



Getting Started With Solar

Going solar presents any organization an important opportunity to achieve long-term electrical cost savings, budget stability, and sustainability goals. While starting a solar project may seem daunting, SunPower is here to help. With over 25 years of experience in solar, SunPower knows how to successfully deploy large-scale solar installations. SunPower provides superior technology, solar policy analysis, project financing, site analysis, educational tools, and a host of other tools, support, and consulting. From site assessment to installation to operation and maintenance (O&M), SunPower can help ensure your solar project proceeds as smoothly as possible and produces reliably for the long-term.

This solar guide is part of a series of guides SunPower has developed to help your company each step of the way. Tailored to the specific needs of commercial customers, you'll find tips about how to evaluate a site, solar financing dos and don'ts, and more. Three key guides to begin with include:

- How to Choose a Solar Partner
- How to Write a Successful Solar Request for Proposal (RFP)
- A Guide for Earning Stakeholder Buy-In for Solar Power

Your Solar Partner

A solar partner should ensure that your solar system succeeds for the long-term. However, many solar power companies are trying to get in and out of a deal as fast as possible, and not every solar partner offers turnkey solutions from start to finish. In fact, there are many different types of companies that can be involved in a solar project. Depending on your project, you may be working with a procurement company, engineering company, solar manufacturer, installation company, solar integrator, energy consultant, and/or others.

To get the best value for your solar project, your partner should be an expert in three key areas:

- Solar policy and incentives
- Technology
- Project finance

You should inquire about these areas of expertise whether directly contracting with a solar partner or going through an RFP process. Aspects such as vertical integration, panel warranties, performance guarantees, and other things should also be considered during the selection process. SunPower's guide on "How to Choose a Solar Partner" goes into greater detail on these and other topics.

Writing a Request for Proposal

Before writing an RFP, gathering a team of internal experts is recommended. A solar project is a large undertaking, and it influences numerous departments from finance to facilities to real estate. By enlisting your internal experts, you'll have access to the expertise you need to create an effective RFP.

A successful RFP should neither be too vague nor too restrictive. Either of these can negatively impact the feasibility of the proposals your company would receive. Elements to include in an RFP (and which SunPower discusses in depth in "How to Write



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a Successful Solar RFP”) are:

- Your company goals and objectives
- Financial requirements and pricing
- Solar partner qualifications, licenses, and experience
- Technology
- Site specifications
- O&M services and more

Winning Stakeholder Buy-In

Aligning to company and departmental goals is crucial if a solar project is going to win approval. This means that it's vital that all the departments involved feel like their goals and requirements are met. Additionally, it's important to address any concerns and mitigate potential risks. For example, the facilities department may be concerned about the number of roof penetrations required for a roof-mounted solar project, so gathering information on different solar solutions and how they are mounted is an important step for assuaging this department's concerns. Above all others, senior management must be persuaded and needs to be shown how solar meets over-arching company goals.

To help you achieve these critical approvals, SunPower has developed “A Guide for Earning Stakeholder Buy-In for Solar Power.” This guide will assist you in identifying objectives and concerns so that your solar project can move forward.

Initial Steps

Before you commence those big steps, you can gather basic site information to share with a solar partner. A solar system's site directly impacts electrical production, and higher energy generation typically means a better net present value (NPV). So it's recommended to obtain photos and drawings of different sites to review to find the optimum location.

Working with an experienced solar partner early on in your evaluation can greatly assist you in managing site assessment. If you are already comfortable working a solar partner, they may do all of this work for you. Whether by you or your solar partner, each of the following elements should be evaluated before selecting a site:

Climate

If you are interested in a rooftop solution, climate factors, such as wind speed, are key considerations and influence the type of solution selected. Similarly, an area with minimal or no flooding issues should be selected for ground sites.

Space Availability

Determining how much space you have available for solar power is another important factor. This influences how large of a system you can create, which impacts the energy production and ultimately, your ROI. Rooftop, open ground spaces, and parking lots are several potential locations for a solar installation.

Roof Structure & Interconnection

For rooftop installations, the integrity of the roof needs to be evaluated to ensure it can accommodate the addition of solar hardware. In order to ensure that your system is online as soon as possible, it is important that the installation be located near your meter.



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Site Characteristics & Terrain

Whether you are in a suburban, urban, or grassland environment, it is important that shading be minimized as it inhibits performance. Also, flatter land spaces for ground-mounted solar are ideal. The land should have less than a 5% slope.

Determining Your Electrical Needs and Goals

Twelve months of energy bills are needed for developing an accurate evaluation of your organization's electrical needs. Along with that, you need to know the utility rates and the rate schedule. SunPower can help you to factor in rate escalation because utility rates have a long history of increases.

All of this information allows you to set up a successful RFP, ask informed questions of solar companies, and ultimately earn project approval from key decision-makers.

Assessing Financial Options and Incentives

Solar power is within financial reach for organizations everywhere because of the many innovative financial tools that are now available. If a cash-purchase isn't possible, a power purchase agreement (PPA) allows your organization to lock in a long-term electrical rate with no upfront costs. A PPA is just one of several financial options to explore, especially as new financial innovations are brought into the solar industry.

Additionally, there may be many solar incentives and rebates to consider. Your solar partner can help you navigate the solar policies on the federal, state, and municipal levels to help you combine the right incentives with the right utility rate structures to maximize the value of your solar project.

Investing in Long-Term Budget Stability

By initiating a solar project, you can help your organization to enjoy significant savings on electricity bills. Furthermore, insulation from volatile utility rates offers increased stability and predictability for your company's budget. Going solar is a great long-term investment, and with SunPower by your side, you can soon turn sunlight into one of your organization's biggest assets.