

# The Next Big Step For Renewables: Energy Storage

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The promise of renewable energy has been partly realized as renewables, including wind and solar, have attracted significant investment over the years and now generate output that comprises a useful contribution to our overall consumer and commercial energy needs.

But technological limitations and high cost structures continue to prevent renewables from meeting their full potential.

Because wind and solar power depend on natural phenomena their production is necessarily intermittent. Developing a way to effectively store such energy in a cost effective manner is therefore crucial to ensure availability on a continuous basis.

A variety of energy storage solutions are being developed, funded by public and private research. Many of these use batteries as the storage device to hold power generated by renewables in reserve.

The Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy ([ARPA-E](#)), part of the US Department of Energy, funds opportunities for transformational energy technologies. ARPA-E recently issued a solicitation which will make \$43 million available to small businesses to “fund the development of transformational technologies that reduce the barriers to mass adoption of electrical energy storage for stationary and transportation applications.”

With respect to stationary applications, the [ARPA-E solicitation](#) focuses on storage systems to support electric vehicles and consumer meter applications. As for transportation applications, the ARPA-E solicitation focuses on battery chemistries, battery architectures and novel electric storage systems.

Effective and efficient systems for storing renewable energy will allow these abundant natural resources to be further integrated within the overall power grid and energy markets.

For now, the high cost of storage, coupled with technological limitations and cheap competing sources (such as natural gas) hinder their full potential. But advances in private and public funding herald the day when clean natural energy, stored in an efficient manner, will make a substantial impact on our energy needs.

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