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Grassroots Education Request for Proposals (RFP) Questions and Answers

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Additional questions and answers are available in the recording of the Grassroots Education Webinar located here:

<https://www.illinoisfa.com/app/uploads/2019/03/Illinois-Solar-for-All-Grassroots-Education-RFP-QA-edited-1.mp4>

QUALIFICATIONS TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

We were planning to develop a campaign that focused on specific neighborhoods in our community and were hoping to hire a neighborhood resident to help with material development and outreach. It looks like that is not permitted and that subcontracting is limited to nonprofits. Do you have a definition of what a qualifying nonprofit is? I understand it must meet the qualifications of the proposal, but I'm not certain what's a nonprofit and what is not. For instance, would a neighborhood association qualify? Some are not so formally organized as others.

Qualifying non-profits are non-profit organizations organized and operating in the State of Illinois pursuant to the General Not For Profit Corporations Act of 1986 (805 ILCS 105). Such organizations may or may not be tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code or under Illinois state law. Groups that are not designated as non-profit organizations consistent with these requirements can partner with a fiscal sponsor to propose a collaborative campaign. For-profit companies, political organizations, and trade groups cannot be sponsored by non-profits. A neighborhood association is an example of an organization that is not a designated non-profit that could partner with a fiscal sponsor that is a non-profit to propose a campaign. Individuals, such as community residents, could be hired as employees of the non-profit for campaigns.

APPROVED VENDORS (AVS) AND RELATIONSHIP TO GRASSROOTS EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

Is there a required partnership/relationship between the grassroots education organizations and the Approved Vendors?

No relationship is required between Grassroots Education organizations and Approved Vendors. In fact, Grassroots Education organizations receiving funding under this RFP

may not partner with individual Approved Vendors. As stated in the RFP, “Grassroots Education is not intended to directly support Approved Vendors who market to and install solar for program participants, or to conduct outreach that directly generates customers for specific vendors (or their agents, subcontractors, or other designees who do the same). Those efforts constitute commercial marketing, and these customer acquisition costs borne by Approved Vendors are already assumed under the REC prices available through the ILSFA program.” The RFP also prohibits funded organizations from receiving payments from Approved Vendors “during the contract period or within six months after the conclusion of the contract period.”

However, the RFP does recognize that Grassroots Education may play a role in informing or facilitating connections between communities and Approved Vendors to accelerate participation in those communities. To that end, “Approved Vendors may participate in events organized by Grassroots Education organizations, provided that all Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendors have the same opportunity to participate in a transparent manner.”

Are there similar concerns or limitations on installers that are not Approved Vendors (AVs)?

Prohibitions related to partnerships with Approved Vendors also extend to designees of Approved Vendors, such as installers of solar photovoltaic projects who may not serve as Approved Vendors under the program. Grassroots campaigns could potentially help educate vendors on the approval process or connect Approved Vendors to their communities if there are no AVs serving their area, but these efforts must be done in an inclusive and transparent manner that provides the same opportunities for participation to all vendors (including installers, contractors, solar developers) or Approved Vendors. Consistent with the RFP’s treatment of Approved Vendors, Grassroots Education campaigns may not favor any installer over any other(s).

I am concerned about going into communities and spreading the word about this great program and the financial benefits available and then ending up in a situation where there are no Approved Vendors interested in building projects. Is this a real concern? How can you use an Approved Vendor to participate if that list will not be published until after grant deadline?

In this scenario, campaigns could be adapted for greater focus on solar basics, solar readiness, job training, and connecting Approved Vendors with communities. Because

there is not yet a list of Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendors available to know fully how applicant communities will be served when Illinois Solar for All launches for project applications in late April, we understand the difficulty in proposing a fixed campaign and will evaluate proposals with the understanding that they may need to be adjusted based on representation (or lack thereof) of Approved Vendors. Suggesting multiple scenarios (with and without Approved Vendors serving the communities in your proposal) is acceptable but not required.

We appreciate it's not allowable for groups to directly support one vendor but want to help as much as allowed. Is it OK for us to reach out to all groups in our target areas when we are ready to start pre-entry prep? Will there be a list with contact info we can utilize?

As an Approved Vendor, we are looking to directly partner with a local closely held non-profit with whom we have had a relationship with for many years. Since the Approved Vendor registration process under the Illinois Solar for All heading requires this type of closely held relationship there should certainly be no negative in beginning to build on this relationship starting with this education grant, correct?

There is no restriction on Approved Vendors reaching out to Grassroots Organizations, but any formal partnerships between Grassroots Organizations and Approved Vendors is strictly prohibited. It is the responsibility of the Grassroots Organization to proactively communicate to and make opportunities available to all Approved Vendors on an equal basis.

Is there a directory of AVs?

Not yet but there will be one posted on www.illinoisfa.com in the coming months.

BUDGET

What is the pay scale or allowable budget for campaign workers?

Other than applicable legal requirements, including those regarding payment to workers, the RFP does not specify parameters for pay scale/allowable budget other than that total awards are not expected to exceed \$50,000 per organization (and may be less). Because the goal of Illinois Solar for All is to help low-income people and communities, the Agency and Program Administrator believe that paying a living wage equivalent is important. However, please note that "cost and value of delivery" is one of

the metrics that proposals will be scored on, and all expenses must be invoiced under tasks on a time and materials basis.

Is the money provided for the Grassroots Education program a grant that you don't have to pay back or a loan that you do have to pay back to the state of Illinois?

The award is not a grant or a loan; it is a contract for Grassroots Education services. The money paid to groups for Grassroots Education activities will be payment for services performed under a contract and does not need to be paid back, subject to contractual requirements for non-performance. See Appendix 1 of the RFP to review the contract that will be used for awardees. Generally, funds will only be paid under the contract after specific tasks are completed. The awards are intended to pay for staff to conduct educational activities and to cover other costs that might be a part of a campaign (e.g., printing brochures, drafting more professional campaign materials, providing food for a neighborhood meeting, etc.).

METRICS AND OUTCOMES

What is the ideal measurable outcome or enrollment process for individuals who take that step? How can we indicate campaign success apart from campaign effort?

Education campaigns should drive both direct and indirect program participation in Illinois Solar for All. This will look different in different communities, depending on which topics are included in Grassroots Education campaigns.

Examples of metrics that would measure success apart from campaign efforts would be the number of people who indicate interest in signing up for jobs training, on-site or community solar, etc.; number of residents educated or number of underserved residents educated (senior citizen, non-English speaker, etc.); number of passing scores on exit quizzes that gauge knowledge. Creative approaches to quantifying individual engagement may be proposed as part of the RFP proposal.

Are there checks and balances to make sure grassroots communications and or events developed as a result of these grants accurately reflect solar programs in Illinois?

Grassroots Education funds are intended to provide education on Illinois Solar for All as well as topics like solar basics, solar readiness, and job training where relevant. We will provide marketing materials and training for funded organizations to ensure that

messaging is consistent and accurate on these and other topics. We will offer, and may require, review of adapted or newly developed materials.

COLLABORATION

Do you have any views about collaborating with partners who are not seeking grant funds?

Collaboration with non-funded partners can be one helpful strategy for reaching community members and is encouraged, but please keep in mind that this RFP is for a contract for Grassroots Educational services – and not a grant.

TIMELINE AND SELECTION

We understand that implementation should be proposed to occur in the calendar year 2019; how soon after submission of proposals will decisions be made and/or how soon will the award period start? Could you provide an estimated timeline for the proposal review, decision-making, and finalizing contracts for awardees after you receive proposals on 3/26?

Awards are anticipated to be finalized in April and early May (including selection and scope and contract negotiations) with a kickoff for funded organizations in mid-May. We expect to notify organizations selected in mid-April.

How many organizations might you select?

The number of selected organizations will depend on the quality of proposals, their geographic focus and other diversity, and funds requested. In this first round, we plan to distribute up to a total of \$500,000 for education campaigns, with individual contract awards of up to \$50,000 per funded organization. The Illinois Power Agency and the Program Administrator reserve the right to make less than \$500,000 in awards.

FORMATTING AND SUBMISSION

Is there a font and spacing requirement?

There is no font or spacing requirement.

We serve multiple areas throughout Illinois. Can we submit more than 1 application?

Only submit one application, but feel free to propose multiple campaigns or geographies. Funded organizations will receive up to \$50,000 each, with exceptions possible for collaborative campaigns.

Do we need to state the name of the presenter we are going to use or the names of the approved vendors we are going to use in the program?

Your proposal should include the biographies of all key personnel and identify who from your organization will be conducting any presentations or other Grassroots Education work on the proposed campaign in your cover letter (item A), as well as any subcontractors you intend to use. Because partnerships with specific Approved Vendors are prohibited, there should not be any information on specific Approved Vendors (AVs) that would be involved with your campaign. Grassroots Education campaigns will be expected to provide information on all Approved Vendors rather than directing to one or a handful of specific Approved Vendors (so for example, if there are 5 AVs operating in your area, you would tell people about all 5 or direct them to a list). The process for Approved Vendor registration was only recently opened for application, so a list of Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendors is still under development.

What is all the information that is needed for a not- for- profit to apply for the program? Is the following list everything we need? Cover letter, campaign description, description of need, organizational expertise, measurement, timeline, budget, contract, attachments 1. Board List (including board members we may contact as references) 2. Any additional references and letters of support, if included (at Applicant's discretion) 3. Bios of key personnel 4. Illinois Secretary of State Certificate of Good Standing for Not-for-Profit Corporation status 5. Current IRS designation letter for 501(c)(3) status, if any 6. Most recent IRS Form 990, if any 7. Budget attachments, as needed.

Yes, then above items are all the items that you should submit as part of your proposal (optional as marked). There is more detail on each item on the Request for Proposals (RFP) here (starting on p.12): <https://www.illinoisfa.com/app/uploads/2019/02/GE-Funding-RFP-final.pdf>. Please refer to this document for details.

ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT FOR FUNDED GRANTEEES

Would you please provide more information on what type of assistance the Administrator will be providing re: points of entry into the program?

The Administrator can provide training to awardees on different points of entry (or ways of getting started) in Illinois Solar for All sub-programs or job training programs; this training will be tailored to meet the needs of funded organizations.

Does the Administrator intend to offer any assistance with solar readiness materials and/or participant savings for use in grassroots education?

The Administrator can provide materials on solar readiness and/or participants' savings (and other topics) for use in Grassroots Education campaigns.

Will Elevate Energy provide campaign materials and solar education to grantees or will this be something required of grantees to develop internally?

Elevate Energy (the Program Administrator) can provide campaign content (though groups will be responsible for printing materials). As part of a proposal, a group may request funding to translate materials into another language or to adapt for use in a way that is tailored to the community they serve. The Program Administrator may require reviews of translated/adapted materials, though funded organizations are required to ensure that translated and/or adapted materials comply with program requirements.

ILSFA PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

Who can be a community solar anchor?

Anyone, or any organization/company, can be an anchor tenant for a community solar project, but if the anchor tenant is a for-profit or a residential customer who is not low-income, the RECs associated with their subscription share will receive a lower REC price.

Are there options for community solar for renters, or just rooftop solar for homeowners?

Renters (and owners) can participate as subscribers to community solar projects (in addition to jobs training, etc.), and educating this sector is within the scope of the RFP. In addition, the owner of a multi-family residential building with renters could choose to install rooftop solar and apply to participate in the Low-Income Distributed Generation sub-program, subject to certain income qualification requirements.

What is the current lifespan of the SFA program?

The Illinois Solar for All Program was established by the Future Energy Jobs Act (Public Act 99-0906) which revised Section 1-56 of the Illinois Power Agency Act (20 ILCS 3855) and does not have a specified lifespan. Details of how the program is implemented are contained in the Illinois Power Agency's Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan, which can be found here:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/ipa/Documents/2019ProcurementPlan/Long%20Term%20Renewable%20Resources%20Procurement%20Plan%20%288-6-18%29.pdf>.

For the Low-Income Distributed Generation sub-program, is 3rd party leasing allowed, and if so, are there any particular requirements in addition to what's been mentioned?

The Low-Income Distributed Generation sub-program does not prohibit third-party leasing as a business model that Approved Vendors can offer to participants. System ownership, leasing, Power Purchase Agreements, and other models are all allowed as long as savings and other program requirements are met. Consumer protection guidelines and contract requirements applicable to those solicitations, sales, and installations are currently under development. A draft of Illinois Solar for All Consumer Protections Guidelines can be found here:

<https://www.illinoisfa.com/app/uploads/2019/02/ILSFA-Consumer-Protections-Guidelines-v1.0-DRAFT-20190219.pdf>

Is there an online enrollment form for interested participants? Or, where or to whom do we direct interested participants?

Interested participants for onsite projects, or potential subscribers to a community solar project, may sign up with any Approved Vendor (or designees doing marketing or installation) operating in their area. We do not yet have a list of Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendors but hope to have that list available and published in time for the launch of Grassroots Education campaigns or shortly thereafter. That list will be updated on a rolling basis as new Approved Vendors are added. In the meantime, grassroots groups can present basics on program information and benefits and will eventually be able to connect interested participants to the list of Approved Vendors.

What is the process for becoming an Approved Vendor?

Information about the Approved Vendor registration process is available here: <https://www.illinoisfa.com/for-vendors/>.

How much is the price range for approval of a vendor?

There is no cost to apply to become an Approved Vendor.

We have a problem with contaminated land in our area and getting the run-around by the city and the EPA. Do you guys offer help in this area?

The Illinois Solar for All Program does not provide funding for clean-up of contaminated lands; however, the program does include goals of 25 percent of program incentives for new solar projects and 60 percent of Grassroots Education funds spent in Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs). EJCs demonstrate a higher risk of exposure to pollution based on environmental and socioeconomic factors.

The first step is to check to see if your community is already designated as an Environmental Justice Community (EJC), by using this map and search tool: <https://elevate.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=fa5c9f04479b4706983bf9ca75a122e4>. While the EJC methodology has not been finalized, you can rely for purposes of your RFP response upon the results produced (viewable at that web link) using the currently proposed methodology.

If your community is not designated as an EJC but you believe that it should be, there is a self-designation process to make a request for consideration for your community. While the process is still being finalized, more information is available here:

<https://www.illinoissfa.com/environmental-justice-communities/>. The finalized process for self-designation will also be posted at that web address.