicant is a CalSEED awardee, they must have already completed their Concept award and must have already submitted their final reporting.

I've already been funded by CalSEED. Can I apply to CalTestBed?
Yes.

Can I apply with the same idea in the next funding round?
Yes. If your project was not funded, you are free to apply again. If your innovation has already been funded through CalTestBed, you are **not eligible** for a second award. **Once an applicant has been declined three times, they are no longer eligible to apply.**

Eligibility

I have two prototypes. Can I submit two applications?
No. For this solicitation we are only accepting one application per lead applicant/organization. You may be on the team for a different application with a different innovation, but not as the lead applicant. Similarly, we are only accepting one application per innovation – duplicate applications from multiple team members will be rejected.

Does this program require any match funding?
Since applicants are not receiving funding directly but in the form of testing services, they are not responsible for match funding.

Will you sign an NDA?
Implementation partners of CalTestBed will <u>NOT</u> sign an NDA.

If we are not signing an NDA, how will my ideas be protected?
Applications will not be published but will be in the public record and available upon request. We recommend giving enough detail so that the review team can adequately judge your application without disclosing confidential and proprietary information.

Is there a specific technology that will score higher than others on the application?
CalTestBed does not score specific technologies higher than others. Innovations must fit within the technology type and category requirements in the Application Manual.

Does my project have to be a technology?
You are required to have a hardware or integrated technology prototype ready-for-testing to be eligible for a CalTestBed voucher.

Does my project/technology/idea qualify?
CalTestBed applicants must have an existing prototype ready-for-testing and the required testing capabilities must be listed in the <u>CalTestBed Facilities Directory</u>. No facilities outside of the those listed in the Facilities Directory will be considered to provide testing.

Eligibility

What types of innovations are eligible for funding?

CalTestBed is focused on providing testing for prototype technologies (TRL 5-7) that have the potential for providing benefits including lower cost, greater reliability and improved safety for to the ratepayers of California. We are specifically looking for hardware and integrated solutions. **No stand-alone software solutions will be considered.**

	Hardware	Integrated Solutions
Description	Physical components – tools, machinery, durable equipment - that require design and testing	An innovative combination of software and hardware innovations to maximize functionality and value
Examples	New inverter technologies; photovoltaic panels; manufacturing equipment; sensors for energy efficiency; electric vehicle components; grid-friendly vehicle charging infrastructure; novel battery chemistry or components; transmission and distribution infrastructure improvements; high-voltage electrical equipment, etc.	Solutions which leverage software and hardware innovations to increase efficiency and resilience of the grid and/or solve community access issues (e.g., vehicle to grid concepts), etc.
Out of Scope	Project financing for already existing technologies; manufacturing line scale up; infrastructure projects; oil/natural gas projects.	Single non-replicable solutions. Concepts that are not novel or innovative in application. Concepts that do not have an innovative hardware component.

Eligibility

I have an idea for a product that we are currently selling to customers. Does this disqualify me from applying?
CalTestBed is targeting novel innovations at the prototype level. This encompasses innovations at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 5-7. For further guidance, please consult Page 7 of this application manual which provides a reference to the US Department of Energy's TRL guide.

How do I know if my technology is in the appropriate stage to be considered for a CalTestBed voucher?
We use the DOE's definitions of the maturity of a concept, called Technology Readiness Levels, to determine eligibility for CalTestBed vouchers. We are looking to fund prototypes between TRL levels 5-7. Please refer to page 7 of this application manual for determining your TRL level. If it is discovered that a recommended voucher recipient does not have a prototype ready for testing, it may result in the applicant being disqualified.

What could potentially result in disqualification of a recommended voucher recipient?
- If inconsistencies are discovered in the application language regarding eligibility criteria, certifications or conflicts of interest are discovered (for example, the company being registered and operating in the state of CA, the innovation's TRL, the nature of the innovation, the existence of a prototype ready for testing, conflicts of interest, certification of the agreement terms, etc.) the applicant risks disqualification from consideration.
- If recommended voucher recipient is determined to be in poor program standing with any other CEC funded programs
- If prototype is not ready for laboratory-grade testing
- If the scope of work cannot be completed by December 31, 2025

Application

What time on November 22nd are the applications due?
Online applications are due by 11:59pm Pacific time on November 22nd, 2023.

How long does it take to complete the application?
We estimate that the complete application will take approximately 3-5 hours to complete. You should expect to spend additional time reviewing the agreements for certification and the CalTestBed Facilities Directory to determine lab preferences.

Can I ask for help with the application process?
Assistance is available in the form of webinars and the application manual. CalTestBed staff are NOT available for one-on-one application assistance. Depending on where you're located in California, it could be beneficial to reach out to your regional innovation cluster (LACI, Activate, BlueTech Valley and SCEIN) for assistance with your application. *Do not contact participating testbeds directly.*

I can't log into SmartSimple, the application portal. What do I do?
Contact us at info@caltestbed.com. Administrators will be available for support through close of business day (5pm PT) on November 22nd, 2023.

Can I include images or graphs in the application?
No. Please describe your innovation and testing requirements using text only. **No additional materials will be considered in evaluating your application**.

Can I edit my application?
We recommend using the "Save Draft" button at the bottom of your SmartSimple application to preserve your progress. When you are ready to submit, press the "Submit" button at the bottom of the SmartSimple application. Once you have submitted, you cannot edit the application.

Application

Can I change my company name in SmartSimple?
If you want to change your company name, you can <u>ONLY</u> do so by starting a new application. You will not be penalized for doing so since the review team will only review fully completed applications. However, once the application period has ended, company names cannot be changed in SmartSimple.

What happens if I accidentally submit an incomplete application?
All applications will undergo a preliminary review to ensure each application meets the minimum requirements. The CalTestBed team will contact any applicant who needs to provide additional information. At that time, you will be notified and will have 24 hours to fix the issue.

How long does it take for CalTestBed to review the applications?
Depending on the number of applications received, the CalTestBed team expects the review process to take 3-4 months. Please refer to the project schedule on Page 11 for critical dates.

Will CalTestBed request more information after the application process?
Once applications have been deemed eligible and score highly enough to be recommended by technical reviewers, the applicants will proceed to the consultation phase. This phase includes a 1.5 to three-hour structured discussion with campus officials and an assigned neutral party to develop a Statement of Work, which includes scope and schedule. The final budget will be determined by the testing facility personnel based on the agreed upon Statement of Work.