

Opportunity Announcement:

RC3 Online Cybersecurity Self-Assessment License Program

Final Round for Applications Now Open for Cooperatives

Deadline October 16, 2020

Applications are now being accepted to participate in the final opportunity for free access to the RC3 Online Cybersecurity Self-Assessment License Program (RC3 Self-Assessment License Program).¹ Participants in the RC3 Self-Assessment License Program will receive free access to an **online version** of the [RC3 Cybersecurity Self-Assessment](#) (RC3 Self-Assessment).² Each license is a multi-year software subscription providing co-ops with unlimited access to the online version of the *RC3 Self-Assessment* through March 2022. The online version of the *RC3 Self-Assessment* offers many features not feasible in the hardcopy version of the *RC3 Self-Assessment*.³



Each license can provide access to the online platform for up to 30 cooperatives. Therefore, licenses will be awarded to groups of cooperatives (5 to 30 cooperatives per group) with a designated License Lead.

This is an announcement for the third and **final round** for applications and is the final opportunity to apply for a free License through NRECA's RC3 Program. ***The deadline for this round of applications is Friday, October 16, 2020.*** The first and second rounds of applications have closed and approximately 36 Licenses were awarded that are providing more than 480 cooperatives access to the online version of the RC3 Self-Assessment.

IMPORTANT DATES	
Final Application Process Opens	August 31, 2020
Final Round Application Deadline	October 16, 2020

¹ No financial contributions from cooperatives are required for participation in the RC3 Online Cybersecurity Self-Assessment License Program, and no award funds will be transferred to cooperatives that participate in the Program.

² The *RC3 Self-Assessment* is a tool that provides cooperatives an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses in their cybersecurity posture, and to use these insights to create a cybersecurity action plan or roadmap for improvement.

³ A hardcopy version of the *RC3 Self-Assessment* is available to all cooperatives at no cost on cooperative.com at: <https://www.cooperative.com/programs-services/bts/Pages/Assessing-Your-Cybersecurity-Posture.aspx>

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All cooperatives that want to participate in the RC3 Self-Assessment License Program must be part of a Group License. Only “*Group Licenses*” will be awarded. Each Group License must consist of at least five (5) cooperatives, and no more than thirty (30) cooperatives.⁴ All members of the Group License must be an owner/operator electric cooperative or a Statewide Association.⁵

Ways to Apply:

1. New Group License Application

All of the members of the Group License must agree on and designate one member as the “*License Lead*.” All License Lead organizations must be voting members of NRECA. Every member of a License Group, including the License Lead, will need to submit a separate application. The License Lead entity needs to be identified by each cooperative on the cooperative’s individual application.

There are three ways cooperatives can assemble into a Group:

- Category A: Individual distribution and G&T cooperatives can form a Group and designate one member of the Group, either a distribution or G&T cooperative, as the License Lead.
- Category B: A G&T cooperative can assemble its member distribution cooperatives into a Group with the G&T as the License Lead;
- Category C: A Statewide Association can assemble its member distribution and G&T cooperatives into a Group with the Statewide as the License Lead.

2. Joining an Existing Group License

Note: This is a change from prior rounds of applications for this program:

In this Final Round, cooperatives may join an existing License Group formed through the prior rounds of applications. Through negotiation with our partner, Axio Global, Inc. (Axio), who runs the Self-Assessment platform, existing License Groups are able to **add individual cooperatives** to their existing Licenses. A cooperative that would like to join an existing License Group is still required to submit an application and a letter of support, and will need to indicate the License Group the cooperative would like to join on the application.

Required Letter of Support from Leadership

All participating electric cooperatives will need to submit a letter of support from their leadership. The letter of support can be signed by either the cooperative’s CEO/General Manager or Board of Directors, and must endorse the cooperative’s participation in the RC3 Self-Assessment License Program. Each of the cooperatives in the Group must submit a letter of support from their cooperative’s leadership. Letters of support

⁴ Exceptions to this will be made on a case-by-case basis under unique circumstances. For exception requests, please contact Cynthia Hsu, NRECA’s Cybersecurity Program Manager (cynthia.hsu@nreca.coop) to discuss options.

⁵ If you are an NRECA member cooperative that is interested in a License but you are not an owner/operator electric cooperative, please contact Cynthia Hsu, NRECA’s Cybersecurity Program Manager (cynthia.hsu@nreca.coop) to discuss options.

should be emailed to CyberSecurityRC3@nreca.coop. A sample letter is available [on cooperative.com](https://www.cooperative.com). The only exception is for a License Lead entity that is a Statewide: Statewides are not required to submit a leadership letter of support, but it is recommended. **Letters of support are due November 16, 2020**, one month after the October 16, 2020, application deadline.

Sharing Information

Building and improving a cooperative's cybersecurity capabilities is an ongoing challenge. While cooperatives are not expected to share data or their *RC3 Cybersecurity Self-Assessment* results, the RC3 Program strongly encourages participants to utilize Cooperative Principle 6, *Cooperation Among Cooperatives*, and help one another by sharing their experiences in using the *RC3 Self-Assessment* and general lessons learned. At this time, the RC3 Program will not offer access to the online version of the *RC3 Cybersecurity Self-Assessment* directly to individual cooperatives, and Axio will not be providing access independent of the RC3 Self-Assessment License Program. Options to continue access to the online platform after March 2022 are yet to be determined, however, details will be shared with cooperatives as soon as available. Cooperatives will continue to have free access to the hardcopy version of the *RC3 Self-Assessment* through cooperative.com.

(Please see the [RC3 Online Cybersecurity Self-Assessment License Program Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.)

APPLYING

Interested cooperatives may apply using the link below.

Note: This application is estimated to take about 30 minutes to complete. Some of the questions may require a combination of management, legal counsel, and technical staff input to complete. We recommend that you have all the answers for the application prepared before you begin the application form. You will not be able to save an incomplete application for completion at a later time. To help you prepare your responses before you begin the application process, a complete list of the application questions is provided in the [RC3 Online Cybersecurity Self-Assessment License Program Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) document](#).

**[APPLICATION for
RC3 Online Cybersecurity Self-Assessment
License Program](#)**

SELECTION PROCESS

Applications to participate in the RC3 Self-Assessment License Program will be accepted in three (3) rounds. This announcement is for the **third and final round** of applications. The RC3 Program will award the remaining 64 Licenses in this third round of applications.

Applications for the third round participants will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis for the first 64 group applications.

USING THE RC3 CYBERSECURITY SELF-ASSESSMENT IN-PERSON OR VIRTUALLY

The RC3 Cybersecurity Self-Assessment is a tool that will require participation from staff from across the co-op organization. The RC3 Online RC3 Self-Assessment can be facilitated *in-person or in a virtual environment* through a series of coordinated web conferences. *It does not require participants to assemble at the same location.*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information on the unique benefits of using the online version of the *RC3 Cybersecurity Self-Assessment*, the RC3 Self-Assessment License Program application and selection processes, the handling of cooperative data related to the application, and other topics, please see the accompanying [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) document](#).

For additional information on how to use the RC3 Online Self-Assessment, the RC3 Program produced five instructional webinars. The webinars are free and available On Demand, and provide detailed explanations on how to use the online platform, how to complete the RC3 Self-Assessment, and insights and suggestions from cooperative staff who have used the RC3 Self-Assessment.

- [RC3 Online Cybersecurity Self-Assessment License Program– Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)
- [RC3 Online Cybersecurity Self-Assessment Training and Materials](#) – links to five free webinars available to view On Demand.
- [RC3 Cybersecurity Self-Assessment Toolkit Website Page](#) – for details on the *RC3 Self-Assessment Toolkit* and access to the free downloadable hardcopy version
- [RC3 Website Page](#) – for information on a variety of cybersecurity products and services for cooperatives

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS

- RC3 Team: CyberSecurityRC3@nreca.coop
- Cynthia Hsu, Ph.D., NRECA Cybersecurity Program Manager: cynthia.hsu@nreca.coop
- Valerie Sayd, Consultant, RC3 Assistant Program Manager: valerie.sayd-contractor@nreca.coop

NRECA's Rural Cooperative Cybersecurity Capabilities (RC3) Program is designed to develop tools and resources appropriate for small and mid-sized distribution cooperatives to improve their cybersecurity posture. The RC3 Program is funded as a collaborative partnership between NRECA and the U.S. Department of Energy.

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