

# **Solarize South County Request for Proposals (RFP)**

**Date of Issue:** 10/9/2018

**Proposal Due Date:** 10/19/2018 12:00pm PST

**Issued by: Spark Northwest and  
Solarize South County Selection Committee**

**RFP Point of Contact:**

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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**FOR INSTALLATION OF SMALL BUSINESS AND RESIDENTIAL SOLAR PV SYSTEMS**  
**SOLARIZE SOUTH COUNTY**

The Solarize South County Selection Committee (Selection Committee), in collaboration with Spark Northwest, is seeking proposals from qualified firms willing to provide for group purchase of photovoltaic (PV) systems in conjunction with the Solarize South County campaign. The goal of Solarize South County is to accelerate solar energy education and installations in the communities of Grandview, Mabton, and Sunnyside and surrounding rural areas, through group purchasing and a competitive bidding process. Participation will be targeted to agricultural producers and small businesses that qualify for USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants. Residential systems may also be included in the group purchase.

The intent of this RFP is to select one or more firms to provide system design and installation services, and ongoing customer service for eligible participants of Solarize South County. Proposing firms are invited to submit proposals individually, or collaborate with another firm to submit a joint proposal.

**BACKGROUND**

Founded in 2001, Spark Northwest ([www.sparknorthwest.org](http://www.sparknorthwest.org)) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to create communities powered by clean energy. The Selection Committee is comprised of a group of local residents coming together with the support of Spark Northwest and the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments to facilitate the Solarize South County project.

Solarize South County is Spark Northwest's 22nd campaign in the Solarize Northwest program. As described in the Scope of Work contained in this RFP (see Exhibit A), the Solarize South County campaign is a community marketing and individual installation campaign. Using a similar neighborhood group purchase format, Solarize Northwest campaigns to date have resulted in over five megawatts of clean energy installed for 980 homes and businesses. Spark Northwest also provides education and technical assistance to rural small businesses and agricultural producers, including assistance preparing REAP grants.

The Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) is a membership organization that is funded by Federal, State, and local resources, as well as member dues and professional service contracts. Founded in 1966, the organization provides a forum for members to address regional issues for 14 cities and Yakima County. YVCOG will provide outreach and education and is not participating in selection of an installation firm.

## CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

*Dates are subject to change and should be used for planning purposes only.*

RFP Announced	10/8/2018
RFP Questions Due in Writing	10/15/2018 by 5:00pm PST
Response to Questions Posted	10/16/2018
Proposals Due	10/19/2018 12pm PST
Firms Notified of Interview Schedule [estimated date]	10/23/2018 (approx.)
Reference Checks	Week of 10/23/18
Interviews [estimated date]	10/26/2018 (approx.)
Firm Selected [estimated date]	10/29/2018
First Public Workshop [estimated date]	11/1/2018
Participant Registration Closed [estimated date]	12/7/2019
Participant List Available to Contractor	After each workshop
Contracting Completed [estimated date]	3/31/2019
Installations Completed [estimated date]	6/30/2019 or as arranged

## QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE RFP

Questions, including requests for explanations of the meaning or interpretations of the provisions of the RFP, shall be submitted in writing (via email) to the citizen members of the Solarize South County Selection Committee by 10/15/2018 5:00pm PST. The Point of Contact for the RFP is **Jill Eikenhorst at [jill@sparknorthwest.org](mailto:jill@sparknorthwest.org)**. In the interest of fairness, **no telephone questions will be accepted or considered**. Questions and answers will be posted in FAQ format at [www.solarizenw.org](http://www.solarizenw.org) by 10/16/2018.

## PROPOSAL DUE DATE & SUBMITTAL

Proposals must be received no later than 10/19/2018 12:00pm PST, and must be submitted electronically in PDF format to **Jill Eikenhorst at [jill@sparknorthwest.org](mailto:jill@sparknorthwest.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 **(206) 457-5403**.

Faxed proposals and late proposals will not be accepted. Proposals may be withdrawn at any time before the due date and time noted above via an emailed request.

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 Selection 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.

Any material submitted by a Proposer will become the property of Spark Northwest and the Selection Committee.

Spark Northwest and the Solarize South County Selection Committee may amend the RFP at any time prior to the Proposal due date by issuance of a written amendment to all Proposers who are participating in the process. Spark Northwest and the Selection Committee may also cancel, delay, or suspend this solicitation if in the best interest of the community as determined by Spark Northwest and the Selection Committee. Spark Northwest and the Selection Committee may reject any or all proposals, in whole or in part, if in the best interest of the community as determined by Spark Northwest and the Solarize South County Selection Committee.

## **FIRM SELECTION**

**Spark Northwest will provide technical assistance to the Selection Committee during the selection process and is a non-voting member of the selection committee.** The Selection Committee is responsible for selecting one or more firms to design, procure, and install PV systems for participating residents and small business owners. During the evaluation process, the Selection Committee and Spark Northwest have the right to require any clarification they need in order to understand the Proposer's approach. The Selection Committee and Spark Northwest will interview the highest ranked Proposers. The scoring provided below is a guide, and The Selection Committee reserves the right to consider other factors if in the best interest of the community. The Selection Committee anticipates making a decision by 10/29/2018.

## **BASIC REQUIREMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS FOR PROPOSING FIRMS**

- Proposing firms will provide a group-based pricing structure.
- Proposing firms must be registered with the appropriate Business License divisions in Yakima County and in good standing in order to be considered for this project.
- Proposing firms, or, if it is a collaborative proposal, both firms, must be a general contractor and must hold an active Contractor Registration with Washington State Department of Labor and Industries.
- Proposing firms must maintain Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability insurance.
- Proposing firms must respond to each section of this Request for Proposals and use the following outline as a guide for formatting Proposals.

## **PROPOSAL FORMAT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Please create project proposals in 8½" x 11" document size using a minimum 12 point font size. Proposals shall not exceed 20 pages, including cover page, cover letter and any appendices and/or attachments.

### **I. Cover letter (0 points)**

**A.** The cover letter shall discuss the highlights, key features and distinguishing points of the Proposal. As part of this discussion, please describe specifically why the firm wants to work with the South Yakima community. The cover letter must be prepared and signed by a manager having the authority to make offers and enter into financial agreements on behalf of the firm(s).

**II. Proposing firm profile (10 points)**

**A.** Detail the proposing firm(s) size and local organizational structure. Describe the demonstrated experience of the firm(s) in developing, designing, and installing commercial and residential solar electric systems, and how that would apply on a community-wide scale.

**B.** Provide a statement describing the firm’s capability to complete the project per the project timeline specified above. Include a discussion of the firm’s financial stability, number of employees (including number of full-time installers, site assessors, and project managers), length of time in business, capacity, and resources.

**C.** The Selection Committee welcomes proposals from single firms or partnering firms submitting a joint proposal. The Selection Committee will evaluate all proposals on a level playing field and will not confer special preference to firms that choose to submit a joint proposal. Firms that do choose to submit a joint proposal should prioritize appearance as a unified provider to program participants. As such, partnering firms are asked to synchronize and provide details on the following:

- Customer contact processes
- Site assessment processes
- Contract language and pricing
- Performance guarantees and warranties
- Any additional customer services

All proposals will be evaluated based on their ability to meet anticipated project capacity, regardless of proposal as a single firm or firm partnership.

**D.** Explain how the firm can expand quickly—and maintain quality—to meet the demand that may occur due to this project. Present the firm’s plan to accommodate demand within the timeline stated above. If possible, provide two examples of large projects completed to date which have prepared the firm for an undertaking of this scale. Provide a best estimate of the number of average installations the firm can complete per week. Describe how the firm plans to maintain or exceed this installation rate, while maintaining quality, throughout the Solarize South County campaign. Describe the firm’s plan to meet the expected timeframes between lead generation and site visit scheduling, site visit completion and quote delivery, and contract signing and system installation.

**E.** Describe how the firm will prioritize Solarize South County customers relative to additional work load elsewhere.

**III. Qualifications of the project team (10 points)**

- A. Identify any financing, manufacturer discounts, or incentives that the firm will be able to offer to prospective customers. These would be in addition to existing Federal, State, and Utility-based incentives.
- B. Identify key personnel for this project including roles, experience, licenses, and certificates (e.g., NABCEP), with corresponding numbers as appropriate. Key personnel should include at a minimum: Owners/Principals; Project Managers; Designers; Installers; and Office Manager who will provide data to Spark Northwest per the specifications outlined in the Scope of Work (see Exhibit A).
- C. Identify any subcontractors the firm plans to use, along with their value to the project, and provide background information on their size, experience, management, licensing, and subcontracting agreement.
- D. Project partners plan to deliver one educational workshop in Spanish. Describe any capacity your firm has to communicate with customers who prefer Spanish.

**IV. Business practices (20 points)**

- A. Lead management practices:** Describe the process for in-office management of a large volume of leads, from receipt of lead information from Spark Northwest through customer contact, scheduling of site assessments and installations, and processing of relevant paperwork. Indicate what software and systems the firm uses to facilitate sales and reporting. *(Note: Spark Northwest uses Salesforce to manage the Solarize participant database. The selected installer must use Salesforce to report program data to project partners, and may use Salesforce to manage leads, alone or in combination with other systems.)*
- B. Billing practices:** Provide a representative copy of the customer proposal and contract the firm plans to use in the Solarize South County project that includes a description of the scope of work, equipment to be installed, terms of payment, terms for termination, post-installation performance verification, and construction timeline from execution of contract to final system commissioning. Identify how the billing cycle and process for this project might differ from a typical billing cycle and process. If partnering firms are submitting a joint proposal, we require the customer contract to be consistent between firms. *(Note: All Contracts will be executed between the home, condominium, or small business owner and the selected contractor. The Contract between the owner and the selected firm will state that Spark Northwest and the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments 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.)*
- C. Change orders:** Describe how the firm addresses change orders. Please provide an example of a recent change order and how it was priced, tracked, and managed.
- D. Work practices:** Address the firm's health and safety record and practices. Identify any communications with the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries and state or federal human rights agencies regarding workplace issues in the last 3 years.

**E. Liability:** Provide information on the level of insurance the firm has, such as General Liability and Auto coverage for residential work (including Broad Form Property Damage, Contractual Liability, No Collapse or Underground exclusions, and Stop Gap coverage). Provide copies of certificates.

**F. Utility Interconnection Experience:** Provide information on your experience working with Pacific Power and other area electric utilities.

**G. Diversity:** Identify whether your firm and any subcontracting firms are a minority-owned, women-owned or veteran-owned business, and whether your firm is an employee-owned business or unionized business. List subcontracting relationships with minority-, veteran- or women-owned Businesses that will be utilized for the Solarize program, and describe your history of subcontracting to or partnering with businesses owned by minorities or women. Describe specific hiring and recruitment practices, if any, to recruit people of color, women, veteran and other groups under-represented in the solar workforce.

**H. Wages and Labor Practices:** Provide information about labor practices, including your commitment to providing family wages, benefits, apprenticeships, and mentoring programs. Identify the percentage of workers who receive more than \$20/hour, and the percentage of workers who receive healthcare and other benefits.

**V. Community practices (15 points)**

**A. Marketing practices:** Identify and describe how any of the proposed project team members are engaged in activities geared towards building public awareness and education about solar energy. Identify any means by which the firm(s) will contribute to outreach efforts for Solarize South County. Provide specific examples. If possible, identify two previous customers who are located in the target area and who have agreed to share their experience with Solarize South County participants (e.g. act as a reference, host a house party, participate in a solar tour, or speak at a workshop).

**B. Educational practices:** Describe the proposing firm's ability to contribute to public awareness and education by supporting the Spark Northwest and YVCOG at public meetings and outreach events. Identify the individual(s) who plan to be present at Solarize South County workshops and briefly describe their experience in conducting similar educational activities.

**C. Sustainability practices:** Describe any sustainability practices adopted by the firm, partners or contractors. Include energy conservation and energy efficiency services that the firm or its business partners provide to customers.

**D. Community Benefits:** Describe how your proposal would "give back" to the community upon reaching certain milestones of signed installation contracts, such as a donated solar installation for a public or non-profit building.

**VI. Work quality (15 points)**

**A.** Explain why the products included in the proposal are appropriate for this project. Provide descriptions of warranties and support that ensure the long-term durability, operation, and maintenance of PV installations. Include performance, efficiency, and reliability figures, in addition to place of manufacture. Please describe any system monitoring capabilities, or production gauges, typically included by your firm as part of its installations.

**B.** Describe the installation process, including how the firm will minimize disruption and disturbance of neighbors, landscaping, structures, and clients' living arrangements during preparation, installation, and clean up.

**C.** Describe final testing and sign-off procedures, including punch lists, inspection, and other necessary requirements. Include any post-installation performance verification procedures.

**VII. Customer service (15 points)**

**A.** Describe how the firm plans to handle incident reports (trouble, warranty, service calls, inquiries). Discuss the firm's typical response time on calls, hours of coverage for customer service calls, and process for providing status reports after an incident is logged. Identify who in your firm responds to such calls.

**B.** Discuss the most common problems and reported issues that the firm has experienced and how they have been resolved. List any complaints received by the Better Business Bureau or the Washington Attorney General's office over the last 3 years.

**C.** Describe the training the firm provides the homeowner, including materials or manuals, customer care books, and/or support for later questions and system performance.

**D.** Provide references from 3 installations including size, date of installation, and location, with a contact name and telephone number. At least one reference should be a small commercial customer. If possible, at least one reference should be from a customer whose solar system was installed at least two years ago and one reference should be located within south Yakima County.

**VIII. Working with Spark Northwest and the Community Coalition (0 points)**

**A.** Identify the main point of contact between Spark Northwest/the Selection Committee and the Proposing firms. Confirm this individual's ability to provide weekly progress reports per the specifications outlined in the Scope of Work (see Exhibit A).

**IX. Pricing and financing schedule (15 points)**



- A. Using Exhibit C, Proposers should present pricing as price-per-watt of installed capacity, exclusive of any eligible incentives or tax credits for a grid-tied system installed on a typical small commercial building. The price is to apply to all work described in the Scope of Work identified in Exhibit A.
- B. Identify any factors or special conditions which would result in additional costs (such as roof materials, roof slope, improvements to existing wiring, roof access) and provide estimates of additional charges for each such factor or condition.
- C. Note: *Customer contact, site assessments, system design and cost estimates are to be provided free of charge.*

**X. Appendix (0 points)**

The Appendix may include any supporting information, such as resumes, references or other data that will support the firm as the best for this project. If present, the Appendix is included in the maximum allowed length of 25 pages for the entire proposal.

**PROPOSAL SCORING & EVALUATION**

The evaluation committee shall evaluate each proposal and assign points based on the categories outlined above. Scores may range from a minimum of zero to a maximum of 100 points. **Spark Northwest is providing technical assistance to the Selection Committee and is a non-voting member of the evaluation team.** Spark Northwest and the Selection Committee will invite the top ranked Proposers for interview and evaluation by the selection committee. Proposal ranking and interviews will be the central valuation in determining successful applicants and final award. The scoring provided above is a guide, and the Selection Committee reserves the right to consider other factors if in the best interest of the community. All Proposers will be notified of the outcome of the selection.

**CONDITIONS AND RESERVATIONS**

**Spark Northwest and the Selection Committee are not obligated as a result of the submission of a Proposal to enter into a Contract with any Proposer and have no financial obligation to any Proposer arising from this RFP. All Contracts will be executed between the home or small business owner and the selected contractor.** The Contract between the owner and the selected firm will state that Spark Northwest and the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments 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 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Spark Northwest and the selection committee to confirm each party's roles and responsibilities prior to work starting.

Furthermore, Spark Northwest and the Selection Committee reserve 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 project to do so;
- Waive any minor informality or non-conformance with the provisions or procedures of the RFP, or to seek clarification of any Proposal, if deemed necessary;
- 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 project.

## **EXHIBIT A SCOPE OF WORK**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The selected firm will provide for design and installation of solar electric systems for a group of south Yakima County businesses and residents in accordance with the general scope of services outlined below. Proposers may use this outline as a guide for organizing a scope of work for their proposal, but are encouraged to expand upon, refine, or suggest alternative approaches based on previous experiences.

### **GENERAL SCOPE OF WORK**

The purpose of this project is to enable the installation of solar photovoltaic systems for small businesses, agricultural producers, and homes in south Yakima County at a per-watt price lower than that typically offered by the firm. The selected firm will access cost efficiencies through a program that combines lowered customer acquisition costs with group purchasing and installations. Project participants will be made aware of the opportunity by Spark Northwest and the Selection Committee through a community project called Solarize South County.

The project pertains to South Yakima County, including Grandview, Mabton, and Sunnyside. The number of participating homes and small businesses and total capacity of the project is unknown. Project partners have set a goal of 15 installations. Previous campaigns have achieved the following results:

- Solarize Mid-Columbia: 12 installations
- Solarize Stanwood-Camano: 26 installations
- Solarize Thurston: 20 installations
- Solarize Snoqualmie: 44 installations

Between the months of November 2018 and February 2019, Spark Northwest, the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments and project partners will promote and deliver 3 educational workshops and webinars at easily accessible public locations in South Yakima County. The selected firm is expected to have staff available to present information, answer questions and provide an interface to the community at workshops. One workshop is planned to be presented in Spanish, which the selected firm will attend and provide information via translation as needed (or provide a Spanish speaking representative, if available). Additional neighborhood outreach opportunities may present themselves and the selected firm is expected to work with Spark Northwest and the Solarize South County Campaign to ensure that the campaign is effective in reaching the South Yakima County community at large. **The first public workshop date is TBD, estimated for November 1-9.**

As prospective participants are identified who wish to proceed with the process, their names and contact information will be provided to the selected firm on a rolling basis. If more than one firm is selected, Spark Northwest will refer homeowners to the firms in an equitable manner determined at the time of firm selection and before the campaign is launched.

The selected firm will provide weekly progress reports to Spark Northwest regarding campaign progress and lead status. Weekly reporting must be submitted by Monday at 12:00PM PST for the previous week's work. All discrepancies should be resolved prior to next reporting period. Progress reports should include the following:

- Contact status
- Proposal Status
- Date of scheduled/completed site assessment
- Date of contract signing
- Date of scheduled installation
- Manufacturer of system installed
- Size of system installed
- Price of system installed

The selected firm(s) will provide site assessments and system design proposals for each interested participant. Individual system designs should take into consideration the preferences of the owner while minimizing project costs and maximizing solar energy production. System proposals should also take into consideration each owner's self-identified financial limitations including, if applicable, any owner-arranged financing with a bank, credit union or other financing entity.

The installations will be carried out by the selected firm in conformance with all applicable laws, codes, and interconnection requirements for net-metered installations.

For each participating customer, the selected firm will be responsible for securing all required permits, completing and submitting all incentive applications, and scheduling and passing all jurisdictional and utility inspections. The selected firm will provide guidance and assistance to each contracted owner with completing a net-metering agreement with the homeowner's utility. If applicable, the firm will provide each owner with the information, documentation, and certified signatures required to complete the appropriate Washington Renewable Energy Production Incentive applications. The firm will also provide each owner appropriate documentation and guidance for applying for federal solar energy tax credits. The firm will provide introductions and support materials to banks, credit unions, and other interested financing entities as needed. Spark Northwest will provide additional assistance to eligible participants to prepare REAP grant applications. The selected firm will provide information and documents as requested to support applications.

**EXHIBIT C  
SOLARIZE SOUTH COUNTY PRICING FORM**

<b>Proposer Firm Name</b>	
<b>Contact Name</b>	
<b>Contact Email</b>	
<b>Contact Phone</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

**Proposed Equipment**

	System 1	System 2*
<b>Modules</b>		
<b>Inverters</b>		

\*Add more systems if desired.

**Pricing**

System Size (kW DC)*	System 1: \$/watt		System 2: \$/watt	
	Solarize	Non-Solarize	Solarize	Non-Solarize
6-12 kW				
12-18 kW				
18-24 kW				

\*You may propose different size ranges, but all sizes between 6kW and 24kW must be included.

**Additional Cost Factors**

	Cost	Criteria
Roof Material		
Roof slope		
Flat Roof		
Ground Mount		(exclude trenching)
Electrical		
Access		
Monitoring system		
Extended Warranty		
Maintenance Contract		
*		
*		

\*Add other factors if applicable