



# Solar Possible

## Collaborative Solar Purchasing for State Agencies, Local Governments & Schools

*An initiative of the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs), Great Plains Institute (GPI), and Department of Administration, Office of Enterprise Sustainability (OES).*

### Why participate in a joint RFP for solar?

Whether it be to achieve environmental goals, reduce energy costs, or show community leadership, solar can provide measurable benefits for state and local governments. However, the process for procuring solar can be difficult, including the following challenges:

- Limited staff time and resources to run an effective Request-for-Proposals (RFP) process
- Lack of knowledge on solar technologies, contract terms, and financing options
- Competing priorities that are more urgent than solar procurement

Collaborative government procurement of solar has been shown to address these barriers by reducing administrative costs for participants, providing opportunities for peer learning and action, providing a structured process for timely action, and potentially reducing solar system costs through bulk pricing.

### What do we hope to accomplish?

Solar Possible will address the above barriers by coordinating a joint site(s)-specific RFP process among multiple state, local government and school participants, including the following key elements:

1. **Joint Site(s)-specific RFP.** Instead of each government entity running their own individual RFP process, this project will provide the opportunity for multiple entities to sign onto a single, joint RFP process, reducing government staff time and resources needed to procure solar.
2. **Technical assistance.** Throughout the project, CERTs will host in-person and webinar meetings to educate participants about solar technology, contract terms, and financing options, with the goal of empowering each participant to make an informed decision in response to vendor proposals. CERTs will also provide 1-on-1 technical assistance.
3. **Structured process.** This project will provide a series of action steps and deadlines to help government staff tackle solar procurement one step at a time and make the process more manageable among competing priorities.

*NOTE: This initial RFP is targeted toward state, local governments, and schools within Xcel Energy electric territory in Minnesota, though the process may be repeated later for customers in other utility territories.*

## What is the Process and Timeline?

1. **Brief Note of Interest (Due March 30, 2018):** Participants will send a quick email to Peter Lindstrom at [plindstr@umn.edu](mailto:plindstr@umn.edu) to indicate interest in being part of the project.
2. **Collect Letters of Intent (Due April 30, 2018):** Interested local governments and schools will sign a non-binding letter formally declaring their intent to participate in the site(s)-specific RFP process, including seeking to identify at least one potential site that is suitable for solar.
3. **Conduct Preliminary Solar Site Assessment Checklist for Each Site (May 2018):** Interested participants will conduct preliminary solar site assessments for one or more publicly owned facilities or properties, to identify suitability for solar and inclusion in the joint RFP. CERTs and GPI will conduct a webinar to help participants with the checklist process.
4. **Issue Site(s)-Specific Request for Proposals (Expected June 1<sup>st</sup> 2018):** A group of solar developers will be prequalified through a statewide Master Contract process. The joint site(s)-specific RFP will be issued to these developers, listing each participant who signed a letter of intent and each potential installation site(s).
5. **Conduct Developer Site Visits (June – July 2018):** CERTs and GPI will work with participants to schedule a site visit for each participating entity, to allow interested solar developers to identify any site-specific changes for their proposal.
6. **Offer Evaluation and Selection (August 2018):** The procurement lead will lead a process to evaluate and rank solar developers' proposals according to qualifications, experience, and price, and other factors. The procurement lead will determine whether to select one or multiple proposers depending on the quality and breadth of proposals received.
7. **Offers Provided (August 2018):** Participants will receive either one or possibly multiple offers to choose from. To help participants evaluate offers, CERTs and GPI will offer a webinar and technical assistance with the offer evaluation process, including reviewing potential risks, key contract terms, and financial costs and benefits. Technical assistance will be available until decisions are due in mid-October, 2018.
8. **Decisions to Move Forward (Due October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018):** Participants will decide whether to move forward with their proposed project(s). Participants not moving forward will be able to exit the process without any penalty other than staff time already invested in participating.
9. **Installations (Fall 2018 – Spring/Summer 2019):** Participants moving forward with one or more projects will work with their selected developer to schedule the installation and establish logistics for on-site work.
10. **Project Promotion and Celebration (Spring/ Summer 2019):** CERTs and GPI will assist participants with communications to highlight and celebrate their installations as a result of the process.

## Questions? Please Contact...

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