

**Midwest Renewable Energy Association**  
**Request for Proposal**  
Rev. 3/27/14

**Power Pack Minnesota**  
**INSTALLATION OF RESIDENTIAL AND SMALL COMMERCIAL PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS**

**APPLICATIONS DUE: April 18, 2014**

**I. Introduction**

The Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA), a national leader in renewable energy education and training, is seeking qualified firms to submit proposals for the **design, procurement, and installation of new, direct-owned photovoltaic systems at a per-watt price lower than the typical residential installation**. The MREA is launching a program in conjunction with Hibbing Community College called **Power Pack Minnesota**. This project is made possible with funding from a NSF Advanced Technology Education Grant and MN Clean Energy Resource Teams (MN CERTS).

Power Pack Minnesota is modeled on a pilot program that ran in Milwaukee, WI during 2012 and has since expanded to four Illinois communities in 2013. The program is designed to lower the costs of customer qualification by educating consumers on the benefits of photovoltaic systems, establishing expectations for system cost and performance, maintaining a list of qualified contractors, offering a limited number of free site assessments, and showcasing successful solar projects. The program will also prioritize quality solar products from regional companies and will demonstrate how solar installations support local companies and jobs in your region. Minnesota is poised to become one of the more robust solar markets in the U.S. and the Power Pack Program is designed to educate consumers and move them toward the installation of solar systems.

The MREA will focus on delivering 1-hour presentations (Power Hours), the educational component of the Power Pack program, with community partners in Minnesota Power territory including, but not limited to, the communities of Brainerd, Duluth, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, Hinkley, Little Falls, Mt. Iron, Park Rapids, and Virginia. We will also be working with our partners and qualifying contractors to identify target markets in these areas including farm owners, food cooperative members, credit union members, large employers and other networks whose members may have interest in solar system installation.

As a result of this solicitation, qualified solar installation contractors may enter into a Master Service Agreement (“Agreement”) with the MREA. The Agreement will set forth the terms and conditions under which a contractor will be recognized on a qualified contractor list that will be provided to interested customers in Minnesota Power Territory, including adjacent cooperative and municipal owned utilities.

**It is the goal of this RFP to select multiple contractors to participate in the program. 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 agreement.**

## **II. Notice**

Proposers are responsible for carefully reading all the terms and conditions contained in this RFP and for following the instructions given. Proposals that do not contain all the information requested may be rejected as non-responsive.

Proposers must review the entire RFP to ensure that all required information is included in the proposal.

The complete RFP consists of the following:

1. Request for Proposal
2. Attachment 1, Bidder Certification
3. Attachment 2, Cost Proposal

It is expected these Agreements for solar implementation services will be offered, but MREA reserves the right to issue additional Agreements. Contractors are not guaranteed any particular volume or dollar amount of work.

## **III. Minimum Contractor Qualifications**

Bidders must meet the minimum qualifications described in this section to become participating qualified solar installers. Determination of whether a bidder meets the minimum qualifications will be based on the complete proposal as defined in Section V.

- Participant must have at least one current employee or currently retained subcontractor who is legally licensed as an electrician in the State of Minnesota
- Participant must have at least one current employee that has accomplished one of the following:
  - Achieved PV Installer Certification through the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) or achieved an Underwriter Laboratories (UL) Photovoltaic System Installer Certification
  - Completed a U.S. Department of Labor recognized electrical apprenticeship program and has at least two documented photovoltaic system installations; or
  - Has earned a certificate/degree from an accredited solar design and installation training program and has at least two documented photovoltaic system installations
- Maintain a primary place of business in Minnesota, serving customers in Minnesota Power Territory including adjacent cooperative and municipal utilities
- Must carry a minimum 5-year labor warranty

## **IV. Scope of Work**

### **A. Specific Requirements**

Successful bidders (Contractors) will be asked to enter into a Master Services Agreement (Agreement)

with the MREA. The Agreement will outline conditions for listing with the program as an approved contractor. The list of approved contractors (i.e., Power Pack Providers) will be provided to individuals after participation in Power Hour presentations, downloaded from our website, and newsletters or other communication.

The role of the MREA and its community partners are to educate interested parties and help facilitate customer qualification. As part of this program, contractor's responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Finalizing the customer contract and managing all financial transactions;
- Handling preparation and submission of paperwork for any State rebate program (if applicable);
- Addressing all customer service matters related to the project including but not limited to scheduling and customer complaints;
- Obtaining all permits needed to install the solar system and provide interconnectivity with local utility as required by federal, state and local jurisdictions;
- Completion of a structural analysis (as appropriate), communication to the customer of results and any recommendations of the analysis, and implementation of any required structural modifications based upon authorization by customer;
- Purchase of all installation components;
- Installation of the photovoltaic system and related testing of the system to the customer's satisfaction.

## **B. General Requirements**

Contractors shall perform the following work and meet the following requirements from the Agreement resulting from this RFP:

- a. Represent the MREA program to residential customers in a professional, positive manner.
- b. Work with the MREA and other consultants to identify and resolve technical and program issues. Failure to resolve technical and program issues will result in termination of the Agreement.
- c. Make available all pertinent data and information generated or otherwise acquired during performance of the Agreement upon request of the MREA.

## **V. Proposal Content**

Bidders are responsible for carefully reading all the terms and conditions contained in this RFP and following the instructions given. The proposal should clearly describe qualifications, experience and

capability to do the work described in this RFP, and must include all information requested below. **Proposals that do not contain all the information requested may be rejected as non-responsive. Proposers must submit the following:**

- a. Cover Letter. **Must** bear the original signature(s) of the official(s) authorized to sign the proposal.
- b. Original proposal narrative, typewritten, single-sided on standard (8½" x 11") paper, **maximum eight (8) pages**, plus Attachment 1-Bidder Certification, Attachment 2-Cost Proposal, and any additional requested attachments.

\* In the case of a joint bid, one cover letter should be submitted presenting information and signatures from officials of each entity. The cover letter should clearly indicate that a joint proposal is being submitted.

**All documents must be submitted electronically and compiled into one electronic file of 5MB or less. Proposals greater than 5MB in size may be divided into separate electronic files. However, the number of files should be kept to a minimum.**

### Proposals Must Contain the Following Information

**COVER LETTER** (0 points): Cover letters should be on company letterhead. In the cover letter or on a title page, please include the title of the proposal, the name of the proposer (firm or individual), the name, address, telephone number and e-mail address of proposer's contact person, and the date of submission. The authorizing signature(s) should appear on one of these pages. These pages are not included in the 8-page limit.

**COST PROPOSAL** (20 points): Proposals will be judged as complete, including whether costs are appropriately justified, and whether costs are reasonable compared to other proposals.

**NARRATIVE** (80 points): Limited to 8 pages.

1. *General Firm Profile (15 points):*

Include a brief description of the proposer's firm size and local organizational structure. Include a discussion of the firm's financial stability, capacity (i.e. number of installations capable of installing per week/month) and resources, and a description of the installations and services your firm specializes in. Include types of buildings on which you have installed photovoltaic systems, (i.e. residential and commercial), size/scope of installations, and services that may be similar to the work described in this RFP.

2. *Certifications + Attachment 1 (10 points):*

- One of the following certifications is required:
  - PV Installer Certification through the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) or a Underwriter Laboratories (UL) Photovoltaic System Installer Certification
  - Completed a U.S. Department of Labor recognized electrical apprenticeship

- program and has at least two documented photovoltaic system installations;
  - or
  - Has earned a certificate/degree from an accredited solar design and installation training program and has at least two documented photovoltaic system installations
- Local Residency – Primary place of business is located within Minnesota. Please provide firm’s mailing address and proof of residency via a public document such as a copy of a property tax bill or utility bill.

3. *Specific Project Experience (10 points):*

Describe prior work performed during the last 5 years that is similar to the work being proposed under this Solicitation. Describe the demonstrated experience of the firm in developing, designing and installing residential solar electric systems, along with a discussion of how experience on previous projects relates to the Power Pack program in Minnesota. Provide a statement describing the firm’s capability to complete the project within the desired time schedule. Also, specifically provide a:

- Brief description (one to three paragraphs) of three projects including scope of the project/size of the installation, customization required, identification of personnel who worked on the project, any lessons learned, and identification of the client (include the name, address and telephone number of the appropriate contact person.)

4. *References (5 points):*

Please provide three references from previous solar clients (including mailing address, contact name, and contact person’s e-mail and/or telephone) that the MREA may contact. Question areas may include, but are not limited to:

- Professionalism in interactions with others and on site
- Efficient resolution of installation/operational challenges
- Quality of installation work
- Timeliness of installation work
- Quality and accuracy of cost estimates

5. *Organization, Management and Administration and Customer Service (10 points):*

Describe how work is be organized, managed, and administered so as to meet specified requirements:

- Outline your scheduling/installation process with reference to typical turnaround times.
- Describe in detail your customer service plan to manage referrals and customer follow-up in a timely manner.
- Please describe any financing options available through your organization, if applicable.

6. *Personnel Experience/Qualifications (10 points):*

- Identify the key project team members by name and position, and submit names and relevant experience of the personnel, including subcontractors, who will perform the work being proposed under this RFP.
- As an attachment to the narrative, provide resumes that give sufficient information to

demonstrate minimum qualifications are met, and experience and expertise in the work to be done. (Resumes are not considered part of the 8-page limit on proposal length). \* Substitutions of personnel identified herein during performance of Work Assignment Contracts will be allowed only with prior approval of the MREA.

7. *Employment Practices (10 points):*

Discuss your standards for:

- Hiring - Describe experience requirements, education requirements, and the existence of non-discrimination policies
- Employee Benefits - Describe benefits including health benefits, family leave provisions, equality for spouses and domestic partners, retirement plans, and labor relation's practices.

8. *Equipment and Vendors - Sustainability (10 points):*

- Submit names and business address of vendors, manufacturers and other partners from whom you typically purchase photovoltaic system components.
- For each vendor please indicate if the vendor's warehouse/distribution center is located.
- For each vendor, manufacturer, or partner, indicate whether the equipment purchased from the listed vendors meets the California Energy Commission's List of eligible equipment ([www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov/equipment/index](http://www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov/equipment/index)) Grade A or Grade B.
- For each vendor indicate the equipment warranty policy.
- Provide your firm's warranty policy on installation.

## VI. Evaluation Criteria

### Step 1:

MREA will evaluate and score proposals to determine each proposal's Draft Score. The maximum possible Draft Score is 100 (20 for Cost Proposal, 80 for Narrative).

The evaluation procedure will consist of an assignment of a number score for each section of the proposal. A score of zero (0) on any section (other than the Cover Letter) will eliminate a proposal from further consideration. In other words, proposals must be complete with each required section or subsection (as identified in Section V) being addressed. Materials not requested in this RFP will not be considered in the evaluation of proposals.

In assigning scores to proposal sections or subsections the following response attributes will be considered: Completeness of response, adequacy of response, quality of response, and ability of response to meet or exceed requirements.

### Step 2:

A Selection Committee will review and evaluate each Draft Score to help assure proposers that many factors and values important to the community were considered in the proposer evaluation process.

The following representatives will make up the Selection Committee:

- One (1) representative from Hibbing Community College.

- Two (2) representatives from the MREA
- One (1) representatives of the NSF-funded C4 Program, the primary funding agent of this program

The Selection Committee will determine the Final Score for each proposal. The maximum possible Final Score is 80. All bidders will be notified of the results of their evaluation.

## **VII. RFP Terms and Conditions**

Cost of developing the proposal, attendance at an interview or any other such costs are entirely the responsibility of the proposer, and shall not be reimbursed in any manner by the MREA.

The MREA reserves the right to issue amendments to this RFP. In the event it becomes necessary to amend any part of this RFP, the MREA will provide notice of the amendment in the same manner as notice of the original RFP. If amendments to the RFP are issued, each proposer must acknowledge each specific amendment in the transmittal letter accompanying proposals. If a proposer does not acknowledge any amendment, then that proposer may be deemed non-responsive.

The MREA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. The MREA reserves the right to cancel or postpone this solicitation at any time, if such would be in the public interest. The MREA reserves the right to award no Agreements, or to award multiple Agreements. Likewise, the MREA reserves the right to negotiate the statements of work from within the scope of work described in the RFP that may be required under Task Order Assignments with a specific contractor.

Firms or individuals submitting proposals in response to this RFP may be requested by the MREA to answer additional questions, which may include phone or face-to-face interviews, or provide additional documentation. This will allow the proposer to clarify the proposal and answer questions the MREA may have regarding proposer's understanding of the scope of work identified herein. However, the MREA may complete its evaluation without further discussion of proposals received. Therefore, it is important that each proposal submitted be as complete, clear and concise as possible.

## **VIII. Contract Terms and Conditions**

Agreements will be written initially for a term of six months. The MREA reserves the right to extend any or all Agreements for additional periods as needed.

The Agreement will clearly indicate a legal liability separation for the organizers of the program.

Contractors are required to obtain and provide evidence of the following insurance coverage: Workers' compensation, comprehensive general liability with a combined single limit or equivalent in an amount not less than \$1,000,000, and automobile liability with a combined single limit or equivalent in an amount not less than \$1,000,000. Contractors are required to provide the MREA with certificates of insurance and prior notice of change or cancellation. Contractor shall provide the MREA with a copy of its professional liability insurance policy upon request. An Agreement will not take effect until documentation of insurance coverage is received by the MREA.

## **IX. Questions**

Questions about this RFP or the selection procedure should be directed to:

Karen Blaha  
Midwest Renewable Energy Association  
Telephone: 715-592-6595 x109  
Email: [karenb@midwestrenew.org](mailto:karenb@midwestrenew.org)  
Address: 7558 Deer Rd, Custer, WI 54423

## **X. Submission of Proposals**

**PROPOSALS ARE DUE April 18, 2014**

**Proposals must be submitted electronically to the attention of Karen Blaha at MREA with the title “Power Pack Minnesota– Installer Application” in the Subject line.**

It is the responsibility of the proposer to ensure that proposals arrive at the MREA:

Midwest Renewable Energy Association  
c/o Karen Blaha  
Telephone: 715-592-6595 x109  
Email: [karenb@midwestrenew.org](mailto:karenb@midwestrenew.org)  
Address: 7558 Deer Rd, Custer, WI 54423



**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**Bidder Qualification Statement**

**Bidder Qualification Statement:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the entire contents of the RFP- Installation of Residential and Small Commercial Photovoltaic Systems and certify that Bidder 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 Bidder possesses the following certifications: (Check appropriate boxes to indicate compliance.)

- Certification through NABCEP
- Achieved an Underwriter Laboratories (UL) Photovoltaic System Installer Certification
- Completed a U.S. Department of Labor recognized electrical apprenticeship program and has at least two documented photovoltaic system installations
- Has earned a certificate/degree from an accredited solar design and installation training program and has at least two documented photovoltaic system installations
- Primary place of business located within the State of Minnesota.

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

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

Bidder 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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness' Signature Name & Title

## ATTACHMENT 2

### Cost Proposal

#### Instructions

- 1) For the baseline estimate assume a 2KW, 5KW and 10KW residential home photovoltaic system installation of 2,500 square feet. Assume that no angle mounts on the roof or ground or pole mounted arrays are required and that the project has been pre-qualified. Assume installation of a dual metering system. Standard mounting and racking hardware should also be included. Please provide baseline estimates for each of the three designated total kW capacity levels. It is expected that the greater the total overall kW volume installed per contractor, the lower the baseline price will be.
- 2) For the customization section, please provide the estimated cost per watt for possible customization costs. An allowance for customization needs to be considered to allow for consumer preference and the expertise of the contractor given a particular installation situation, as not all homes are the same and many factors come into play when installing a solar system. Customization may take into account upgrades to more efficient solar panels, inverters and racking systems, or roofing materials and pitch, just to name a few. Space is available to add additional costs as deemed necessary by the proposer.

#### System Requirements

*New Components:* All of the major system components (modules, inverter and, if needed, a charge controller) must be new.

*Certified Modules and Inverters:* Solar electric modules and inverters must be on the California Energy Commission's list ([www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov/equipment/index](http://www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov/equipment/index)) of eligible equipment and must be either Grade A or Grade B.

*Five-Year Installation Warranty:* 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 contractor that installs the solar electric system must provide the warranty. Repairs, general maintenance, or replacement of batteries or inverters are the responsibility of the homeowner.

*Code:* All systems installed must meet the requirements spelled out by the State of Minnesota for building and/or electrical code as it pertains to this photovoltaic system, as well as conform to any local requirements.

*Permits:* System owners and installers must adhere to permit requirements by federal, state, and local jurisdiction.