



Solarize Midcoast Maine

A Midcoast Economic Development District (MCEDD) Program

Request for Proposals from Solar Photovoltaic Installers

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is available online at www.mceddme.org and www.cityofbath.com/solarizemidcoastmaine. Please check online for updates prior to completing and submitting a bid.

All responses to this RFP must be sent electronically to Bill Najpauer, Director of Planning and Development, MCEDD, bnajpauer@mceddme.org no later than January 8, 2016 at 12:00pm. All bids will be opened at that time.

Please direct questions or feedback regarding this RFP to:

Scott LaFlamme
Director of Economic Development, City of Bath
slaflamme@cityofbath.com
207-443-8372

Or

Bill Najpauer
Director of Planning and Development, MCEDD
bnajpauer@mceddme.org
207-370-6045

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Program Summary

Solarize Midcoast Maine, sponsored by the Midcoast Economic Development District (MCEDD) is requesting proposals from solar photovoltaic installers for solar installations for the following municipalities: Arrowsic, Bath, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Georgetown, Phippsburg, Richmond, Topsham, West Bath, Woolwich, Harpswell, Wiscasset, Camden, Rockport, Rockland, Thomaston, Belmont, Lincolnville, Northport, and Searsmont.

The Midcoast Economic Development District (MCEDD), requests proposals from solar photovoltaic installers for solar PV installations in the Solarize Midcoast Maine program.

The District has been collecting names and email addresses of residents interested in learning more about solar and how a bulk purchase can bring the cost of installation down.

Solarize Midcoast Maine establishes a bidding process whereby a “Partner Installer” is selected for the duration of the program. All resident leads will be forwarded to the Partner Installer.

Solarize Midcoast Maine aims to make residential solar PV energy more accessible to residents and small businesses. The District seeks bids which provide competitive tiered pricing for a direct-ownership model for solar PV installations at private residences and commercial establishments.

The District’s role is to bring property owners interested in investing in solar power together and to identify a Partner Installer to get the job done at a lower cost to residents. The District will not provide financial assistance or other financial incentive for participation.

A consortium consisting of more than one installer may bid collectively, and is encouraged, as long as the members take responsibility for managing the consortium and maintaining a simple message and point of contact for residents.

Relevant experience, quality and value of services and equipment, capacity for implementation of the program, and proposed pricing will be factors in the selection process.

Solarize Midcoast Maine is inspired by similar programs in Freeport and Brunswick, Maine, as well as programs in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Definitions:

Solarize Midcoast Maine, or the Program: the Solarize Midcoast Maine program

The District: The Midcoast Economic Development District

Selection Committee: a committee established by the Midcoast Economic Development District to evaluate bids and select from among them, identifying the Partner Installer.

Bid: a submitted proposal from an installer or consortium of installers

Bidder: an installer or consortium of installers submitting a bid

Partner Installer: the installer or consortium of installers selected by the Selection Committee to partner with the District for the duration of the Program.

SECTION ONE – Program Overview

A. Program Goals and Overview

i. Program Goals

Solarize Midcoast Maine is aimed at making residential solar PV energy more accessible to residents. The goals of the Solarize initiative are to:

- 1) lower the cost of solar energy by reducing customer acquisition costs via a tiered bulk pricing mechanism, and transferring those savings directly to residents; and, as a result,
- 2) significantly increase the number of residential solar installations in the community over the course of this project.

ii. Program Overview

Solarize Midcoast Maine aims to overcome common barriers to going solar at a residential scale:

A) Consumer Confidence

- Solarize Midcoast Maine provides residents interested in solar energy with information, competitive pricing, and an easy start towards a solar installation.
- Solarize Midcoast Maine is designed to be transparent. Pricing information is posted online, along with details about the Solarize program, and a list of area installers.
- Solarize Midcoast Maine establishes a Selection Committee which evaluates bids based on objective criteria. This process enables residents to be confident that the committee's choice is well founded and reliable.

B) Cost

- District-wide outreach helps reduce customer acquisition costs and is expected to lead to numerous installation jobs for the Partner Installer. These factors help bidders to offer competitive pricing, discounted below their typical installation prices. Pricing is tiered, meaning that cost goes down for everyone as more residents sign up to go solar.
- Financing may be necessary to make solar feasible for many residents. Any financing options that an installer has to offer should be described in the Company Profile narrative.

C) Motivation

- A critical component of any Solarize program is its deadline. Residents must sign a contract with the Partner Installer by a certain date in order to take advantage of the special tiered pricing offer. This deadline helps motivate residents to take action.
- The tiered pricing structure serves as a motivator for residents to talk with their neighbors about Solarize and encourage one another to take action. More neighbors going solar mean lower prices for everyone.

B. The Solarize Midcoast Maine Process

Overview:

Once the RFP is released, the District will accept bids up to the bidding deadline.

A Selection Committee has been established by the District to select the Partner Installer for the duration of the program.

In the event that a bid is found to be incomplete, or the Selection Committee has a question or request, the bidder will be notified. A prompt response is expected.

The Selection Committee may invite one or more bidders for an interview. If needed, the Selection Committee has the right to agree to terms with multiple providers.

The District expects bidders to submit competitive and realistic bids. Bidders should not sacrifice their bottom line or the quality of their equipment and services in order to participate in this program. The equipment and services included as part of the tiered pricing proposal should be representative of a typical roof-mount system. Cost adders should truly be adders, not commonly required components. Cost adders can also include options that would reduce system cost.

Program Implementation:

The Partner Installer(s) is selected by the Selection Committee for the duration of the Solarize Midcoast Maine program. Shortly after selection, the Partner Installer(s) shall conduct a Launch event for interested residents. The District will assist in making arrangements for the event.

The Partner Installer(s) will collaborate with the District on outreach and lead tracking throughout the program. The Partner Installer(s) will provide Solarize Midcoast Maine customers with a turnkey inquiry-to-installation process that will make them want to encourage their neighbors to go solar too. Once selected, the Partner Installer becomes the primary contact for potential customers. Once the Partner Installer and potential customer are brought together, the District is no longer involved.

Any Midcoast Maine resident may contact the Partner Installer(s) to receive a free site visit and quote based on the equipment and special tiered pricing outlined in the Partner Installer' bid. Residents must sign a contract with the Partner Installer, or consortium, by the program deadline in order to be eligible.

Residents within the Midcoast region are free to seek bids and work with other installers. Installers not participating in Solarize Midcoast Maine are free to continue marketing and doing business in MCEDD footprint. Solarize Midcoast Maine in no way limits customer choice. Installations contracted during the Solarize program with installers other than the Partner Installer are *not* counted toward the pricing tiers outlined in the Partner Installer's bid.

The Partner Installer shall work with eligible small businesses and be familiar with any unique incentives or tax considerations available to these potential customers. Any small businesses that participate in Solarize Midcoast Maine will count toward the tiered system of pricing. Bidders may establish limitations in size or other aspects of a potential system for small businesses. If so, that information should be included in Form C- Core Solarize proposal.

The District also encourages the Partner Installer(s) to offer solar garden/farm options to interested and qualified participants, in accordance with all applicable regulatory constraints. Information and pricing options for collaborative solar gardens/farms should be included in your final submission

The following chart outlines specific partner roles and responsibilities:

	The Midcoast Economic Development District (MCEDD)	Bidder/Partner Installer
Securing Solarize Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release RFP • Initiate the selection process • Using various communication resources, make residents aware of Solarize Midcoast Maine and maintain a list of residents interested in participating • Evaluate bids and select a Partner Installer • identify financing options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit competitive bids
Reduce Cost to Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide online resources and handouts detailing available incentives and financing options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free site visits and free quotes • Offer competitive, tiered pricing • Help customers understand and apply for available incentives • Assist customers in assessing purchase / financing options
Marketing/ Outreach/ Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage website as a central resource for program information • Provide updates to residents who have asked to be included in the program • Attend and support key community outreach events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a presentation for the Solarize launch event • Answer technical questions from residents • Optional: supplement community outreach (e.g. direct mail, yard signs, etc.)

Web and Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide communications and media strategy/support • Manage attention from regional media outlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide relevant information for the Solarize Midcoast Maine website, and link to the Solarize website on the installer’s website • Cooperate with partners to provide content (e.g. photos, stories) and accommodate media
Leads/ Installs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide site assessments, system design, and turnkey installation
Admin/ Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive and manage reports from installers • Track leads generated from website form(s) • Ensure the Partner Installer has access to up-to-date contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track leads and contracts

C. Timeline

RFP Released	11/18/2015
Bidding deadline	1/8/2016 at 12:00pm
Selection Committee reviews proposals, conducts interviews, etc.	1/11/16 through 1/15/2016
Partner Installer selected	1/22/16
Launch Event	Late January/Early February
Installations occur	Summer and Fall 2016
Survey Solarize Midcoast Maine participants (customers and installer(s))	December 2016

D. Detailed Partner Installer Commitment

Collaboration with the District:

- a. Conduct Launch Event(s) for interested residents. At the Launch Event, the Partner Installer will announce the opportunity for residents to arrange site visits, obtain quotes, etc. The District will advertise this meeting via social media, available public access TV, and local news publications. The District will provide the location for the meeting(s).
- b. Collaborate with the District on press releases; developing additional marketing materials, such as photographs, statements of support, testimonials, or other information for use in Solarize marketing.
- c. Collaborate with the District to recommend alternative opportunities, where appropriate (i.e., solar farms or other renewable energy projects such as pellet stoves),

for interested residents without feasible sites for a solar PV project. These opportunities will not form part of the Solarize Midcoast Maine program.

- d. Partner Installers will create an independent website to promote the project. The website will act as the central clearinghouse for all project documentation and information.
- e. At the end of the program, meet with the District and provide feedback, including insights about customer decision-making process, motivations to install or not install solar, suggested program improvements, and the efficiency of different outreach strategies.

Ownership and Pricing:

- a. Provide a dollar per watt (\$/W) purchase price for a typical, all-inclusive, roof-mount installation that will decrease by tier levels as the total contracted capacity of solar PV within the community increases (see Form C). Tier levels shall be determined by the installer.
- b. Provide a list of additional system features (see Form C) which may be preferred or required in some (but not the majority of) cases and would impact the final project cost. This list of adders and associated costs will be published with other pricing information.
- c. Provide all customers within the District with pricing at the appropriate tiered level. Any contract between the Partner Installer and the customer must acknowledge the current tier price and lay out a process through which the final system cost will be adjusted and reconciled to reflect the community's final tier price after the program deadline. The contract must also include a guarantee that the work will be completed as proposed along with a remedy if the work can't be completed.

Marketing Materials, Presentations, and Claims Made Throughout the Program:

- a. The Partner Installer shall refer to the Program as "Solarize Midcoast Maine" in all Program materials and marketing efforts, and direct individuals to www.cityofbath.com/solarizemidcoastmaine for initial registrations. Partner Installers will provide an independent website for all other program materials and marketing tools;
- b. The Partner Installer shall ensure that any media they produce does not claim to represent the opinion or position of the Midcoast Economic Development District;
- c. The Partner Installer shall use a reasonable escalator rate for predicted utility price in all marketing and in predicting payback periods, and make clear that all figures are based on given assumptions;
- d. The Partner Installer shall use an average current utility rate based on current electricity rates (including any increases that have been approved by the Maine Public Utilities Commission) in the area in all marketing and make clear that rates are based on averages;
- e. Information regarding federal tax credits should include a suggestion to contact a tax professional;

Tracking:

- a. The Partner Installer shall track the pricing associated with each project, detail why a specific project requires additional costs (if applicable), and provide all information regarding final project cost and composition to the District at the end of the program.
- b. The Partner Installer shall provide the District with regular tracking reports.
- c. The Partner Installer shall communicate to all leads verbally at the time of the site visit that their contact information and project status will be shared with the District, but only for the purpose of measuring the success of the project and to calculate the savings to residents by participating in the program.

Customer Service:

- a. The Partner Installer shall promptly contact all interested residents who request a site visit or submit an inquiry.
- b. The Partner Installer shall make every attempt to complete site visits with Solarize Midcoast Maine leads within two weeks, or within a reasonable timetable, of first contact, and will clearly communicate with leads about the expected timeline and any changes in that timeline.
- c. The Partner Installer shall provide objective information to enable customers to choose among any solar financing options offered or otherwise available.
- d. The Partner Installer shall work with customers to identify and apply for available incentives, and all Solarize Midcoast Maine projects applying for incentives must meet requirements for incentive eligibility.
- e. The Partner Installer shall maintain high standards of quality and value when presenting proposals to interested residents, and aim to design high-efficiency systems.
- f. The Partner Installer shall be familiar with and comply with all relevant codes and requirements, at the local, state, and federal level, for all installations to be completed through the Program.
- g. The Partner Installer shall outline and be prepared to enact a contingency plan in the event that the customer service expectations described are not being met (as determined by the District) due to an increased volume of leads or any other reason.

SECTION TWO – Application Process

A. Eligible Applicants

In order for an installer to be eligible to submit a proposal, the installer must:

- a. Demonstrate experience and proficiency in solar PV installations, be a NABCEP certified installer, and have at least one master electrician on staff.
- b. Submit a proposal that meets all of the threshold review criteria outlined in Section Four below.

B. Application Deadline

Responses to this RFP must be received by the Midcoast Economic Development District no later January 8, 2016 at 12:00pm. Proposals should be in PDF format and attached to an email sent to Bill Najpauer, bnajpauer@mceddme.org. Hard copy versions can be mailed, or delivered to 165 Main Street, Damariscotta, ME 04543. Please label your proposal materials clearly.

C. In-Person Interviews

The District may opt to interview prospective installers. If so, the interviews will be held at the MCEDD Office (specific day and times to be determined).

D. Questions and Contact Information

Please contact Scott LaFlamme, Director of Economic Development for the City of Bath, with any questions: Scott LaFlamme, slaflamme@cityofbath.com, 207-443-8372.

E. Guidelines for Bidding as a Consortium

A consortium consisting of more than one installer may bid collectively as long as the consortium partners take responsibility for managing the partnership and maintaining a simple message and point of contact for residents. Partnering installers should strive to maintain the following critical program components:

- A single lead contact person for the partnering installers is identified;
- A single tiered pricing structure; and
- Protocols regarding the shared responsibility and assignment of individual projects to participating installers. Partnering installers will take full responsibility for managing their relationship

SECTION THREE – Bid Requirements

Required Forms to be completed by Bidder:

- A. Installer Contact Information – Form
- B. Company Profile – Forms B-1 and B-2
- C. Core Solarize Proposal – Form C
- D. Equipment and Pricing Proposal – Form D
- E. Authorized Signature – Form E

The forms listed above are available online at www.cityofbath.com/solarizemidcoastmaine or www.mceddme.org.

Required Attachments:

- Sample Solarize Midcoast Maine customer contract (for a residential system)
- Sample Solarize Midcoast Maine customer proposal (for a residential system)
- (if applicable)* Sample terms for any lease or other financing options offered
- (if applicable)* Explanation of any lease or financing options offered and how they will be incorporated into the program, particularly with respect to the tiered pricing model.

SECTION FOUR – Evaluation Criteria

Threshold Requirements: The District will review all bids for completeness prior to forwarding bids to the selection committees. If the District finds any bid to be incomplete, the bidder will be notified and given three business days to produce any missing information. Bids will be considered complete if each of the required forms is present and completed, and each of the required attachments is present (see Proposal Requirements in Section 3 above).

Evaluation Criteria: Complete bids will be evaluated by the Selection Committee selected by the Midcoast Economic Development District. Selection of an installer will be based on the following criteria:

- **Relevant experience** of the installer company and its staff;
- **Overall quality and value** of the proposed services and equipment;
- **Solarize implementation** – the installer’s ability to provide timely and high-quality customer service and installation services given the expected volume of leads generated by Solarize outreach, as well as to collaborate with community volunteers;
- **Tiered pricing** and cost adders proposed by the installer are clear and offer good value;
- **Unique or creative offerings** – e.g. unique technologies offered, unique business model, creative outreach ideas;
- **Commitment to growing the use of solar in Midcoast Maine** – see below.

The goal of Solarize Midcoast Maine is to increase the rate of adoption of solar in the MCEDD District, and to sustain that momentum beyond the timeframe of this program. Strong installer partners will demonstrate commitment to building the market for solar energy beyond their participation in Solarize. In determining an installer’s ability to continue solar installations after the project, the following will be considered:

- Does the installer have a history of solar installations in the Midcoast region?
- Has the installer demonstrated a commitment to growing a strong market for solar in Midcoast region throughout and beyond the Solarize program?