

SOLARIZE ASHBY PROGRAM**Request for Qualifications and Quotes from Installers of Small-Scale Solar Photovoltaic Systems**

Posting Date: November, 2015

1. OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY:

The Town of Ashby, through its New Energy Resource Committee (NERC), is releasing a request for qualifications and quote (“RFQ”) from solar photovoltaic (“PV”) installers (“Installer(s)”) to participate in the 2016 Solarize Ashby Program (“Program”). The NERC is a group of Ashby citizens who are volunteering their time to make solar available to citizens at a reduced cost through a trusted, pre-selected installer. This will be accomplished through a partnership focused on localized marketing and installation efforts using a group purchasing model. This is not a government program and does not require a vote from the town.

The Town of Ashby seeks responses to the RFQ (“response”) from Installers who can provide for residential and small-scale commercial¹ solar PV installations through both a Cash Sale Price (competitive pricing for a direct-ownership model) and a Lease/PPA Price Model (a leasing model (“Lease”) and/or an innovative financing (“Innovative Financing”) model. It is expected that customers who purchase a system under the program will receive competitive pricing that results in a progressively greater reduction in the total purchase cost as more people contract for solar PV in Ashby. Similarly, Customers who enter into PPAs or leases will receive a greater financial incentive from Installer volume increases. Installers are also required to assist with the customers directly, or identify a partner to provide aggregation or brokerage services for the sale of customer solar renewable energy certificates (“SRECs”).

While coordinating the process, the Town of Ashby is not a contracting entity and is acting solely in the public interest and will not be paying for any of the contracted work. This project is meant to benefit both our residents and the chosen installer by reducing the cost of installation and the cost of marketing.

After selection of the installer for this Solarize Ashby program, there is nothing implied or stated that prohibits any other installer from working in Ashby.

Installer qualifications and quotes will be reviewed by a committee. Refer to section 2.C. for more information on the evaluation criteria.

¹ The focus of Solarize Ashby is on residential projects. Projects over 10 kW of capacity fall outside of the scope of the program, but Installers may choose to count them toward Ashby’s total contracted capacity or tiered pricing. Please note larger commercial projects will not be the focus of the campaign’s marketing and outreach.

Installer Scope (see page 4 for more detail)

- Co-Marketing and lead qualification
- Creating a Price Structure and Financing Options
- Free site assessments
- System estimates
- Contracts – to be signed by September 30, 2016
- Permitting
- Engineering
- Procurement
- Installation – to be in service by December 31, 2016
- Commissioning/Interconnection – to be in service by December 31, 2016
- Required to offer, as an adder, non-tax based Incentives such as interest free loans or SRECs.
- 10 yr. workmanship Warranties
- Point of Contact (POC) on material pass-through warranties
- Partner with NERC to finalize combined outreach plan and disseminate information on program
- Create Marketing & Education Toolkit (May include banners, educational materials)
- Attend some Community events
- Serve as technical expert on residential solar installations, net metering and connection to the grid.

NOTE: NERC & Installer will participate in a weekly check-in call. In addition, all parties will agree to share all communication email lists.

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

In order for an Installer to be eligible to submit a response, the Installer must:

1. Demonstrate experience and proficiency in solar PV installations. The Installer must have installed a minimum of ten (10) solar PV projects in Massachusetts.
2. Be, at minimum, a professional contractor licensed to conduct business in Massachusetts.
3. Include on the project team at least one electrician holding a valid and current Massachusetts master electrical license to perform any electrical work on the solar PV projects.
4. Submit a response that meets all of the threshold review criteria outlined in section 2.C. below in order to be considered complete.
5. Provide an application that clarifies Installer experience in conducting outreach to residents, Installer expectations for partnership with Ashby, and a general sales process.
6. Be a member of or be certified by North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP)
7. Hold “Expedited” status with the MassCEC program such that systems installed will be eligible for the in Mass Solar Loan.

A proposed timeline for the RFQ process and program is outlined below.

2016 Solarize Ashby Schedule	Tentative Timeline
RFQ for Solar Installers: Released	November, 2015
Deadline to submit Installer RFQ Questions	December 1, 2015
Webinar for Installers	TBD
Responses from Solar Installers: Due	January 11, 2016
Review team review and score Installer responses	January 2016
Ashby-Installer Interview Day (see section F below)	January 2016
Announce Selected Solar PV Installer	January 2016
Outreach Strategy Development with Installer	February 2016
Meet the Installer Presentations	February 2016
Customer Sign-Up Period Begins	February 2016
Customer Sign-Up Period Ends	September 30, 2016
Deadline for Systems to be placed in service	December 31, 2016

B. INSTALLER SELECTION PROCESS AND INTERVIEW DAY:

NERC must receive the Installer responses by January 11, 2016

Upon receipt of all Installer responses, NERC will perform a threshold review to verify that all responses are complete. Installer responses that are received after the RFQ submittal deadline will not pass the threshold review.

After providing a threshold review, Responses will be evaluated individually by the Review Team.

The Review team will be responsible for reviewing Installer responses (along with a Technical Consultant) and initially selecting the top three (3) ranking Installers who will be invited to the Interview Day. Ashby will host the Interview Day in January 2016, during which the Review team and the Technical Consultant will have the opportunity to interview the three (3) invited Installers. At least one (1) member of the Review team must be present at the Interview Day. Conference lines will be available so that other members of the Review team have the option to participate remotely. After the completion of the event, the Review team, with input from the Technical Consultant, will

select their first choice of Installer. The Town of Ashby will sign an agreement with the Installer for the duration of the Solarize Ashby program timeline.

C. APPLICATION DEADLINE:

Responses to this RFQ must be received by January 11, 2016. Only complete responses that are submitted before the RFQ deadline will be considered. NERC, at its sole discretion, may determine whether a response is complete. It is preferred that the response be in electronic form, including a completed *Pricing Quote* and *Adder Form* (Attachment A. and Attachment B.), and should be submitted via email to the Solarize Ashby inbox at Solarize@ashbyma.gov. Hard copy responses will be accepted if submitted in triplicate and mailed to 895 Main St, Ashby, MA 01431.

Responses submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. An announcement of the selected Installer is targeted for late January, 2016.

D. ANTICIPATED TERM OF CONTRACT:

Installer will be required enter into an agreement with the Town of Ashby. It is essential, in order to meet the program goals and timelines, that Installer be prepared to sign an agreement with Ashby soon after their selection. Therefore, each applicant Installer must review the Terms and Conditions outlined in the *Ashby-Installer Agreement* (Attachment C) and provide comments on those Terms and Conditions at the time of application. NERC's selection of an Installer pursuant to this RFQ does not mean that NERC accepts all aspects of the quote, modifications to which may be requested and agreed to during agreement negotiations.

NERC anticipates that the term of the agreement with the Installer will commence in January, 2016 and continue until the last system application is installed and placed into service.

E. QUESTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

Please submit all questions to the Solarize Ashby team at Solarize@ashbyma.gov **no later than December 1, 2015**. "**Solarize ASHBY RFQ**" must appear in the email subject line or on the mailing envelope. Responses to submitted questions, and other Frequently Asked Questions, will be posted to www.ashbyma.gov on the Installer Solicitation page by **December 9, 2015 at 5:00 pm ET**.

2. PERFORMANCE AND RESPONSE SPECIFICATIONS:

A. SCOPE OF WORK:

Installers selected for the Solarize Ashby Program will have primary responsibility for managing leads, performing site assessments, providing general customer service, contracting, installation, and all other functions typically associated with the sales and installation process, including communication with Unitil for each installation. Installers will also play an integral role in public outreach and educational events coordinated between the Town of Ashby and the Installer.

Once selected, the Installer will work with NERC to finalize a marketing strategy specific to Ashby. Shortly thereafter, the Installer will participate in a "Meet the Installer" presentation, where the Installer will be introduced to the residents of Ashby. The Installer is encouraged to provide additional training for NERC on the Installer's operations or other relevant topics.

As leads are identified, the Installer will provide site assessments (as appropriate) and system designs for individual solar PV projects. The site assessment will evaluate a site's suitability for solar PV, including shading, onsite load, and any electrical, structural, or mechanical issues that may increase the cost of the solar PV project relative to the proposed cost. The system design should maximize system production while minimizing project cost. The Installer should also provide information about the Mass Solar Loan program.

Upon contracting with the customer, the Installer will be responsible for providing each customer with a turnkey service, which includes securing all local permits, and placing into service by December 31, 2016. In addition, the Installer will be expected to provide information regarding net metering, the sale of SRECs, and any other federal or state incentives available for the customer. Should the customer opt for the loan program, once a customer signs a contract with the Installer, the Installer will submit an application to the Mass Solar Loan program on their behalf. When this application is approved, homeowners can apply for a loan from a participating bank or credit union.

The Installer must identify a process for handling leads that have non-feasible sites for solar PV. Examples may include offering individuals with non-feasible sites more information on other technology options, such as energy efficiency or solar hot water. The Installer will also provide NERC with monthly data as requested, including but not limited to, the number of initial interested contacts, number of site visits completed, number of feasible sites, number of signed contracts, and contracted capacity. The Installer will be able to contract with customers through September 30, 2016. The Installer will be required to provide NERC with a final report outlining the total number of contracted customers and the resulting prices that will be associated with each installation by November 30, 2016.

B. RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS:

An Installer response must consist of the following items:

- **Attachment A:** Tier Pricing Structure
- **Attachment B:** Pricing Contingencies / Cost Adders
- **Attachment C:** Signed Agreement for Terms and Conditions (or discussion of proposed changes)
- **Addendum 1:** Attach a copy of the standard agreement for direct Purchase projects, as well as the standard agreement for Lease or PPA projects (if applicable). The agreements should outline all of the terms and conditions for a customer under the Program. For Lease or PPA offerings, the Installer should clearly identify any criteria in which a price escalator may be present for customers, and include a maximum range for the price escalator. For Lease or PPA, the installer should also outline a buyback option.
- **Addendum 2:** Attach example marketing documents that may be provided to residential customers.
- **Addendum 3:** Attach example email communication template, or if applicable, materials that would be provided to residents who are determined not to have a feasible site for solar.
- **Addendum 4:** Qualifications. Be sure to attach resumes, licenses, and/or certifications of key members of the Installer team
- **Addendum 5:** Attach proposed equipment specification sheets.

Components of Attachment A: Tier Pricing Structure

Information provided on Attachment A must be in electronic format. Project specific pricing not outlined in Attachment A will not be considered for this Program. In addition, NERC will not recognize any project-related costs adders if they are not outlined in Attachment B at the time of application.

Section 1. Installer Primary Point of Contact

Section 2. Proposed Installer Company Partners / Team

Section 3. Proposed Equipment: Identify specifications for equipment that will be used for projects going through the Program, including equipment manufacturer, model, warranties for equipment, including PV panels, inverters, racking, meters, and data acquisition systems, if applicable. NERC is interested in high quality as well as cost competitive equipment.

Section 4. Tiered Pricing Quotes: Outline the tiered Purchase Price, the Lease/PPA Price (if being offered), and the Lease/PPA financial incentive (if third-party ownership is offered) on the *Pricing Quote* (Attachment A). The pricing should be based on the total aggregated capacity (DC @STC) of solar PV contracted in the program using the following five tiers:

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
1kW – 25kW	>25kW – 50kW	>50kW – 100kW	>100kW – 200kW	200kW +

- **Purchase Price Requirements:** As total contracted capacity increases by tier, it is expected that the Installer’s proposed cost per watt (\$/w) will decrease for customers who purchase a system under the program, unless the installer has pricing that is well below normal market levels.
- **Lease/PPA Price Requirements (if being offered):** Installers who propose a \$/kWh Lease/PPA Price for customers that sign a third-party ownership contract, must note an additional financial incentive as higher tiers of aggregate contracted capacity within Ashby are reached. The financial incentive can include, though is not limited to, a rebate, gift card, or other financial incentive. For example, if an installer is offering a financial incentive at each tier for Lease/PPA customers, as higher tiers are reached, the Lease/PPA customers would receive a financial incentive(s) rather than a \$/kWh base tier price reduction. Clearly indicate if money is required up front by the customer for the Lease/PPA offering, if there is a pricing escalator, and how the pricing will change for sites of various solar access.

- **Innovative Financing:** Installers are also welcome to provide innovative financing mechanisms for customers under the Program, including loans, payment plans, or other mechanisms.

The pricing should include total installation costs, which includes system design, permitting, applicable materials and equipment, transportation, labor, a stamped structural letter, and all equipment and workmanship warranties. The price should be independent of any tax credits or incentives available to the customers. Alternative pricing structures or financial models will be evaluated as appropriate.

Section 5. Expected High-Use Pricing Contingencies / Cost Adders: For costs that are not built into the base tier pricing, the Installer must list any cost adders that are expected to be utilized for more than fifty (50) percent of contracted projects. Common cost adders may include automatic reporting to the Production Tracking System, use of micro-inverters or DC optimizer technology (if not part of base pricing), and others. Installers should note common cost adders, and clarify the expected percent of systems that a cost adder may be applied.

Components of Attachment B: Pricing Contingencies / Cost Adders

It is understood that features of certain installations will result in higher costs. Installers must outline specific electrical, mechanical, and structural costs and those related to equipment, site, or labor features that will result in greater costs on the *Adder Form* (Attachment B). In addition, Installers must identify a maximum Purchase Price or Lease/PPA Price associated with more complicated installations and understand that an individual project price cannot exceed the base price (at a given capacity tier) plus the additional price. Adders should be listed as a \$/watt cost for Purchased projects, and a \$/kWh cost for Leased/PPA projects. If applicable, Installers may also list an adder as a flat cost for Purchased projects. Installers will be responsible for identifying individual projects that trigger additional pricing and will submit appropriate documentation to NERC for those customers.

Components of Addendum 4: Qualifications:

- 1) **Executive Summary:** The Executive Summary should summarize the highlights of the application, key features and distinguishing points of the response, as well as any unique challenges identified by the Installer, and proposed solutions.
 - **Company Information:** Describe the Installer Company, including company size, financial stability, location, capacity for work, years in business, and access to various supply chains. Highlight relevant experience, skills and capabilities that would be used to undertake this Program, including, but not limited to, demonstrated experience through the sale and installation of solar PV projects in Massachusetts. Include information about eligibility to participate in Mass Solar Loan through attainment of "Expedited" status. **The Installer should provide references for at least ten (10) of its projects within the state.**
 - **Installer Team Members and Partners:** Identify all members of the project team, including but not limited to, partners assisting in project financing, customer service, outreach, project installations, and SREC aggregation or brokerage. Include an organization chart (if not submitting a team diagram in the following section) outlining the various key individuals and partners, with a description of each. As part of Addendum 4, attach résumés and copies of any licenses, if applicable, of all key individuals on the project. Qualifications must include the following:
 - Provide a list of any partners on the project team that are located in or near Ashby.
 - Identify any third-party financing partner(s) that will facilitate the Installer's ability to provide a Lease/PPA Pricing, and the duration of the existing partnership.
 - Identify any partnerships or resources you provide to your customers to facilitate the sale of their SRECs.
 - Identify any innovative financing partner(s) that will facilitate the Installer's ability to provide customers with financing options, and the duration of the existing partnership.
 - Optional: Propose a partner or contact who can install solar hot water systems, other renewable energy technology, or other energy efficiency measures.
 - **Installer Team Diagram (Optional):** As part of an Organization Chart, develop a diagram of the Installer outreach team, clearly defining which individuals will be interacting directly with the volunteer team during the sign-up period of the Program. Consider noting how many hours per week a sales representative would spend performing site assessments within Ashby.

2) Application Narrative:

- **Marketing Strategy:** Outline a marketing plan that builds off of the Ashby marketing plan that would be used to motivate residents to contract for solar PV under the program.
 - Describe how a joint marketing strategy between Ashby and the Installer could expand the number of solar PV projects within Ashby.
 - Include ideas on how to leverage Ashby outreach to generate leads that are more likely to move forward to contracts.
 - Clarify any experiences the Installer has with residential sales outreach efforts in the past.
- **Program Operations Plan:** Describe a plan to provide good customer service for Ashby, including timely lead contact, site assessments to interested customers, installation services, and SREC aggregation
 - Clarify intake process for customer leads, method for screening sites, and process for managing an increased volume of leads and projects.
 - Clarify an average number of site assessments expected to be conducted per week during the signup period of the program.
 - Provide an estimate of the number of small-scale solar PV projects the Installer team can complete on a monthly basis.
 - Describe a quality assurance process for the solar PV installations and outline the process for managing any permits, inspections, and the interconnection process with Unitil.
 - Outline how the installation process will be explained to the customer.
- **Timeline:** Provide an expected timeline for the average residential lead under the Program, from initial contact to contracting, to installation.
- **Proposal for sites that are not feasible for solar PV:** Outline the process by which the Installer team will handle leads that do not have feasible sites for solar PV. Offer example documentation or email templates of what a resident with a non-feasible site would receive. Describe whether a customer (even with a feasible site for solar PV) might be assisted in other renewable energy or energy efficiency efforts through the Program. For example this may include solar hot water, additional thermal technologies, weatherization, or other energy related efforts.
- **Geographic Proximity:** Provide a plan to address the Installer's geographic proximity to Ashby and how this will shape the services provided.

C. **EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

Threshold Requirements: Responses must meet a threshold review before they will be provided to the Review Team. To meet the threshold review, the following criteria must be met:

- o Response must be received by NERC at or before the RFQ submittal deadline. Responses received after the deadline will not meet threshold requirements;
- o Completed and signed Attachments A, B and C (or submit questions/suggested changes for C);
- o installers must be eligible to participate in Mass Solar Loan by attaining "Expedited" status;
- o Proposed program and marketing plan;
- o Offer at minimum a Purchase Price option (presented as a \$/watt price)
- o Optional: Offer a Lease/PPA Price option (presented as \$/kWh price) with corresponding PPA/Lease financial incentive or an innovative financing model;
- o Identify any project price adders and the range of any price escalators on Attachment B;
- o A template copy of both a direct purchase standard agreement and (if applicable) a Lease/PPA agreement with the customer, specifying the terms and conditions;
- o Identification of any financing or third-party partners that enable the Lease/PPA price or financing, as well as the sale of SRECs; and

Once an Installer response passes threshold review, it will be evaluated by the corresponding External Review Team and Technical Consultant based on the following criteria:

- **Overall quality and value:** overall quality of response and partnership potential with the Town of Ashby;
- **Experience:** degree of Installer's experience and proficiency in the scope of work, including demonstrated experience in developing, designing and installing small-scale solar PV systems. In addition, experience of Installer team in outreach activities; Listing of people in the team and their qualifications.
- **Marketing plan:** ability of response to drive Ashby adoption of solar PV projects and drive down cost of residential and small-scale PV installations;
- **Implementation:** ability to provide timely, quality customer service and installations as well as ability to communicate and work in partnership with Ashby;
- **Price structure:** quality and simplicity of pricing quote for Purchase Price (\$/kW) and if applicable, Lease/PPA Price (\$/kWh) or financial incentive. In addition, the value offered by the proposed equipment, price adders, price escalators, and contract terms and conditions;
- **Materials:** What materials will be used; price/watt; brands and wattage of solar panels; ability to upsell to other materials.

Demonstration of innovative concepts: additional consideration will be given to Installers that can provide innovative business models, or have options for other technologies such as Solar Hot Water and energy efficiency;

3. GENERAL REQUEST FOR RESPONSE CONDITIONS:**A. NOTICE OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE:****General Statement**

As a public entity, NERC is subject to Massachusetts' Public Records Law, codified at Chapter 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws. Thus, any documentary material, data, or other information received by NERC from an applicant is a public record subject to disclosure. Materials that fall under certain categories, however, may be exempt from public disclosure under a statutory or common law exemption, including the limited exemption at Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 23J, Section 2(k) regarding confidential information submitted to NERC by an applicant for any form of assistance.

NERC considers the following information to be confidential and may be redacted when NERC receives a public records request:

- a. Individual cost adders and associated prices (note that the aggregate adder pricing will be made available for the sub-categories outlined in Attachment B.2).
- b. Template standard agreements for purchase projects, Lease/PPA projects, or innovative financing.
- c. Licenses or certifications of key members of the Installer team.
- d. Attachment D: *Company Information* and *Marketing Strategy* sections.

B. AGREEMENT REQUIREMENTS:

Upon the selection of a response, NERC and the selected Installer will enter into an agreement, which will set forth the respective roles and responsibilities of the parties.

C. WAIVER AUTHORITY:

NERC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to waive minor irregularities in submittal requirements, to modify the anticipated timeline, to request modifications of the application, to accept or reject any or all applications received, and/or to cancel all or part of this RFQ at any time prior to awards.

D. DISCLAIMER:

This RFQ does not commit NERC to award any funds, pay any costs incurred in preparing an application, or procure or contract for services or supplies. NERC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, negotiate with all qualified applicants, cancel or modify the RFQ in part or in its entirety, or change the application guidelines, when it is in its best interests.