

Solar Request-for-Proposals Process Guide for Higher Education

This step-by-step outline is intended to guide Higher Education Institutions through the process of pursuing viable options for solar power on their facilities and effectively evaluating vendor proposals.

Gather Project Data

Collect all relevant facility and utility information and pre-screen sites to enable vendors to more accurately estimate costs and design systems to best practice standards.

- Create initial inventory of facilities and review potential for solar power (rooftop & carport)
- Gather facility electricity usage data – minimum 12 month (36 months recommended)
- Gather facility site plans & drawings – Roof layout, structural, electrical
- Define assumptions for financial analysis including utility rates and escalation
- Consolidate all data from viable sites into electronic package for RFP

Create Request-for-Proposals Package

Utilize a standardized approach and common specifications for requesting proposals to enable comparative analysis from various vendors, systems and financing options.

- Review & update specification template (PV102) with any additional requirements
- Review & update response checklist as needed (PV101)
- Review & update pricing proposal template (PV103)
- Utilize existing institutional boilerplate language, and tailor as appropriate
- Create RFP package of documents and templates for issuance (PV105)

Issue RFP and Evaluate Proposals

Create interest and awareness by connecting to industry groups, then evaluate responses using a comprehensive set of criteria that include lifetime costs, qualifications and system productivity.

- Issue RFP to known vendors and regional/national organizations for distribution
- Post on institutional website and hold vendor and financier conference to review
- Utilize evaluation template (PV104) and cost proposal form to compare various proposals
- Conduct interviews of “short-listed” vendors to finalize selection process
- Maintain continuity from initial RFP requirements through contract negotiation process

Planning for Construction and Operations

Incorporate construction best practices and solar-specific tasks into the planning process to reduce performance risks and ensure that staff knows how to monitor and operate the system.

- Ensure all required documentation is received from vendor(s) in advance of contract date
- Include independent project commissioning or inspections during and after construction
- Communicate project goals and timeline to internal and external stakeholders
- Review monitoring system and process; and assign oversight responsibilities internally