

# Resource Guide for Local Solar Procurement

## Summary

The [Community Solar Value Project](#) (CSVP) has developed this **Resource Guide for Local Solar Procurement** as part of its complete Community Solar Solutions Guide. The CSVP has identified improved financing and procurement a major pathway for increasing net benefits of utility-led community solar programs. Other pathways include strategic solar siting and design; project financing and procurement; target marketing for customer acquisition and retention; and integration with solar-plus companion measures, such as demand-response and storage. Using these approaches, utilities can create a better offer for all program stakeholders.

Although most of the resources identified in this Guide were not developed specifically for utility-led community solar procurements, they help to inform the utility procurement process. This list is organized into the following sections, summarized below. All links were accessed in November 2016. If you cannot access a resource due to an expired link, please contact [CSVP](#). Additional guidance, specific to utility-led community solar procurements is under development for release in 2017.

- Portal Websites and Documents
- Commercial Projects/RFP Best Practices and Guidance
- Local Government Projects/RFP Best Practices and Guidance
- Templates for Solar PV Procurement, Adaptable to Utility Needs
- Sample Community-Solar Procurement Documents

## Portal Websites and Guidance Documents

**Collison, B. and Foster, B. (2014, April). *Green Power Partnership Webinar: Solar Procurement Templates and Tools for Higher Education*. Environmental Protection Agency.** Available at:

<https://www.epa.gov/greenpower/gpp-webinar-solar-procurement-templates-and-tools-higher-education>

EPA provides tools and resources that can be utilized in community solar, commercial and local government cases. This portal was created to support an EPA webinar on the procurement process, and covers the a process flow, solar system specifications, vendor proposal checklist, pricing worksheet, proposal evaluation criteria, and a leveled cost of energy calculator.

**Colson, M. *Tool #9: Collaborative Procurement*. National Association of Regional Councils.**

Available at:

<http://narc.org/wp-content/uploads/Collaborative-Procurement-DOE-Toolkit-9.pdf>

This short guide provides an overview of collaborative procurement, a way for local governments, communities or regions to work together to negotiate a reduced cost for solar procurement through reduced up-front costs of solar, overall savings due to site aggregation, administrative cost savings, and favorable contract terms. This document includes resources on how to do it, who is doing it, and where to find detailed support.



Community  
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**Community Solar Value Project Website. Cliburn, J. and Powers, J., Editors.** (2016). Available at:  
<https://www.communitysolarvalueproject.com>

The CSVP is co-funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, Solar Market Pathways Program. The website serves as a portal for best-practices and innovations related to utility-led community solar. Relevant resources include a brief on the national landscape for community solar program development, summaries of programs and pricing scenarios, archived webinars, event announcements and summaries, blogs, links, and more.

**National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). (2012). Renewable Energy Project Finance: Renewable Energy Contracts Library.** Golden, CO: National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Available at:  
<https://financere.nrel.gov/finance/content/renewable-energy-contracts-library>

NREL has assembled a financing resource library to promote procurement-document standardization and to aid in the successful development of renewable energy projects. This library covers many different aspects of procurement, including RFP templates (see more below).

**Chwastyk, D. and Sterling, J. (2015). Community Solar: Program Design Models.** Smart Electric Power Alliance (SEPA). Available at:

[https://www.solarelectricpower.org/media/422095/community-solar-design-plan\\_web.pdf](https://www.solarelectricpower.org/media/422095/community-solar-design-plan_web.pdf)

This resource offers a four-step guide to a successful utility-led community-solar program, including tips on in-house or out-sourced development. Though a membership organization, SEPA is a U.S. DOE SunShot grant recipient, with a number of relevant resources available to non-members, searchable from the SEPA website.

## Commercial Projects/RFP Best Practices and Guidance

**Better Buildings Alliance Program. (2016). Fact Sheet: 7 Steps to Selecting a Solar Provider.** U.S. Department of Energy. Available at:

[http://betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/Provider\\_Selection\\_Guide\\_Fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/Provider_Selection_Guide_Fact_sheet.pdf) This document highlights best practices for businesses or building owners selecting a commercial solar provider. Procurement best practices are similar across sectors, as project goals, requirements and specifications are often similar. However, these are presented from the utility *customer* point of view.

**Canada, S. (2009). Procurement Challenges. McCarthy Engineering.** Presentation for an unarchived webinar at Smart Electric Power Alliance (SEPA). Available at:

<http://sepa-media-2009-webinars.s3.amazonaws.com/2014/Solar%20Procurement%20Workshop/Scott%20Canada%20-%20Understanding%20Procurement%20Processes.pdf>

Recommendations for procuring solar presented at a SEPA workshop are relevant despite the time lapsed since this presentation.

**Green Power Partnership Program. (2014). Webinar: Solar Request-for-Proposals Process Guide.** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Available at:

[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-01/documents/webinar\\_20140416\\_guide.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-01/documents/webinar_20140416_guide.pdf)

This document outlines a four-step process for evaluating proposals to procure solar PV electricity. It is aimed for utility customers in higher education, but its advice may be customized for utility-led projects. See also, the Green Power Partnership Program (2014) Webinar: Solar RFP Issuance Checklist for Facilities Managers. Available at:

[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-01/documents/webinar\\_20140416\\_rfp\\_issuance\\_checklist.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-01/documents/webinar_20140416_rfp_issuance_checklist.pdf)

Drawn from a second U.S. EPA webinar, this resource offers a checklist for the RFP process.

## Local Government Projects/RFP Best Practices and Guidance

**Goodward, J. Perera, A. Lau, C. Massaro, R. Foster, B., and Judy, C. (2011, April). *Purchasing Power: Best Practices Guide to Collaborative Solar Procurement*. World Resources Institute.** Available at:

<http://www.wri.org/publication/purchasing-power>

This resource offers 12 steps to procuring solar, using a group-buying or otherwise collaborative process to reduce costs and access greater expertise. Provides best practices for formulating and achieving the procurement.

**Solar Technical Assistance Program. (2011). *Solar Requests for Proposals Web Page*. National Renewable Energy Laboratory.** Available at:

[http://www.nrel.gov/tech\\_deployment/state\\_local\\_governments/basics\\_solar\\_rfps.html](http://www.nrel.gov/tech_deployment/state_local_governments/basics_solar_rfps.html)

This web page provides links to a webinar, slides, and a guide, describing best practices for local government solar procurement. As noted above, the customer perspective would need to be adapted to meet utility needs.

**The Solar Foundation. (2012, October). *Steps to a Successful Solar Request for Proposal*. Prepared for U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative.** Available at:

<http://www.thesolarfoundation.org/steps-to-a-successful-solar-request-for-proposal/>

This is an extensive guide for procuring solar and developing a successful RFP. It offers examples of two cities successfully procuring solar energy, as well as sample RFPs.

## Templates for Solar PV Procurement

**Better Buildings Alliance Initiative. (2016, May). *Solar Request for Proposal & Procurement Guidance*.** Prepared for U.S. Department of Energy. Archived in the CSVP Library:

<http://www.communitysolarvalueproject.com/library>

BBA has established a customizable template for facilitating solar procurement, including process guidelines.

**Kiatreungwattana, K., and Stoltenberg, B. (2015). *Solar RFP Template*.** Office of Indian Energy. U.S. Department of Energy. Available at:

<http://www.energy.gov/indianenergy/downloads/doe-office-indian-energy-solar-rfp-template-draft>

This solar RFP template was developed for U.S. tribal groups, but is adaptable for across sectors.

## Sample Community Solar Procurement Documents

CSVP has gathered the following community-solar and related RFPs issued by utilities or utility-partners, to serve as examples for others to review. While they are useful models, inclusion here does not imply any specific endorsements. CSVP is currently developing additional guidance, specifically for utilities, on procurement best practices, which is anticipated in early 2017. Because utilities periodically remove procurement documents from their websites, these RFP documents are all archived in the [Community Solar Value Project Library](#), under Financing and Procurement. Please [contact](#) CSVP directly or via the website you have sample RFPs to share.

**City of Fort Collins, CO Utilities Department. (2013). *Request for Proposal: Community Solar Garden*.** Archived in the [CSVP Library](#).

The City of Fort Collins municipal utility procured a 600 kW community solar project from Clean Energy Collective under a turnkey agreement. The project is complete and fully subscribed.

**CPS Energy. (2014). *Requests for Proposals and Specifications for Community Solar Development*. San Antonio, TX.** Archived in the [CSVP Library](#).

CPS Energy released this RFP to obtain a third party turnkey agreement for a 1-MW community solar project.

**City of Palo Alto, CA Utilities Department Resource Management Division. (2014). *A Local Community Solar Program for the City of Palo Alto*.** Archived in the [CSVP Library](#).

Palo Alto issued an RFP in 2014 with the goal of procuring solar energy for a 1-3 MW community-solar program within their distribution grid. This program is in the procurement phase.

**Xcel Energy. (2015). *2015 Requests for Proposals, Energy and Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) from Qualified Community Solar Gardens*.** Archived in the [CSVP Library](#).

Xcel Energy issued this RFP for the purpose of establishing Community Solar Gardens (CSG) with the following key characteristics: project size ranging from 10 kW to 2 MW, providing electricity for CSG subscribers and associated RECs to Xcel Energy.

**Austin Energy. (2015). *Request for Proposals for Customer-Sited Community Solar Projects Sized between 200 kW and 1 MW*.** Archived in the [CSVP Library](#).

Austin Energy of Texas developed this RFP in order to expand its community solar program and fulfill local solar demand. It calls for third parties to own and operate arrays and sell the energy and RECs to Austin Energy.

**Southern California Public Power Authority. (2016). *Request for Proposals for the Development of Community Solar Programs*.** Archived in the [CSVP Library](#).

SCPPA issued this RFP in February 2016 with the goal of developing community solar programs with member utilities. Project size projected to be 350 kW to 5 MW. Results from this RFP are expected in fall 2016.

**Roseville Electric. (2016). *City of Roseville's Community Solar Pilot Project*. City of Roseville, CA.** Archived in the [CSVP Library](#).

Roseville Electric released this RFP in order to obtain a turnkey solution that is comprised of two parts: project design and program design.

**Rocky Mountain Institute and ROCSPOT. (2016). *Community Solar Requested for 9 Sites, Up to a Total of 16 MW*.** Archived in the [CSVP Library](#).

ROCSPOT is a non-profit based in Rochester, NY. This RFP represents a solicitation on behalf of ROCSPOT to achieve cost-competitiveness for a community solar portfolio that is to be located on the local distribution grid, rather than at remote sites. Rochester is a participant.

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