



2021 Southwest Virginia Residential Solar RFP

Background

The Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia is excited to issue this 2021 Residential Solar Program Request For Proposals (RFP) on behalf of a group of homeowners in the coalfield region of Southwest Virginia (Wise, Dickenson, Lee, Scott, Russell, Buchanan and Tazewell counties, and the City of Norton).

The Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia is a group of nonprofit and community action agencies, colleges, state agencies, planning district commissions and other interested citizens and businesses working together since 2016 to develop a renewable energy industry cluster in the seven coalfield counties of Southwest Virginia. The workgroup is co-convened by the UVA-Wise Office of Economic Development & Engagement, People Inc. and Appalachian Voices, with facilitation assistance from Dialogue + Design Associates, policy and legal analysis from Southern Environmental Law Center, program development assistance from the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, technical assistance from paleBLUEdot, and regional solar planning with The Nature Conservancy.

We've worked in our community and with volunteers to recruit nearly 100 interested homeowners for this program, and will continue to collaborate with our vast network of Workgroup members and community leaders, as well as the selected solar installer, to grow the list of participants for the residential solar program.

We are issuing this RFP with the intent of selecting one company ("Respondent") to provide solar photovoltaic (PV) energy systems and optional battery backup and energy efficiency services for the participating homeowners and small businesses in a subset of the coalfield region (2 or more counties). The Respondent will provide a single price/watt installed for the group. If the Respondent offers battery backup or efficiency services, the Respondent will provide price ranges for installation, equipment, and design offered to participating homeowners.

The goal of the residential solar program is: (1) to enable Southwest Virginia residents to receive competitive pricing on their solar systems by proceeding as a group, (2) to provide the project installer with a pre-screened group of customers and assistance in the education and recruitment process, and (3) to boost local education and economic potential in the solar energy sector.

***Please note that during COVID, the health and safety of all program participants is our #1 priority. We are asking that all outreach take place in virtual format including info-sessions and are requiring Respondents to provide detailed safety protocol and plans for the sales and installation process. We will allow flexibility for virtual meetings for the in-person site visit phase of the group, and will adjust in accordance to all state, federal, and local guidelines.*

Southwest Virginia Residential Solar Program - Timeline

1. RFP Issue Date: **Wednesday February 24th**
2. Pre-Bid Webinar: **March 8th, 2pm EST**; register at:



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https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PWkP42qzSUqCnQyGyYUjKQ

3. Questions and Notice of Intent to Bid Due: **Wednesday March 10th by 5:00pm EST**
4. Answers to Questions Provided: **Friday March 12th**
5. Proposals Due: **Wednesday March 24th by 5:00pm EST**
6. Selection Committee Review: **Week of March 29th**
7. Notice of Intent to Award: **Week of March 29th or early April**
8. Contract Negotiations Completed: **Early April**
9. Suggested target date for new participants to sign up: **Tuesday June 1st**
10. Suggested target date for all site visits completed: **Monday August 2nd**
11. Suggested target date for all proposals to participants: **Monday August 23rd**
12. Suggested target date for all signed contracts: **Thursday September 30th**

If you would like to submit a response to this RFP, please complete the attached RFP Response Template. Proposals are due by email submission to chelsea@appvoices.org by **5:00 pm EST on March 24th**. A notice of intent to bid is not required but it is suggested if you want to ensure you receive answers to all questions submitted.

Below you will find additional information and requirements for compiling a compelling proposal. More information about the Workgroup can be found at swvasolar.org. If you have any questions about the process or expectations, please don't hesitate to email. We look forward to receiving your submissions!

*******Please respond to this RFP by completing the provided "Solar RFP Response Template" Word document. The following are bid requirements and suggestions.*******

Scope of work

Services to be provided by the Solar Workgroup

1. Pre-screen participants by reviewing each roof via publicly available satellite imagery. Assessments performed by The Workgroup are categorized by orientation, shading, and roof characteristics and are not intended to be overly restrictive. Our goal is to find the balance between wasting a homeowner's or the installer's time and unnecessarily excluding residents.
2. Recruit local residents before and after selection of an installer (see timeline above). We expect the number of participants to increase significantly by the end of the project cycle.
3. Provide an existing list of interested Southwest Virginia residents.
4. Issue promotional materials (press releases, flyers, social media posts, etc.) as well as work to generate local media attention. We'll clear materials with you to the best of our ability. We



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will feature your company prominently while keeping bid details confidential.

5. Support program participants and the selected installer throughout the process.
6. Host celebration of successful residential program and public recognition of the installer.
7. Distribute information should any details about the RFP be clarified or changed during the RFP period.

Services to be provided by the Respondent

1. A custom proposal for each participant in the group based on the group pricing and component offerings outlined in the bid. The proposal should include language that explains all the services provided in the turnkey price for the system (assessment, system design, permitting, installation, interconnection paperwork, etc.).
2. Provide the Workgroup with the first three proposals you send to program participants.
3. Keep the Workgroup informed of the progress and status of each program participant.
4. In-person (or virtual) site assessment, structural assessment, design, equipment procurement, installation, monitoring setup, financing, customer training (i.e., safety rules, monitoring, maintenance, how to deal with problems, etc.), permitting, and application/management of applicable incentives.
5. Responsive communication with program participants.
6. Responsive communication and coordination with the Solar Workgroup.
7. Participation in public education/outreach events.
8. Installations performed in conformance with all applicable laws and codes, interconnection requirements for net-metered installations, and any incentive-related installation requirements, rules, and timelines.
9. Abide by the law and all applicable ethical business guidelines set forth by the Council of Better Business Bureaus (BBB), Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), relevant state consumer protection bureaus, and other regulatory bodies with jurisdiction.

Bid Requirements

- Offer participation for residents in 2 or more of the listed Southwest Virginia counties: Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, or Wise County (including the City of Norton).
 - Note that the Workgroup also has interested residents located in Washington County. The Workgroup can pass along those leads to the selected Respondent if there is interest in developing in Washington County, but the Workgroup will not be actively recruiting for participation from Washington County residents.
 - Note that some residential participants have small farms or small businesses for which they are also interested in pursuing solar. We do not require Respondents to offer services for



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small farms or small businesses but will make those leads available to the selected Respondent.

- Offer a single purchase price (\$/watt) for all residential participants.
 - This price will be offered to all homeowners participating in the residential program.
 - You do not need to provide individualized proposals for each homeowner in this initial bid. If selected to develop the group of projects, the Respondent will provide individualized proposals for each participant.
- Explicitly state any additional charges not included in the \$/watt price in the proposal (e.g., charges for electrical upgrades, steep roofs, specific roofing types/materials, roof attachment methods/components, multiple array locations, small system size, energy efficiency upgrades, customized racking, tree trimming, etc.)
 - The assumption is that all costs to most participants are factored into the base price, and that an additional charge, if necessary, is reserved for unique circumstances.
- Consider all selection criteria when preparing your proposal. Although the Selection Committee will look for aggressive pricing, price is not the only factor they will consider. The Workgroup also values experience in the marketplace, quality system components, and strong warranties, among other factors. This program is not a “race to the bottom” in terms of system price and quality, nor do we want Respondents to feel they must sacrifice quality to be selected.
- Describe how the Respondent currently utilizes or plans to utilize local workforce or solar energy track students through Mountain Empire Community College or other local training programs during the project. Any proposed or existing role in job/skill development or employment will be taken into consideration.
- Bid with PV modules that:
 - Are listed and reviewed on the California Energy Commission Solar Equipment List available at: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/solar-equipment-lists>, or Respondent must provide similar performance information from an alternate source, or by referencing a CEC-listed panel from the same product family.
 - Have at least a 25-year power warranty with a specified performance degradation curve showing acceptable levels of performance or replacement and show achievement of a minimum of 80% of the nameplate rated power at STC by year 25;
 - Have a product warranty of at least 10 years.
- Bid with inverters that:
 - Are included on the California Energy Commission Solar Equipment List available at: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/solar-equipment-lists>, or Respondent must provide similar performance information from an alternate source or by referencing a CEC-listed inverter from the same product family.
 - Have a warranty that allows for replacement due to premature failure over the specified warranty time frame and be a minimum of 15 years for microinverters and 10 years for string inverters.
- Utilize mounting equipment that is:
 - Grounded in accordance with manufacturer’s specifications.
 - Used in accordance with its manufacturer’s listed purpose and specifications.



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- Used in accordance with manufacturer specifications for waterproofing penetrations.
- Meet the following insurance requirements (for Respondent and any sub-contractors):ⁱ
 - General liability - \$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$2,000,000 in aggregate
 - Worker's compensation - \$1,000,000 each accident, each employee, policy limit
 - Automobile liability - bodily injury, death, and property damage combined single limits of at least \$1,000,000 per occurrence covering vehicles owned, hired, or non-owned
 - NOTE: Official proof of exemption by applicable jurisdiction for any above insurance requirements for a company is also acceptable.
- For Respondents that provide brokerage services for SRECs, do not obligate participants to sell SRECs to said Respondents. As long as a participant retains ownership of the solar system, they should be able to select his/her preferred broker, which may include the Respondent. If the participant opts for a PPA or leased system, the Respondent may manage SRECs freely.

Useful Information

Goals of the Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia

The Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia was formed as a result of the 2016 SWVA Economic Forum hosted by UVa-Wise. The mission of the Solar Workgroup 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 of the Solar Workgroup:

1. Identify policy changes that will make a more favorable environment for the development of a solar industry in Southwest Virginia;
2. To the greatest extent possible, utilize existing supply chains and workforce in the region in the development of prioritized projects, and work with area community colleges and other groups to further develop our region's ability to meet future demand;
3. Identify and develop sites in the region that are ideal for solar development, emphasizing projects that can be "ambassadors" of solar energy; and
4. Perform outreach and education to our local and regional leaders and the community at large to communicate the benefits of solar energy development.

How the Solar Workgroup Selects an Installer

The Solar Workgroup planning team will convene a selection committee of Workgroup members. This Selection Committee will review the proposals. The Committee will select one Respondent to develop all of the projects for the group. The Committee may select multiple installers if their proposed geographic areas of work do not overlap.

The process used to select the winning bid will be as follows:



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1. Bids will be distributed to Selection Committee members along with a summary spreadsheet created by members of the Workgroup Planning Team.
2. Selection Committee members may review bids independently before meeting as a group.
3. Committee members will convene on one day to review all bids and make a decision. During that meeting they will:
 - a. Discuss each bid
 - b. Select a winning company or finalists
4. If clarifications regarding bids are needed, the Selection Committee will:
 - a. Contact the designated bid representative for each finalist if a bid component needs clarification. (Committee may decide not to contact finalists if no clarification is needed.)
 - b. Hold a second meeting to select a winning company to service the program.

If you are selected as a finalist, you may have an opportunity to speak about your bid and to answer questions. Please abide by the following:

1. No discussions of other Respondents' bids, reputation, etc.
2. Please do not negotiate to change any aspect of the bid from what is in your proposal. Clarifications of what's included are acceptable.
3. Keep responses as brief as possible.

Selection Criteria

**Please note: The "Scoring Weight per Category" column below reflects the selection criteria priorities and preferences of the Workgroup and will often vary from one program to another*

<i>Scoring Weight & Category</i>	<i>Description</i>
<p>26%</p> <p><u>System Quality & Sourcing</u></p>	The extent to which the Respondent incorporates high-quality components (high CEC panel ratings, flashed/non-penetrating attachments, etc.).
<p>24%</p> <p><u>Competitive Pricing</u></p>	The extent to which proposed pricing terms are competitive.
<p>20%</p> <p><u>Respondent Experience & Qualifications</u></p>	The extent to which the Respondent demonstrates a track record of quality work and incorporates photovoltaic technologies in line with industry standards. Experience in the local market is a plus.



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<p><i>20%</i> <u><i>System Warranty</i></u></p>	<p>The extent to which the Respondent offers strong warranties on system components and labor.</p>
<p><i>10%</i> <u><i>Workforce and Community Benefits</i></u></p>	<p>The extent to which the proposed solar PV systems foster social and community development, including hiring local workers and offering local job training/internship opportunities. Preference may be given to locally-owned companies.</p>

Q&A Process

Please submit any questions and/or comments regarding this RFP via email to chelsea@appvoices.org by March 10th, 5pm EST. Answers will be provided by March 12th. A notice of intent to bid is not required but it is suggested that you submit a notice of intent by March 10th, 5pm EST if you want to ensure you receive answers to all questions submitted.

What we will disclose to program participants about your bid if selected

We will disclose this information to the entire participant group (not the public) about your winning bid:

- Equipment included in the bid
- Warranties on all equipment and installation
- Base pricing and key adders
- System cost examples based on bid pricing, average sizes and equipment options (bid prices and component offering is for a limited time and may not be applicable to non-participants)
- Installer contact information and next steps for each homeowner
 - o NOTE: If you are selected, we will work with you to clarify this.
- COVID safety protocol

ⁱ These requirements are in line with the Solar Energy Industry Association's described best practices <https://www.seia.org/research-resources/installation-best-practices-residential-portfolios>