

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Minnesota Solar Power Hour Program

A Public Education Series to Develop New Solar Customers
Summer 2017

SEEKING PARTNERING FIRMS TO PROMOTE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SOLAR OWNERSHIP

Date of Issue: June 5, 2017

Proposal Date Due: June 19, 2017 at 5pm Central

Issued By: Midwest Renewable Energy Association

RFP Point of Contact: Devon Cupery, Engagement Manager
Midwest Renewable Energy Association
devonc@midwestrenew.org

INTRODUCTION

The Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) is seeking qualified firms to submit proposals for the design, procurement, and installation of residential and commercial photovoltaic systems and/or Community Solar Garden (CSG) subscriptions as part of a region-wide customer education program.

The program, led by the MREA, is designed to increase solar installations in Minnesota with an emphasis on the Greater Twin Cities Area through a series of 15 free public presentations in partnership with qualifying firms offering installation, financing, and CSG subscriptions services. We are reaching out to municipalities and neighborhoods with promising solar markets based on home ownership, population, community interest, and income level.

It is the intention of the MREA to design and deliver the program in a manner that reduces customer acquisition and qualification costs and increase purchase volume during the project period. It is recommended (but not required) that firms offer discounts valid for the timeframe of the program to move interested customers to purchase.

The program is building off experiences gained from a similar program, The Minnesota Power Pack Program, which was conducted in 2016. The 2017 Solar Power Hour series will feature free, one-hour education sessions about solar energy options in Minnesota, including financial considerations, available incentives, and how to review an installer's solar assessment. The MREA will be conducting outreach with the support of local municipalities, neighborhood associations, the Neighborhood Energy Connection (NEC), the Center for Energy and Environment (CEE), and Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs), and continues to work to expand program partners.

ABOUT THIS RFP

The intent of this RFP is to select firms interested in providing quotes for purchased, financed, and/or CSG enrollment services for eligible participants. Participation in this program includes: 1) being listed in education materials as a partnering firm, 2) attending public presentations as available and networking with potential customers, 3) responding to customer inquiries as referred by MREA, and 4) exhibiting/sponsoring/presenting at the capstone public event, The Minnesota Energy Fair, taking place September 9-10, 2017 at Harriet Island Park in St. Paul. (see www.TheEnergyFair.org).

As a result of this solicitation, qualified solar installation contractors may enter into a Master Service Agreement ("Agreement") with MREA. The Agreement will set forth the terms and conditions of participation.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO RFP

Questions, including requests for interpretation of the provisions of the RFP, **shall be submitted in writing (via email)** to the RFP Point of Contact Devon Cupery at devonc@midwestrenew.org by **6/14/2017** at 2:00pm CST. Questions and answers will be emailed to all RFP respondents as they are received, with no more accepted after **6/14/2017** at 2:00pm CST.

PROPOSAL DUE DATE AND SUBMITTAL

Proposals must be received no later than 6/19/2017 at 5:00pm CST. Proposals must be submitted to Devon Cupery at devonc@midwestrenew.org. All emailed proposals will generate an emailed response within one business day confirming receipt of the proposal. If you do not receive a confirmation email, please call 414-617-5843.

In order to maintain the fairness and integrity of the selection process, proposals must conform to the requirements of this RFP. All communications shall be through the RFP Point of Contact listed on the RFP Cover Sheet. Communications with members of the evaluation committee for the purpose of unfairly influencing the outcome of this RFP may be cause for the proposal to be rejected and disqualified from further consideration.

SELECTION

The selection of partnering firms will be made by the MREA. The MREA may require additional information from proposing firms to make final selection. If this is the case, an MREA representative will reach out directly to the point of contact listed in the proposal.

TIMELINE

RFP Announced	June 5, 2017
RFP Questions Due/Posted	June 14, 2017
RFP Proposals Due	June 19, 2017
Firm(s) Selected	June 30, 2017
Public Engagement	July 1, 2017 to October 31, 2017
Participant List Available to Contractor	Ongoing
Suggested Discount Begin	July 1, 2017
Minnesota Energy Fair	September 9-10, 2017
Suggested Discount End	October 31, 2017
Installations and Subscriptions	Ongoing

PROPOSING FIRM REQUIREMENTS

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

BIDDER QUALIFICATIONS

Bidders must meet the minimum qualifications described in this section to participate. The determination of whether a bidder meets the minimum qualifications will be based on the complete proposal.

Required:

- Installation firms **must** have at least one employee that is a North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Certified PV Installer
- Proposing firms must meet licensure requirements for the State of Minnesota.
- Firms offering CSG subscriptions must be listed as a currently available CSG program on the Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Teams website (see <http://www.cleanenergyprojectbuilder.org/solar-gardens>) and provide a complete subscriber disclosure checklist to all participants (see http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/sites/default/files/CommunitySolarGarden_DisclosureChecklist_12-11-14_0.pdf)
- Proposing firms must respond to each section of this Request for Proposals

Preference Given To:

- Firms with primary place of business located in Minnesota
- Firms that provide a discount to participants purchasing services as part of the program

PROPOSAL SCORING & EVALUATION

The MREA shall evaluate each proposal based on the categories outlined below. Proposal ranking will be the central evaluation in determining program participation. All Proposers will be notified of the outcome of the selection.

CONDITIONS AND RESERVATIONS

The MREA is not obligated as a result of the submission of a Proposal to enter into an agreement with any Proposer, and have no financial obligation to any Proposer arising from this RFP. All Contracts will be executed between interested parties and the selected contractor.

MREA will not share information provided as part of this RFP with outside parties and will limit internal review to parties responsible for evaluation of proposals and selection of partnering contractors.

The Contract between the interested party and the selected firm will state that MREA and its partners are not parties to the Contract, and that the selected contractor will be solely liable for any claims, losses or damages arising out of the Contract. The contractor will be expected to sign an Agreement with MREA to confirm each organization's roles and responsibilities prior to work starting.

Furthermore, MREA reserves all rights regarding this RFP, including, without limitation, the right to:

- Amend, delay or cancel the RFP without liability if the team finds it is in the best interest of the project to do so. In the event it becomes necessary to amend any part of this RFP, notice will be provided in the same manner as notice of the original solicitation;
- Reject any or all Proposals received upon finding that it is in the best interest of the program to do so;

- Waive any minor informality or non-conformance with the provisions or procedures of the RFP, and seek clarification of any Proposal, if required;
- Reject any Proposal that fails substantially to comply with all prescribed RFP procedures and requirements;
- Negotiate and/or amend the Scope of Work to serve the best interest of the program

PROPOSAL FORMAT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Please create project proposals in 8½” x 11” document size using a minimum 12-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 shall not exceed 8 pages, including cover page, cover letter and any appendices and/or attachments. The sample proposal and sample contract do not count toward your 8-page maximum.

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**. The page limit does not include Attachment 1-Bidder Certification, sample proposal, and sample contract.

* 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.

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.

SAMPLE PROPOSAL AND CONTRACT (20 points): Attach a sample proposal and contract that your firm provides to customers. This will not count as part of the 8-page limit.

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: Bidder Qualification Statement (10 points):*
Describe relevant licenses and certifications currently held by company and key staff.
- For PV installation contractors, the following certification is required:
 - PV Installer Certification through the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP)
 - MREA may accept the following credentials and experience as substitute for NABCEP certification:
 - 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 and References (20 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 or providing subscriptions to CSG programs.
- Include three references including project descriptions, identification of personnel who worked on the project, and identification of the client (include the name, address and telephone number/email of the appropriate contact person.)
- Questions for references may include topics such as:
- 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 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 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 Qualifications and Employment Practices (15 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.
 - Hiring - Describe experience requirements, education requirements, professional development availability, and the existence of non-discrimination policies
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) Grade A or Grade B.
- For each vendor indicate the equipment warranty policy.
- Provide your firm's warranty policy on installation.

Evaluation and Selection

MREA will evaluate and score proposals to determine each proposal's Draft Score. The maximum possible Draft Score is 100 (20 for Sample 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.

ATTACHMENT 1
Bidder Qualification Statement

Bidder Qualification Statement:

I, _____, have read the entire contents of the RFP- Minnesota Solar Power Hour Program and certify that Bidder has necessary capacity to furnish the proposed products/services in the manner described and to perform the required work satisfactorily.

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

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

For PV installation contractors:

- 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.
- Other, please describe:

For CSG providers:

- Listed as a currently available CSG program on the Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Teams website (see <http://www.cleanenergyprojectbuilder.org/solar-gardens>)
- Provide a complete subscriber disclosure checklist to all customers (see http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/sites/default/files/CommunitySolarGarden_DisclosureChecklist_12-11-14_0.pdf)

Authorized Signature: _____ Date: _____

Title of Signatory: _____