



## The Houston Central Solar Co-op RFP

Thursday, March 14

Dear Installer,

Thank you for your interest in The Houston Central Solar Co-op! We're excited to issue a Request For Proposal (RFP) on behalf of a group of 20 homeowners and businesses in Houston within the Sam Houston Tollway. We've worked closely with community stakeholders and volunteers to recruit interested homeowners for this group.

We are issuing this RFP with the intent of selecting one company ("Proposer") to provide solar photovoltaic (PV) energy systems for all of the participating homeowners. The Proposer will provide a single price/kW installed for the group. This price will be offered to all homeowners participating in the group.

The goal of the solar co-op is two-fold: (1) to enable the participants to receive competitive pricing on their solar systems by going solar as a group, and (2) to provide the project developer with an extensively pre-screened and well-educated group of customers.

### The Houston Central Solar Co-op Timeline

1. RFP Issue Date: Wednesday, March 6 (amended Thursday, March 14)
2. **Proposals Due: Wednesday, April 17 by 5 pm (amended from Wednesday, March 17 at 5 pm)**
3. Selection Committee Review: **Week of April 21 (amended from week of April 8)**
4. Notice of Intent to Award: **Week of April 28 (amended from week of April 15)**
5. Contract Negotiations Completed: **Week of May 5 (amended from week of May 5)**
6. Deadline for new participants to sign up: Sunday, June 30
7. Deadline (tentative) for all site visits completed: Tuesday, July 30
8. Deadline (tentative) for all proposals to participants: Tuesday, August 13
9. Deadline (tentative) for all signed contracts: Tuesday, August 27

We are working to help as many homeowners go solar as possible. We also want to help grow a strong, vibrant solar market in the region. We've been organizing solar cooperatives since 2007, facilitating 180 different solar co-ops with thousands of participants, resulting in over 28 MW of contracted residential solar.

**If you would like to submit a response to this RFP, please complete the attached RFP Response Template. Proposals are due to [dwolfe@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:dwolfe@solarunitedneighbors.org) by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, April 17. (Late submissions will not be accepted)**

Below you will find additional information and requirements for compiling a compelling proposal. If you have any questions about the process or expectations, please don't hesitate to email.

We look forward to receiving your submissions!

Best,

Dori Wolfe  
[dwolfe@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:dwolfe@solarunitedneighbors.org)  
Houston Manager, Solar United Neighbors of Texas

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**Please respond to this RFP by completing the provided “RFP Response Template” Word doc. The following are bid requirements and useful suggestions**

### Scope of work

#### Services to be provided by Solar United Neighbors

1. Pre-screen participants by reviewing each roof via publicly available satellite imagery. Assessments performed by Solar United Neighbors are categorized by “Qualified”, “Maybe Qualified”, and “Disqualified” (based on shading, size, shape, orientation) and are not intended to be overly restrictive. Our goal is to find the balance between wasting a homeowner’s or the developer’s time and unnecessarily excluding participants.
2. Recruit participants after selection (see timeline above). We expect the numbers of participants to increase significantly by the end of the project cycle.
3. We’ll issue promotional materials (press release and social media posts, etc.) as well as work to generate local media attention. We’ll clear materials with you to the best of our ability. We will feature your company prominently while keeping bid details confidential.
4. Support participants and the selected developer throughout the process.
5. Host celebration of successful co-op and public recognition of the work of the installer.
6. Distribute information should any details about the RFP be clarified or changed during the RFP period.

#### Services to be provided by the Proposer

1. A custom proposal for each participant in the group based on the group pricing and component offerings outlined in bid. The proposal should include language that explains all the services provided in the turnkey price for the system (assessment, system design, permitting, installation, interconnection paperwork, etc.). Please provide us the first three (3) proposals you send to co-op participants.
2. Site assessment, structural assessment, design, equipment procurement, installation, monitoring setup, financing, customer training (i.e. safety rules, monitoring, maintenance, how to deal with problems, etc.), permitting, and application/management of applicable incentives.
3. \$600 per signed contract to be paid to Solar United Neighbors as a development fee. This fee should be incorporated into the \$/W price, not listed as an adder. We accept payment by check or ACH (electronic bank transfer).
4. Responsive communication with group participants
5. Responsive communication and coordination with Solar United Neighbors about group and individual participant status
6. Participate in public education/outreach events.
7. Installations performed in conformance with all applicable laws and codes, interconnection requirements for net-metered installations and any incentive-related installation requirements, rules, and timelines. Solar United Neighbors defers to the [SEIA Solar Business Code](#) as a determinant of fair, transparent business practices to ensure solar customers are treated in a fair and honest manner. In addition to the SEIA Code, Companies shall abide by the law and all applicable ethical business guidelines set forth by the Council of Better Business Bureaus (BBB), Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), relevant state consumer protection bureaus, and other regulatory bodies with jurisdiction.



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8. For installers that provide brokerage services for SRECs, installer may not obligate participant to sell SRECs to said installer. As long as participant retains ownership of the solar system, participant should be able to select his/her preferred broker, which may include installer. If participant opts for a PPA or leased system, installer may manage SRECs freely.

### Bid Requirements

- **Offer a single purchase price (\$/watt) for all co-op members.**
  - This price will be offered to all of the homeowners (and businesses) participating in the solar co-op.
  - You may not exclude from your proposals any of the participants involved in this RFP.
  - You do not need to provide individualized proposals for each homeowner in this initial bid. If selected to develop the group of projects Proposer will provide individualized proposals for each participant.
- **Explicitly state any additional charges not included in the \$/watt price in the proposal (e.g., charges for electrical upgrades, steep roofs, specific roofing types/materials, roof attachment methods/components, multiple array locations, small system size, customized racking, tree trimming, etc.)**
  - The assumption is that all costs to most co-op participants are factored into the base price, and that an additional charge, if necessary, is reserved for unique circumstances.
- **Consider all selection criteria when preparing your proposal.** Although the Selection Committee will look for aggressive pricing, price is **not** the only factor they will consider. Participants also value experience in the marketplace, quality system components, and strong warranties, among other factors. Solar co-ops should not be a “race to the bottom” in terms of system price and quality, nor do we want proposers to feel they must sacrifice quality in order to be selected.
- **Bid with PV modules that:**
  - Are listed and reviewed on the California Energy Commission list, '[Incentive Eligible Photovoltaic Modules in Compliance with SB1 Guidelines](#)' or installer must provide similar performance information for selection committee from an alternate source, or by referencing a CEC-listed panel from the same product family.
  - Have at least a 25-year power warranty with a specified performance degradation curve showing acceptable levels of performance or replacement and show achievement of a minimum of 80% of the nameplate rated power at STC by year 25;
  - Have a product warranty of at least 10 years.
- **Bid with inverters that:**
  - Are included in the California Energy Commission list '[List of Eligible Inverters per SB1 Guidelines](#)' or installer to provide similar performance information for selection committee from an alternate source or by referencing a CEC-listed inverter from the same product family.
  - Have a warranty that allows for replacement due to premature failure over the specified warranty time frame and be a minimum of 15 years for micro inverters and 10 years for string inverters.
- **Utilize mounting equipment that is:**
  - Grounded in accordance with manufacturer's specifications.
  - Used in accordance with its manufacturer's listed purpose and specifications.



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- Used in accordance with manufacturer specifications for waterproofing penetrations
- Meets any specific local zoning requirements beyond #2 and #3
- **Meet the following insurance requirements** (for proposer and any sub-contractors):<sup>i</sup>
  - General liability - \$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$2,000,000 in aggregate
  - Worker's compensation - \$1,000,000 each accident, each employee, policy limit
  - Automobile liability - bodily injury, death, and property damage combined single limits of at least \$1,000,000 per occurrence covering vehicles owned, hired, or non-owned
  - NOTE: Official proof of exemption by applicable jurisdiction for any above insurance requirements for a company is also acceptable.

### Have you worked on a Solar United Neighbors co-op before?

In order for you to be eligible to submit a proposal for this co-op, you must:

1. Have no overdue invoices for past solar co-op work.
2. Have updated all customer tracking data for active or completed co-ops (including kW installed and interconnection completed dates).
3. Have completed initial contacts, site visits, and individualized proposals for the majority of any existing co-op you are currently working on.

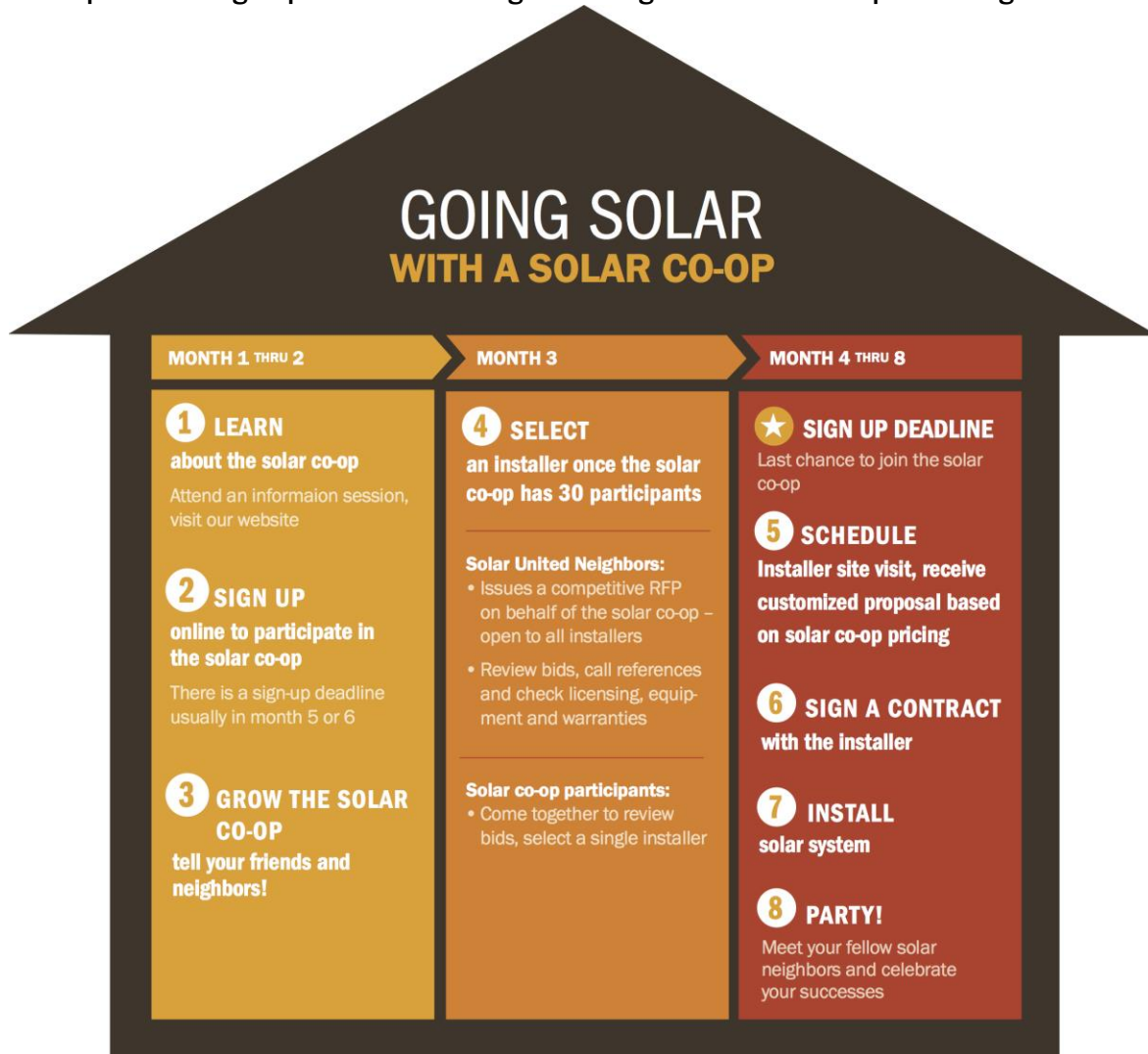
***Solar United Neighbors reserves the right to deny any proposer's bid due to overdue payments, lack of proper licensure for applicable jurisdictions, or outstanding co-op participant grievance yet to be resolved.***

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### Useful Info

#### How a solar co-op works

A solar co-op is when a group of homeowners goes through the solarization process together.



More detailed information about each phase is available here:

<http://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/for-installers/>

#### How a co-op selects an installer

After all interested installers have submitted a proposal in response to this Request for Proposals, Solar United Neighbors will convene a selection committee of co-op members. This Selection Committee, consisting of homeowners participating in the solar co-op, will review the proposals. Each Selection Committee member signs a confidentiality agreement to keep your bid details private. The Committee will select **one Proposer** to develop all of the projects for the group.

The process used to select the winning bid will be as follows:



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1. Once Selection Committee members sign the confidentiality agreement, bids will be distributed to Selection Committee members along with a summary spreadsheet created by our staff.
2. Selection Committee members may review bids independently before meeting as a group.
3. Committee members will convene in one evening to review all bids and make a decision. During that meeting they will:
  - a. Discuss each bid
  - b. Select finalists
  - c. Contact the designated bid representative for each finalist if a bid component needs clarification. (Committee may decide not to contact finalists if no clarification is needed.)
  - d. Select a winning company to service the co-op.

If you are selected as a finalist and the committee calls you that evening, you will have an opportunity to speak about your bid and to answer questions. Please abide by the following:

1. No discussions of other installers' bids, reputation, etc. This is about your proposal only.
2. Please do not negotiate to change any aspect of the bid from what is in your proposal. Clarifications of what's included are acceptable.
3. Keep responses as brief as possible.

### Selection Criteria

*\*Please note: The "importance" column below reflects the selection criteria priorities and preferences of the co-op participants and will often vary from one co-op to another*

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Importance</u></b>
<b><u>Competitive Pricing</u></b> Questions 1 - 11	The extent to which proposed pricing terms are competitive.	95% of PARTICIPANTS INTERESTED
<b><u>System Quality &amp; Sourcing</u></b> Questions 12 - 15	The extent to which the Proposer incorporates high-quality components (high CEC panel ratings, flashed/non-penetrating attachments, etc.) and American-made products into their system design.	90% of PARTICIPANTS INTERESTED
<b><u>Proposer Experience &amp; Qualifications</u></b> Questions 16 - 19	The extent to which the Proposer demonstrates a track record of quality work and incorporates photovoltaic technologies in line with industry standards. Experience in the Houston market a plus.	85% of PARTICIPANTS INTERESTED
<b><u>System Warranty</u></b> Questions 20 - 22	The extent to which the Proposer offers strong warranties on system components and labor.	85% of PARTICIPANTS INTERESTED
<b><u>Social &amp; Community Benefits</u></b> Questions 23 - 25	The extent to which the proposed solar PV systems	75% of PARTICIPANTS INTERESTED





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	foster social and community development, including hiring local workers and offering local job training opportunities. Preference will be given to locally-owned companies. Active membership in MDV-SEIA, our partner on policy issues, is also a plus.	
<b>Please take note of these non-solar offering questions:</b>		
<u>Battery Storage</u> Question 3		15% of PARTICIPANTS INTERESTED  70% of PARTICIPANTS UNSURE IF INTERESTED  15% of PARTICIPANTS NOT INTERESTED
<u>Level 2 Electric Vehicle Chargers</u> Question 4		20% of PARTICIPANTS INTERESTED

*If you would like a summary of roof types in this co-op please contact us.*

### Q&A Process

Solar United Neighbors will act as the point of contact for all solar co-op and RFP related questions on behalf of the participants covered under this RFP. Dori Wolfe will manage all communications. Please submit any questions and/or comments via email to [dwolfe@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:dwolfe@solarunitedneighbors.org). Proposers that contact participants directly for any reason will be disqualified.

### What we will disclose to group participants about your bid if you are selected

We will disclose this information to the entire group (not the public) about your winning bid:

- Equipment included in the bid
- Warranties on all equipment and installation
- Base pricing and key adders
- System cost examples based on your bid pricing, average sizes and equipment options (noting that bid pricing and component offering is for limited co-op time frame and may not be applicable to non-co-op participants)
- Installer contact information and next steps for each homeowner
  - NOTE: If you are selected, we will work with you to clarify this.

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<sup>i</sup> These requirements are in line with the Solar Energy Industry Association’s described best practices <https://www.seia.org/research-resources/installation-best-practices-residential-portfolios>