



# **Solarize Southwest Virginia Request for Proposals**

## **Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia 2020 Residential Solicitation**

Issue Date: 3/2/2020

Response Due Date and Time: 3/27/2020, 5pm ET

Location: City of Norton, and Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell,  
Scott, Tazewell, and Wise Counties (Washington County optional)

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## Introduction

The Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia (SWG) is a collaborative effort of nonprofit and community action agencies, colleges, state agencies, planning district commissions and other interested citizens and businesses seeking to develop a renewable energy industry cluster in the seven coalfield counties of Southwest Virginia. The effort was formed as a result of the 2016 Southwest Virginia Economic Forum hosted by UVa-Wise. In early 2017, the Appalachian Regional Commission awarded a POWER Initiative Technical Assistance federal grant to fund the development of the Solar Roadmap of Southwest Virginia (the “Solar Roadmap”). The SWG has since received additional support through ARC POWER, as well as the US Department of Energy and other sources.

The mission of the SWG is to utilize the development of solar energy as an economic catalyst in the seven-county region of far Southwest Virginia. There are four key goals:

1. Identify and develop sites that are ideal for solar development, especially solar “ambassador” projects.
2. Grow workforce development and entrepreneurship opportunities to advance solar projects and maximize local benefits.
3. Expand education and outreach in communities and with local leaders around solar benefits and opportunities.
4. Promote policy changes that will help grow the solar industry in Southwest Virginia.

The SWG is co-convened by the UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development & Engagement, People Incorporated and Appalachian Voices, with facilitation assistance from Dialogue + Design Associates. The strategies to achieve the goals of the Workgroup are outlined in the Solar Roadmap, which has been developed collaboratively by members of SWG, and is available on the project website with additional background information at the website [www.swvasolar.org](http://www.swvasolar.org).

**The primary goal of this Solarize Southwest Virginia RFP is to work with the SWG to develop residential solar for an existing list of interested homeowners, while continuing to expand the number of participants in the program.** Through this Group Solicitation process, the SWG Selection Committee and the residential site owners anticipate that Respondent bids will reflect highly competitive rates and quantity discount considerations due to the aggregation of projects, resulting in appealing contracts for residential site owners. **Preference will be given to developers that:** **(1)** Have a place of business located within Southwest Virginia or partner with a local contractor; **(2)** can provide contracts to participants that are revenue neutral or positive from year one; **(3)** incorporate opportunities for hiring local Southwest Virginians, or opportunities for interns through the Mountain Empire Community College Energy Technology pathway program; **(4)** incorporate energy efficiency improvements for participants, and/or are able to provide efficiency services for program installers that ultimately do not install solar.

## Project Description

The Solarize Southwest Virginia campaign covers seven counties of far Southwest Virginia and the City of Norton. These counties included Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, and Wise with some participation from Washington county residents. Through outreach conducted to date, Solarize Southwest Virginia currently comprises more than 80 site owners ready to receive professional

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assessments for solar development on their home, small business, or farm. Many of these homeowners have already provided contact information, home addresses, household income, potential concerns, and have indicated their utility. Small commercial or agricultural buildings currently provide an additional 10 solar opportunities, bringing the total solar system potential to at least 90. Most participants have been informed about and assessed for potential issues with shading, orientation, and roof configuration and condition. The SWG will continue to recruit additional participants through outreach and education events and targeted marketing, with a goal of reaching at least 150 enrollees.

Site owners will negotiate and enter into agreements with the selected Respondent individually.

## Project Background

The SWG conducted a Solarize Wise program Virginia campaign in 2017, focused on residential development in Wise County, VA. In 2019, eight Southwest Virginia communities achieved designation under the national [SolSmart](#) program for encouraging the growth of local solar energy markets. Among these communities, **Wise County** achieved SolSmart Silver designation, while the others achieved SolSmart Bronze designation: **Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott and Tazewell counties, the City of Norton and Town of St. Paul**. These are the first communities in the Central Appalachian region to have applied for and received the SolSmart designation. This accomplishment makes solar cheaper and easier for solar development in Southwest Virginia.

In this current expanded Solarize campaign, residents from across the seven-county region of far Southwest Virginia are invited to participate and procure all information needed to decide if solar is right for their homes, farms, or small businesses. Using the solarize model, the SWG seeks to reduce prices for solar installations through bulk purchasing and a competitive selection process.

## Conditions of the RFP

1. Nothing in this solicitation process, RFP, or any contemplated or final agreement relieves any qualified vendor from complying with all laws and regulations applicable to the services provided through this program.
2. Each Respondent is responsible for reviewing and understanding all terms of this RFP. Failure to thoroughly examine or request clarification on RFP terms may result in disqualification.
3. Any bid may be withdrawn at any time prior to the due date with a written request signed by an authorized Respondent representative. Revised proposals may be submitted up to the Response Due Date.
4. Issuance of this RFP and receipt of proposals commits neither SWG nor any of the program participants to move forward with an installation. SWG reserves the right to postpone the RFP award process, to accept or reject any or all proposals received in response to this RFP, and to modify the scope of the project at any time. Any changes to the scope of the project or RFP will be provided to Respondents who have registered an intent to bid.
5. An award under this RFP may not be based solely on the lowest price but will be made to the Respondent with the overall best value proposal. The successful proposal will meet the project site design guidelines and provide service level acceptable to SWG.
6. Bid proposals will remain valid for 120 days after the Notice of Intent to Award. The Respondent must within 30 days of the Notice of Intent to Award, provide solar site assessments to pre-registered site owners.
7. The Successful Respondent will negotiate and enter into a formal agreement with each Site Owner individually in the time frame as best indicated by the site owner.

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## Reservations

The SWG is not obligated as a result of the issuance of this RFP or a proposal submission by a Respondent to enter into an agreement with any Respondent, and have no financial obligation to any Respondent arising from this RFP. All contracts will be executed between each homeowner and the selected Respondent. This RFP does not obligate any homeowner to sign a contract or complete the proposed project.

The agreements between the building owners and the selected Respondent will state that the selected Respondent will be solely liable for any claims, losses or damages arising out of the agreement. The SWG is facilitating this RFP as a service to the participating building owners, free of charge.

## Request for Proposals

### RFP Schedule

The schedule for this RFP is as indicated below. It may be modified or changed at the discretion of SWG. An addendum will be issued in the event of any scheduling changes.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Milestone</b>
3/2/2020	RFP released
3/12/2020	RFP questions due; Notice of Intent to Bid due
3/17/2020	Mandatory Pre-Bid call
3/27/2020	RFP responses due
4/2/2020	Solar developer selected (approximate)
4/27/2020 - 5/7/2020	Conducts three in-person outreach and education events
6/20/2020	Program completion and development plans begin.

### Questions and Requests for Information

Please submit any questions or requests for information via email by **March 12th, 5:00pm ET**. Responses to all submitted questions and requests will be shared with all Respondents. Questions must be emailed to Austin Counts, [Austin@appvoices.org](mailto:Austin@appvoices.org) and Chelsea Barnes at [chelsea@appvoices.org](mailto:chelsea@appvoices.org).

### Mandatory Pre-bid Call

The Mandatory Pre-bid call will take place on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2:00pm ET. Respondents expecting to attend should register at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2899653360495315467>. The webinar will be available for call-in and online participants. The webinar will go over programmatic background, expectations, and the project timeline while also providing feedback on all inquiries submitted by the

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questions due date and will be open for additional clarifying questions.

## RFP Submission Requirements

### Notice of Intent to Submit Proposal

Respondents must state their notice of intent to submit a proposal to Austin Counts ([austin@appvoices.org](mailto:austin@appvoices.org)) and Chelsea Barnes ([chelsea@appvoices.org](mailto:chelsea@appvoices.org)) by March 12th, 5pm ET to ensure receipt of all addenda and other project documents. Addenda to this RFP based on submitted technical questions, along with changes to the proposal schedule, will be issued via email only.

Responses to this RFP will be accepted via email only. All submissions must be made by the Response Due Date and time identified in the RFP Schedule. Email size is limited to 25MB. Respondents may elect to transmit documents via compressed / cloud transfer methods such as Google Drive, Dropbox, zip files, etc. Email submissions to Austin Counts at [austin@appvoices.org](mailto:austin@appvoices.org) and Chelsea Barnes at [chelsea@appvoices.org](mailto:chelsea@appvoices.org)

## Respondent Qualifications and Requirements

Respondent teams must meet the minimum qualifications described in this section to participate. Respondents are invited to submit cost proposals individually or collaborate with another firm to submit a joint proposal.

### Required:

- Respondent team must have demonstrated experience designing, planning, scheduling, permitting and constructing complete solar electric systems.
- Respondent team have demonstrated experience in successfully working with utilities similar to those serving the homeowners.<sup>1</sup>
- Respondent team must provide free site assessments and financial analysis.
- Respondent team must offer system monitoring and maintenance options.
- Respondent team must have at least one employee that is a North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Certified PV Installer.
- Respondent team must identify any applicable incentive/rebate support available to participants.
- Respondent team must meet standard insurance requirements and be able to provide proof of liability insurance and worker's compensation policy, as well as any documentation for pending or active judgements or liens if requested.
- Respondent team must include a licensed electrician in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Respondent must abide by the SEIA Solar Business Code: <http://www.seia.org/policy/consumer-protection/seia-solar-business-code>
- Respondent team must use the Proposal Template provided as Exhibit B and Cost Proposal Form provided in Exhibit A for proposal submission.
- Respondent team must be able to provide homeowners with no-money-down contract options either through Leases, Self-Generation Agreements, Solar Services Agreements, Third-Party Power Purchase Agreements where available, and/or other similar contract options as applicable

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<sup>1</sup> Note that while the RFP generally references homeowners, the SWG has received interests from small farms and small businesses, and the selected developer may elect to provide services to these entities in addition to homeowners.

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(collectively referred to in this RFP as “Third-Party Financing Options”), while also providing a cash-purchase option.

**Prioritized Consideration Awarded To Companies that:**

1. Have a place of business located within the project area or surrounding counties, or partner with a local contractor;
2. Can provide contracts to participants that are revenue neutral or positive from year one;
3. Incorporate opportunities for hiring local Southwest Virginians, or opportunities for interns through the Mountain Empire Community College Energy Technology pathway program.
4. Incorporate energy efficiency improvements for participants, and/or are able to provide efficiency services for program installers that ultimately do not install solar.

**Local Participation**

One of the goals of SWG is to “Grow workforce development and entrepreneurship opportunities to advance solar projects and maximize local benefits.” In that spirit, SWG encourages Respondents to include in their proposal consideration of:

**Local Workforce:** Opportunities for inclusion of local Southwest Virginia sub-consultants and/or sub-contractors, as well as strategies for hiring individuals in the local workforce.

**Community College Interns:** Inclusion of Solar PV interns through the Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) Energy Technology pathway program.

**Proposal Requirements**

Please submit all materials in 8½” x 11” document size using a minimum 10-point font size. Proposals should be submitted as one PDF file, or, if multiple files are required, one ZIP file containing the proposal folder and files. Proposals should use the template provided in Exhibit B, including cover page, cover letter, Cost Proposal exhibits, and any appendices and/or attachments.

**Proposal Checklist:**

- 1. Cover Letter**
- 2. Cost Proposal (Exhibit A)**
- 3. Completed Proposal Template (Exhibit B)**
- 4. Qualification statement (Exhibit C)**
- 5. Required Appendices**
- 6. Optional Appendices**

**1: Cover Letter**

The cover letter should discuss the highlights, key features and distinguishing points of the proposal. As part of this discussion, please describe specifically why the Respondent wants to work with the SWG and the residents of Southwest Virginia and why the Respondent’s proposal should be considered superior. The cover letter must be prepared and signed by a manager having the authority to make offers and enter into financial agreements on behalf of the Respondent or Respondent team, as the case may be.

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## **2. Cost Proposal**

- A. Using **Exhibit A**, Respondents should present pricing and include pricing options for each ownership option (cash and 3rd-party owned). The price is to apply to all work described in the Scope of Work and as required to achieve an interconnected and operational solar system.
  - Optionally, provide a group-based pricing structure that incentivizes participation through lower prices as the number of participants or kW capacity rise. Pricing discounts for increased installed capacity/participants should be identified in the Cost Proposal Form.
- B. **Production Guarantee:** Provide at least a 90% kWh guarantee for year 1, degrading by a maximum of 0.5% per year for 20 years. Performance guarantee should be measured and damages should be paid on an annual basis.

## **3. Completed Proposal Template (Exhibit B)**

## **4. Completed Proposing Firm Qualification Statement (Exhibit C)**

## **5. Required Appendices**

- 1. Sample contract
- 2. Sample Site Assessment / Cost Estimate
- 3. Respondent's Health and Safety policies and/or plan

## **6. Optional Appendices**

- 1. Plan and description of Respondent's commitment to employ Southwest Virginia residents for project installations.
- 2. Plan and description of Respondent's commitment to employ solar PV interns through the Mountain Empire Community College internship program for project installations.
- 3. Plan and description of commitment to prioritize diversity and inclusiveness in Respondent's business practices.
- 4. Equipment warranty documentation
- 5. Documentation of Better Business Bureau complaints

## **Selection Process**

The SWG Selection Committee will evaluate each proposal based on the Proposal and Evaluation Criteria section of this RFP. Proposals will be ranked based on the evaluation criteria, which will determine the final award recipient. Respondents who do not meet the Requirements listed in the Respondent Qualifications section above are not eligible for the final award. All Respondents will be notified of the outcome of the selection.

## **Proposal Evaluation Criteria**

Final selection will be based on Proposal evaluation and References. The SWG Selection Committee will evaluate all proposals based on the SWG's perception of each Proposal's technical merit. In the event that two or more proposals are considered to be basically equal in merit, cost or price may ultimately be the deciding factor. The SWG Selection Committee will evaluate all Respondent proposals received based on the following criteria:

Responsive and Complete Proposal Submission:

Required



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Qualifications of Team:	Up to 30 points
Local Workforce / Internship Plan	Up to 10 points
Business Practices:	Up to 10 points
Work Quality	Up to 10 points
Customer Service	Up to 10 points
Cost Proposal	Up to 30 points

## Scope of Work

The SWG is soliciting proposals from qualified solar providers to design, build finance, and maintain installations, with one or more ownership options. The goal of this RFP is to identify a solar partner with the necessary experience to ensure a co-managed and well-executed solarize program. The successful Respondent will have demonstrated experience designing, planning, scheduling, permitting and constructing, and interconnecting solar PV systems. Selected Respondent will be responsible for all permitting, financial analysis, and onsite safety standards

## Design Guidelines

When developing the design for any residential system, it is the responsibility of the Respondent to assess building structural integrity, roof condition, shading limitations, site topography and geotechnical attributes to estimate costs related to project installation. The Respondent is responsible for securing all permits and approvals required of the project prior to the construction start date as defined in each homeowner's final agreement terms. Local solar permitting and zoning information for most jurisdictions is available online here: <http://swvasolar.org/local-government/>

## Selected Respondent Responsibilities

### Project Management and Homeowner Communications

The Successful Respondent will be responsible for:

- Entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia committing to the Respondent's application as the Scope of Work for the Solarize program.
- Attending and presenting at three outreach and education events taking place in the month following selection (in late April and/or early May)
- Providing free satellite assessments for all interested homeowners and on-ground site assessments for all buildings moving forward with solar development.
- Securing all required building and electrical permits.
- Completing and submitting all incentive applications on behalf of the homeowner.
- Scheduling and passing all inspections.
- Completing all necessary interconnection and net metering applications on behalf of the homeowner.
- Providing each owner with information regarding energy efficiency and available incentive programs.
- Providing each owner appropriate documentation and guidance for applying for the federal residential solar energy tax credit and, where applicable, federal commercial asset depreciation tax credit.

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- Participating in bi-weekly in-person meetings or conference calls regarding project statuses, barriers, and successful developments with the SWG.

### Warranties

The solar provider's standard system warranty coverage for Cash Purchase and Third-Party Ownership Options should cover modules, inverter, racking and workmanship.

- **Modules:** 20-Year Power Output & 10-Year Workmanship Limited Warranty
- **Inverter:** 10-Year Limited Warranty
- **Racking:** 10-Year Limited Warranty priority
- **Workmanship:** 1 Year Limited Warranty

O&M Manual and Data: prior to initial System Operation Date, the successful Respondent must supply a copy of all Component Product Data and Component O&M manuals to the homeowner. The information should allow the homeowner to evaluate and ensure appropriate O&M is being completed over the life of the system.

## RFP Exhibits

### Exhibit A: Cost Proposal Form

Baseline cost per watt price assumes:

1. Cost for major system components (modules, inverter) – must be new.
2. Standard racking and mounting hardware and wiring
3. Flush mount systems
4. Installation of net metered system
5. The system must include at least a *five-year installation warranty* that covers any defects in the workmanship of the installation at no charge to the owner. The warranty must be provided by the contractor that installs the solar electric system.

What is NOT included in baseline price:

1. Costs related to analysis of any structural improvements that may be needed for a property
2. Electrical work that may be required beyond basic interconnection of solar installation (costs incurred by participant to bring electrical system up to code, for example)
3. Upgrades as requested by the program participant (see below)

Milestone discounts (optional):

1. Respondent may elect to propose programmatic milestones using total kW installed or number of total clients.
2. Each milestone should indicate a reduced baseline cost per watt should the milestone be reached
3. Should the Respondent elect not to propose a milestone discount, list the base price per watt in each column provided.

Firm Name  
Contact Name  
Contact Email  
Contact Phone  
Date


### BASELINE PRICE INFORMATION (CASH PURCHASE -ROOF MOUNTED SOLAR ARRAY)

PV System Equipment Information			Total kW Installed or Total Clients		
System	Modules	Inverter	X	Y	Z
<b>Example</b>	Solar World 275W	SMA 4KW Sunny Boy	\$\$\$ /watt	\$\$ /watt	\$ /watt
1					
2					
3					

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**BASELINE PRICE INFORMATION – (THIRD-PARTY OWNERSHIP OR LOAN - ROOF MOUNTED SOLAR ARRAY)**

PV System Equipment Information			Total kW Installed or Total Clients		
System	Modules	Inverter	X	Y	Z
<b>Example</b>	Solar World 275W	SMA 4KW Sunny Boy	\$\$\$ /watt	\$\$ /watt	\$/watt
1					
2					
3					

**BASELINE PRICE INFORMATION – (CASH - GROUND MOUNT SOLAR ARRAY)**

PV System Equipment Information			Total kW Installed or Total Clients		
System	Modules	Inverter	X	Y	Z
<b>Example</b>	Solar World 275W	SMA 4KW Sunny Boy	\$\$\$ /watt	\$\$ /watt	\$/watt
1					
2					
3					

**BASELINE PRICE INFORMATION – (THIRD-PARTY OWNERSHIP OR LOAN - GROUND MOUNT SOLAR ARRAY)**

PV System Equipment Information			Total kW Installed or Total Clients		
System	Modules	Inverter	X	Y	Z
<b>Example</b>	Solar World 275W	SMA 4KW Sunny Boy	\$\$\$ /watt	\$\$ /watt	\$/watt
1					
2					
3					

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**BASELINE PRICE ADJUSTMENTS (add additional lines as needed)**

Additional Cost Factors (if any)	Increase / Decrease Cost (\$/unit)	Flat Rate Adders +/- (\$)	Description
Battery backup			
Energy efficiency upgrades			
Roofing - e.g. Metal; Slope - angle exceeding 30 degrees			
Height - Building exceeding 2 stories or other cost adders			
Electrical - Full Panel Upgrade, subpanel or interior conduit run			
System - Micro-Inverter and or monitoring			
Premium modules (High Efficiency)			

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## **Exhibit B: Proposal Template**

Please attach this document to your cover letter.

Respondent Firm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **1. Respondent Profile and Qualifications**

#### **A. Team/staff description:**

- i. Describe the team size (including full time and part time staff)
- ii. Name, title, and contact information for key project contact.
- iii. Name, title, and contact information for business owner if different than above.
- iv. Names, titles, and contact information for key Project Managers and Designers serving on this project, if applicable.
- v. Name and certification information for one NABCEP certified staff person.
- vi. Name and certification information for one licensed electrician on staff.
- vii. Name and certification information for one Master Electrician if applicable.

#### **B. How long has the Respondent or members of the Respondent team been in business?**

#### **C. How many solar installations has the Respondent completed in the past three years, and what is the total capacity of those installations?**

- ii. Does the Respondent have experience working in Southwest Virginia? If so, in what capacities?
- iii. Does the Respondent have experience interconnection PV systems with the following utilities (Yes or No):
  - a. APCo (AEP)
  - b. Kentucky Utilities (Old Dominion)
  - c. Powell Valley Electric Cooperative (TVA)
  - d. Bristol Virginia Utilities
  - e. Richlands Municipal Utility

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iv. Describe the financing options the Respondent can offer to residents in Southwest Virginia, and approximately how many contracts the Respondent has executed for each type of financing options, or describe how you would like to collaborate with the SWG to identify financing options for Southwest Virginians in this program.

D. List 3 references for projects completed within the last 3 years with direct client phone numbers and email addresses.

E. Describe the Respondents capability to complete the project per the project timeline specified above. Include a discussion of the firm's financial stability, number of employees, length of time in business, capacity, and resources. Include any website or marketing support your firm plans to provide for this project.

## **2. Business Practices**

A. Describe the Respondent's health and safety record and practices. Identify any communications with Labor and Industries regarding workplace issues, as well as the OSHA Reporting Indicators for the last three years. Provide a brief description of appendices here and attach any documents in the "Required Appendices" section.

## **3. Work Quality and Customer Service**

A. For the equipment that will be used in the installations, provide a description of the equipment warranties or include warranty documentation as an appendix.

B. Describe how the Respondent will handle incident reports (property damage, warranty, service calls, or inquiries), including response time on calls, and hours of coverage for customer service.

C. List any complaints received by the Better Business Bureau of the last 3 years.

D. Describe the training the Respondent provides the property owner, including materials, manuals, customer care books, and/or support for later questions and system performance.

## **Additional Questions**

A. Please describe the Respondent's ability to be present at three in-person informational events in late April and early May.

B. Please describe the Respondent's willingness to provide services in all seven of the coalfield counties, and whether you would be willing to provide services in Washington County as part of this program.

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C. Please describe the Respondent's willingness to provide services to small businesses and small agricultural customers as part of this program.



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**Exhibit C: Proposing Firm Qualification Statement**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the entire contents of the RFP, and certify that Proposing Firm has necessary purchasing contacts, equipment, storage facilities, experience, ability and capital to furnish the proposed products in the manner described and to perform the required work satisfactorily.

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Signatory:  
\_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that Proposing Firm possesses the following certifications: (Check appropriate boxes to indicate compliance.)

- Certification through NABCEP (required)
- Place of business located within Southwest Virginia (not required).

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Signatory:  
\_\_\_\_\_

I certify that Proposing Firm agrees to abide by the SEIA Solar Business Code:  
<http://www.seia.org/policy/consumer-protection/seia-solar-business-code>.

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Signatory:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Proposing Firm declares the following legal status in submitting this proposal:

- A corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_
- A partnership
- An individual doing business as \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name FEIN

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address City/State/Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Proposer's Signature Name & Title

