



# Permitting Innovators informational webinar transcript

May 14, 2026

00:05

Ellie Kiernan: Welcome, everyone, to the Permitting Innovators Informational Webinar. My name is Ellie Kiernan. I'm an Engagement Manager at Luminary Labs, the strategy and innovation firm supporting the design and administration of the Permitting Innovators program with the Council on Environmental Quality in collaboration with NASA.

Before I begin, I want to share that this session is being recorded and will be available on the Permitting Innovators website shortly. The views expressed by myself or Luminary Labs during this session do not necessarily reflect any official policy of the United States Government, CEQ, or NASA.

Today's session will provide an overview of the program and how to participate. We will also respond to some frequently asked questions at the end of the webinar, and we'll start by providing an introduction to the program. You'll hear directly from the Council on Environmental Quality. We'll then dive into the program details and participation geared toward potential entrants considering submitting to the Call for Solutions.

Permitting Innovators is a program launched by the Council on Environmental Quality, CEQ, and administered by Luminary Labs in collaboration with NASA Tournament Lab. I'll now pass it off to David Yi from the CEQ team to introduce himself and provide background on the program.

01:33

David Yi: Thanks, Ellie. Hi, everyone. Thank you all for your time today. We're really excited to see the level of interest and engagement on this important topic. My name is David Yi, and I am the Acting Director for Permitting and Innovation here at the Council on Environmental Quality. And in this role, I work closely with our partner federal agencies to identify and address the technology gaps that slow environmental review and permitting processes.

The challenge that we are trying to address is that, while federal agencies already use technology for environmental review and permitting, many of these systems are fragmented, outdated, and highly manual, slowing down an already lengthy process. These delays increase costs and create burdens on agencies, project sponsors, and American people. And this challenge points to a significant opportunity for modernization.

We believe that existing technology solutions have the opportunity to accelerate and modernize environmental review and permitting by connecting data systems and processes, which will mean enhanced collaboration between agencies, project sponsors, and the American public.



02:36

David Yi: The establishment of CEQ's Permitting Innovation Center one year ago marked an important milestone in modernizing permitting for the 21st century. The creation of the Permitting Innovation Center delivered on President Trump's Memorandum, Updating Permitting Technology for the 21st Century, which was issued last April. The Memorandum directed the federal government to leverage modern technology to effectively and efficiently conduct environmental views and evaluate permits for infrastructure projects of all kinds.

The Permitting Innovation Center focuses on working with federal agencies to build new and improved software systems and coordinating federal agency implementation of their technology modernization efforts. We have developed service delivery standards, minimum functional requirements, and data and technology standards to guide agencies, all of which are available in the Permitting Technology Action Plan. The program we're here to discuss today builds directly on this important foundational work.

03:32

David Yi: So with that context in mind, I'd like to briefly introduce the Permitting Innovators program before having the team go into more specific detail. Permitting Innovators is a program to modernize federal permitting for the 21st century. It represents the next step in CEQ's broader efforts to bring new partners, particularly from the private sector into this work. Through Permitting Innovators, CEQ is inviting innovators to share technology solutions that can accelerate and improve environmental review and permitting.

To be clear, this is a Call for Solutions, not a proposal for bids for a particular project or a procurement action on behalf of the federal government or any particular agency. Any future implementation would of course be at the agency's discretion following any and all appropriate requirements. With that, let me thank you again for your time and engagement today. I'll turn it back to Ellie now, who will walk through the program structure in more detail.

04:24

Ellie Kiernan: Thank you, David, for that foundational context on the program introduction. We'll now walk through the structure of the Permitting Innovators program. So the program launched on April 28th, beginning the Call for Solutions period, the phase we're currently in. Call for Solutions will be open until June 2nd at 6:00 PM Eastern Time. Following the Call for Solutions, selected entrants will be invited to participate in the Permitting Innovators Expo in July. Finally, qualifying solutions will be featured in the Permitting Innovators Solutions Catalog due to be published in late 2026. Taken together, these three components, the Permitting Innovators Call for Solutions, the Expo, and the Solutions Catalog are designed to not only surface innovative ideas, but also connect innovators with decision makers to explore potential ways to implement promising ideas.

05:24



Ellie Kiernan: This program brings together potential entrants from technology companies and practitioners to startups and researchers, federal agency staff, and project sponsors, and the public. For entrants, this is an opportunity to connect directly with federal agencies to demonstrate solutions, receive feedback, and explore pathways to capitalize on innovations. For federal agencies, it's an opportunity to see a curated set of solutions in one place, helping them identify tools that can improve efficiency, coordination, and outcomes across their permitting processes. For project sponsors and the public, improved permitting technology means clearer timelines, more transparent processes, and more reliable delivery of infrastructure projects. The Expo will offer an early look at the solutions making these improvements possible.

06:21

Ellie Kiernan: So let's take a moment to dive deeper into what participation can offer potential entrants. Introductions to agency contacts, invitations to the Expo, and targeted engagement opportunities. For targeted engagement opportunities, a smaller group, up to 15 entrants, may receive more focused engagement, including deeper conversations with agencies to explore fit and implementation pathways. For Expo invitations, up to 50 high-potential solutions will be invited to showcase their work at the Permitting Innovators Expo, where teams can demonstrate their solutions and engage with decision makers across the permitting ecosystem. Finally, qualifying solutions will be featured in a curated catalog shared with federal agencies, thereby extending visibility and serving as a lasting resource to support technology adoption.

07:17

Ellie Kiernan: During the Call for Solutions, entrants will submit concept papers describing technology solutions that address federal environmental review and permitting challenges. Submissions should clearly articulate the problem being addressed, the proposed solution, and how it aligns with CEQ's service delivery standards and functional requirements. The goal of this phase is to surface a broad and high quality set of solutions that can meaningfully improve permitting outcomes. As a reminder, the call for submissions open on April 28th and will remain open until June 2nd at 6:00 PM Eastern Time. Following the submissions deadline, a panel of experts will evaluate all eligible submissions. We encourage you to begin early and leave time for review ahead of the deadline.

08:10

Ellie Kiernan: Submissions will be evaluated across five criteria: Impact, User-centered design, Readiness, Multi-agency compatibility, and Team capacity. Each criterion is weighted equally and follows a consistent structure, with a few related components outlined within its description.

Rather than walking through each criterion in detail, I'll use Impact as an example. So reviewers will use the Impact criterion to assess the extent to which a submission, A, addresses a specific service delivery standard, B, implements relevant minimum functional requirements, and C, meaningfully improves the quality or speed of environmental review and permitting. This same structure applies across the other



criteria, User-centered design, Readiness, Multi-agency compatibility, and Team capacity, each evaluating a different dimension of the solution. If there are terms or components that are unfamiliar, the criteria descriptions on the website reflect the level of detail we're able to share. We encourage you to reference the Resources page for additional context.

09:22

Ellie Kiernan: In July 2026, up to 50 high-potential solutions will be invited to participate in the Permitting Innovators Expo in the Washington DC area. The Expo is an in-person event designed to bring entrants and federal agency staff together in one place. It will include a demo floor, structured opportunities for engagement, and programming that supports deeper understanding of solutions and their potential applications. This is a key moment in the program for building relationships. Following the Expo, qualified solutions will be featured in the Permitting Innovators Solutions Catalog. The Catalog will be shared with federal agencies as a curated resource to support ongoing permitting modernization efforts. CEQ may also facilitate follow-on engagement to continue to support innovation.

10:18

Ellie Kiernan: Next, we'll walk through what it looks like to submit a solution. To submit, you'll register through the submit page on the program website. I'll walk through the steps for how to submit in just a moment, but it's important to note that final submissions are due by June 2nd at 6:00 PM Eastern Time. I know I've mentioned that a few times. This is what registration interface looks like. You'll create an account and begin your submission through this platform. You'll first provide basic contact information for your team. Be sure all fields are complete before moving forward. You'll then provide details about your solution, including your concept paper and a demonstration link. This is where you'll align your submission to the evaluation criteria we just discussed.

11:20

Ellie Kiernan: CEQ is generally soliciting ideas in whatever format the submitter thinks will best convey its idea. That being said, to best enable reviewers to evaluate the proposals, you may wish to structure your concept paper to address the following. Solution name, so the product name or headline. Solution overview, brief description summarizing your solution. Service delivery standards, standards your solution primarily seeks to address. Functional requirements, functional requirements your solution seeks to address. Team capacity, team relevant experience and contributions to the solution. Proposed solution approach, description of the solution, the problem it addresses, and how it works. User-centered design, how the need of end users are reflected in your solution's design. Impact, expected impact of your solution, including improvements to permitting processes. Readiness, current state of the solution and readiness to implement. Multi-agency compatibility, how the solution supports compatibility across multiple federal agencies. These recommended elements relate to the evaluation criteria and thus will aid reviewers as they review the submissions.

12:44



Ellie Kiernan: Before submitting, take time to review your materials and ensure all required components are complete. Once submitted, you'll receive confirmation through the platform. For any questions about how to submit, please email [hello@permittinginnovators.com](mailto:hello@permittinginnovators.com). As next steps, we encourage you to, number one, register on the submission platform, review all program materials on the website, sign up for the program reminders, and add the program email to your contacts to ensure you receive important communications, and the program email is [hello@permittinginnovators.com](mailto:hello@permittinginnovators.com).

13:31

Ellie Kiernan: I'm now going to answer frequently asked questions that attendees surfaced during the registration process for this informational webinar. These will also be posted to the Permitting Innovators website after the session.

For the first question, what kinds of technology solutions are you looking for? This was a question we received. Priority areas for solutions include business process modernization, workflow automation, digital first documents, and tools that reduce timeline uncertainty. CEQ is not prescribing any particular technology approach. AI-enabled tools, data integration platforms, document management systems, and others are all welcome. A single solution is not expected to address all areas, but we refer you to the Resources page for the full list of service delivery standards, minimum functional requirements, and illustrative examples.

14:36

Next question, who is eligible to submit solutions? An entrant may be an individual, group of individuals, or entity. Entities that submit solutions must maintain a primary place of operations in the United States. Individuals that submit solutions must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States. For more information about eligibility, visit the rules, terms and conditions published on the Permitting Innovators website.

15:08

Can entrants submit more than one solution? This answer is simple. There is no limit on the number of unique solutions an entrant can submit.

15:20

How will submissions be evaluated? A panel of expert reviewers will evaluate submissions and recommend top-scoring solutions to CEQ. Submissions are scored across five equally-weighted criteria, Impact, User-centered design, Readiness, Multi-agency compatibility, and Team capacity. Full descriptions of each criterion are on the evaluation criteria page. Potential entrants are encouraged to reference the Resources page for additional context. Sign up for program reminders to receive key updates, including when reviewer information is available.

16:03



Will the federal government co-invest in or help procure selected solutions? There is no funding or procurement commitment attached to this program. Permitting Innovators will offer the teams behind top scoring submissions opportunities to engage with federal agencies implementing the Permitting Technology Action Plan through the Permitting Innovators Expo, the Solutions Catalog, and structured introductions to agencies interested in their solutions. We encourage you to look at the program benefits page for more information.

16:38

This program is focused on federal agencies. Is state permitting in scope? The Permitting Innovators Call for Solutions focuses on solutions for federal environmental review and permitting. The relationship between federal and state processes is an important one, and one that may be addressed in conversations and sessions at the Permitting Innovators Expo in July. Sign up for the program reminders to stay informed as the Expo agenda develops.

17:09

And finally, who can I reach out to with other questions? We encourage you to reach out to [hello@permittinginnovators.com](mailto:hello@permittinginnovators.com) for any additional questions.

17:21

Ellie Kiernan: I'll now ask that we share the last slide of the deck to wrap the presentation. Thank you again for joining us today. We encourage you to scan the QR code or visit the website to stay up to date on program announcements and Expo details. We're so excited to see the solutions that emerge through this process and look forward to your submissions. Have a great day.