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INTERSTATE RENEWABLE ENERGY COUNCIL

Interstate Renewable Energy Council SolSmart Engagement Partner Request for Proposal

This RFP is being solicited by the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) for organizations to serve as an engagement partner for the SolSmart program focusing on engagement of priority communities meeting the DOE definition of “disadvantaged community” (DAC). The SolSmart program, (<http://www.solsmart.org>), is administered by IREC and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office.

RFP Posted: May 9, 2023

Responses Due: June 9, 2023

We will make selections no later than June 16, 2023. The beginning of the contract will be on June 5 or as soon as possible afterward. **The project must be completed by May 30, 2024.**

Send proposals and any questions on the RFP with the subject line “Submission: SolSmart Engagement Partner” to: SolSmart@IRECUSA.org.

If you have any questions on the proposal, please submit your questions to the email above. We will respond to all questions in a public forum accessible at this link:
<https://irecusa.org/blog/irec-news/irec-releases-solsmart-engagement-partner-rfp/>.

Budgets may vary according to proposal but will not exceed \$40,000 per applicant. Budget amount is expected to correspond to the number of communities applicant intends to bring into the SolSmart program.

About Us

For over forty years, the [Interstate Renewable Energy Council \(IREC\)](#) has focused on making clean energy possible for millions of Americans by identifying and removing regulatory, workforce, and economic barriers. IREC’s organizational mission is to build the foundation for rapid adoption of clean energy and energy efficiency to benefit people, the economy, and our planet.

SolSmart is a national program that helps local governments (cities, towns, counties, and regional organizations) encourage the development of solar energy in their communities.

The core of the program is the [SolSmart criteria](#), a list of local best practices that help reduce barriers to solar energy growth. The program offers no-cost technical assistance to help communities achieve these best practices. Communities receive points for achieving each criterion, and those with a sufficient number of points are designated SolSmart Platinum, Gold, Silver, or Bronze. Since the program launched, over 490 communities in 43 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have achieved designation, as displayed on the [SolSmart designee map](#).

The SolSmart Program is committed to advancing the goals of the federal [Justice40 Initiative](#) to provide equitable opportunities for communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. The SolSmart Program is committed to centering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in all aspects of the program's design, implementation, and outreach to communities.

Project Overview

IREC is seeking organizations, including community-based organizations and regional organizations, to recruit **priority communities** for participation in the SolSmart program. A "priority community" is a local government for a city, town, or county with at least 50% of the census tracts within its borders deemed disadvantaged according to the DOE list of disadvantaged communities (DAC). This list can be found at <https://energyjustice.egs.anl.gov/>. For reference, you can find DOE's data [here](#).

The engagement process involves initial contact with priority communities, consultation calls with the communities to review goals and align with SolSmart program assistance, and submission of a solar statement by the community indicating an intent to pursue SolSmart designation. The community will then receive no-cost technical assistance through the program to adopt nationally recognized best practices that will increase the deployment of solar energy. The SolSmart team will ensure that engagement partners have the resources needed to help communities understand the program's goals and the steps toward SolSmart's four designation levels.

IREC will provide training and educational resources about the SolSmart program to the selected organizations. If an organization has strong community ties but limited renewable energy experience, additional training on basic solar energy issues will be provided. The selected organizations will be assigned a liaison from within the SolSmart program who will serve as the point of contact on behalf of the program.

Timeline for Selection

May 9, 2023	RFP distributed
June 9, 2023	Proposals due to IREC
June 12 - 15, 2023	Proposal presentations (invitation only)
June 16, 2023	Determination
May 30, 2024	Implementation complete

Project Requirements

Our main goals and requirements for the SolSmart Engagement Partner program are below. Additional goals may be considered if proposed depending on the available budget.

Secure solar statements from a minimum of 5 *priority* communities. Securing solar statements ensures that priority communities receive technical assistance and have a strong likelihood of receiving SolSmart designation. Organizations with broader reach may propose a higher number of communities and correspondingly a higher budget. While our focus is the priority communities, organizations working with local governments that do not fall into the DOE definition are welcome to include those entities. Note that at least 80% of communities should be priority communities, with the minimum number being 5.

Report status to the SolSmart team of outreach and engagement to priority communities on a regular basis. Information regarding outreach and engagement from the recruitment organization will allow coordination of resources and information with the SolSmart program and the organization.

Submission of solar statements as received. Opportunities for engagement continue after recruitment according to the organization's goals for their communities. We quickly move prospective SolSmart communities into our intake process and perform an assessment to formulate the best plan for a community's desired designation level. While the continuing role of the SolSmart Engagement Partner will not include provision of technical assistance, the partner may provide continued support as described in the proposal.

Work Requirements

- Staff training on SolSmart for organizational contacts as needed
- Weekly checklist report of completed tasks, submitted via email

- Regular check-in meetings with core staff members
- Comprehensive documentation of work to be performed and resulting outcomes
- Minimum of 5 solar statements from priority communities

Application Process

Please submit the following information with your proposal:

- Cover letter
- A description of your proposal and how you would meet the requirements in this RFP, including a specific list of proposed communities
- Statement of the applicant organization's qualifications, including a sample of relevant work
- Contact information for two professional references
- Staff CVs of key personnel who will be involved
- Statement on your organization's diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) principles and objectives
- Proposed budget (maximum of \$40,000)

Selection Criteria

The applicant selected must have a clear understanding of the SolSmart program and must act as a partner in solar deployment and the administration's Justice40 Initiative by minimizing expenses and maximizing efficiency through effective identification and prioritization of interested SolSmart communities.

Upon notification of selection, the successful organization is required to execute and deliver a contract within two weeks of notification. If the successful respondent is unwilling or unable to execute an agreement, IREC maintains the right to request another applicant to enter into a contract with IREC.

Selection criteria include:

- 15% Cost
- 40% Methodology: Please describe how your organization will approach the project with a detailed description, outline, list of proposed communities, and anticipated date of completion. Show strategies for priority community engagement.
- 15% Process description: include schedule for routine progress meetings, documentation of completed deliverables, and documentation of major findings.
- 15% Demonstration of positive results with current and previous work
- 10% Experience level and competence of staff who will execute deliverables
- 5% Adherence to a well-defined diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) statement submitted with the application
