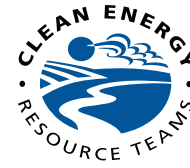


Rural Minnesota Solar Initiative

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Squash Blossom Farm in Altura, MN | Photo by Susan Waughtal

Looking to fund your farm or business solar project?
USDA's Rural Energy for America Program provides assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses.

The program, administered by USDA Rural Development, offers grants and loan guarantees to any agricultural producer or rural small business for a wide variety of renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, including solar PV and solar thermal projects.

Eligibility & Details: Any community with 50,000 members or fewer is eligible. Grants can range from a minimum request of \$2,500 up to a maximum request of 25% of project costs or \$500,000, whichever is less. Loan guarantees can cover up to 75% of eligible project costs.

Recipe for Success: Kellye Rose of Rose Consulting Service, Inc. in Burnsville, MN and Ron Omann, Energy Coordinator, of USDA's Rural Development in St. Paul, MN offer advice for how potential applicants might prepare projects to ensure their best chance for funding under this competitive program.

Ms. Rose noted that with costs of solar technology steadily decreasing, applications including solar technology are becoming more appealing to the REAP program officials. Based on past experience, Ms. Rose believes that renewable energy production, including solar, will continue to be a priority for REAP funding.

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Here are a few key insights for success from Ms. Rose and Mr. Omann:

- 1. Start the process early:** Renewable energy projects take time to design and engineer. Prior to preparing an application, complete an energy audit and renewable energy assessment and/or detailed calculations indicating energy savings and payback for the project. Allow at least two-months lead time for creating project plans and an application, and up to a year of prep time for the largest of projects.
- 2. Keep your cart behind your horse:** In order to be eligible for funding, an applicant's renewable energy project cannot have purchased equipment or started construction before the grant application is received by the USDA. However, once USDA receipt is confirmed, a project may begin construction. USDA is accepting applications for FY 2013 program.
- 3. Get good grades:** The application consists of 10 different scoring criteria that gauge the compatibility of an applicant's clean energy project with the project's priorities. With these criteria in mind, applicants can maximize their application score, thereby improving their chance of being funded. Scoring criteria favors projects that:
 - Cost less than \$200,000 for small business (less than 15 employees, \$1 M annual sales) or small farmers (less than \$600,000 annual sales)
 - Replace greater than 50% of energy use
 - Include a well-crafted Technical Report with experienced contractors, installers and/or engineers identified who can document past successful project experience
 - Have the remaining funds needed to complete the project (outside of the USDA REAP grant) on hand or committed to the project
 - Have a favorable return on investment

Get started today! Visit rurdev.usda.gov and click on "Energy" or visit the USDA Rural Development office nearest your farm or business. You can also visit GetSolar.MnCERTs.org.

To receive one-on-one assistance with a solar project for your farm or business, contact:

- Joel Haskard with the Clean Energy Resource Teams at 612-625-8759 or haska004@umn.edu
- Fritz Ebinger with The Minnesota Project at 651-789-3330 or febinger@mnproject.org
- Kellye Rose with Rose Consulting Service at 866-357-4315 or kellye@roseconserve.com