



Request for Applications (RFA) from CONNECT Member Municipalities Seeking Guidance and Technical Support Going Solar

Municipalities that are participating members of the Congress of Neighboring Communities (CONNECT) are invited to submit applications to participate in the Pennsylvania Solar Center's *Galvanizing Energy Transition (GET) Solar: CONNECT* program. *GET Solar* helps organizations through the entire solar procurement experience in a streamlined process, from identifying solar feasibility of municipal properties (rooftop and ground-based), through a competitive bid, to developing a complete financial roadmap.

The Pennsylvania Solar Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our vision is that Pennsylvania becomes a leader in renewable energy through rapid and broad expansion of in-state solar generation. We will accomplish this by providing trusted guidance, education, and technical support. The PA Solar Center is supported by generous funding from The Hillman Foundation, the Heinz Endowments, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, business sponsors, and donations.

Date RFA Released	Thursday, March 16, 2023
Application Due Date	Friday, April 28, 2023, at 11:59 PM Eastern Time
Eligible Applicants	CONNECT Member Municipalities (see page 7 for requirements)
Application Questions	Email questions to Leo Kowalski at leo@pasolarcenter.org

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Overview of *GET Solar: CONNECT*

Program Summary

At the Pennsylvania Solar Center (PA Solar Center) we know firsthand the excitement and desire of people across the country and the state to go solar for many different reasons, including concern for the environment and seeking more stable, predictable, and lower energy prices. We also understand that once that decision to explore solar is made, the steps to get the equipment installed are sometimes difficult and cumbersome. Not knowing who to trust along the way makes the process even more challenging.

PA Solar Center will address these and other obstacles for communities by assisting them to help their non-residential properties to go solar through our *GET Solar* Initiative. The *GET Solar* initiative is a streamlined process that instills individuals, organizations, and communities with confidence in the process using trusted tools and resources that connect organizations to qualified professionals making the process of going solar straightforward. There have been nearly 60 businesses and organizations that have gone through the process to date. Some of the completed projects include Global Links in Pittsburgh, Community College of Allegheny County, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's Fallingwater, Berner International, and Utz properties with several projects in the contracting process.

Program Goals

The purpose of the *GET Solar* initiative is to:

- Demonstrate that providing trusted resources, streamlined technical assistance, and pre-identified financing decreases solar decision-making time and increases confidence for customers to go solar.
- Increase the amount of clean, solar energy on the Pennsylvania electric grid.
- Decrease the use of carbon-intensive, air-polluting fuels in Pennsylvania that are contributing to climate change, air pollution, and to health and environmental impacts in our communities.
- Increase economic development in Pennsylvania by supporting solar businesses and resources located within the Commonwealth that will increase job opportunities as well as save businesses and nonprofits money on their electricity bills by going solar.

The goal of *GET Solar: CONNECT 2023* is to help **at least two selected municipalities contract solar developments with a cumulative solar capacity of at least 500 kilowatts.**

About *GET Solar* Team and Partners

Pennsylvania Solar Center and the *GET Solar* team, Pittsburgh, PA – The PA Solar Center is a statewide organization that provides a centralized hub of resources and information for anyone who is seeking to power their home, business, house of worship, or community organization with clean solar power. The PA Solar Center offers technical assistance to tax-exempt organizations and to businesses to go solar by connecting them with trusted professionals and financing. The PA Solar Center also has a savvy communications and outreach program to lift up the benefits of solar across the state and works to support robust solar policies at the state, regional, and local levels.

Process, Resources and Timeline

GET Solar Process

The Application Phase

For *GET Solar: CONNECT* the PA Solar Center invites CONNECT member municipalities to identify core teams of volunteers and submit applications through the PA Solar Center website or by email to the Director of Programming (page 7).

PA Solar Center's *GET Solar* team will host an educational webinar about the *GET Solar* process and solar finance tailored to the experience of municipal organizations. The *GET Solar* team will answer questions and facilitate discussion amongst participants. Interested municipalities are encouraged to submit a prequalification form on the PA Solar Center website to ensure they are a viable solar candidate and to request a high-level estimate of their solar potential.

The deadline for municipalities to apply is Friday, April 28, 2023. Applications submitted by this deadline must include all required materials to be accepted (page 7).

If necessary, applications will be evaluated competitively and municipalities that demonstrate a clear commitment to increasing education and performing outreach around solar PV will receive strong consideration. Special consideration will be given to low-income and/or racially diverse communities, specifically those designated Environmental Justice Zones by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and/or Enterprise Zones by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PA DCED) (page 7).

Request for Proposals (RFP) Phase

Once the *GET Solar* team reviews each application and ensures all necessary documentation has been provided, they will notify each municipality of their acceptance status and provide a high-level assessment of their solar potential (if not already provided during prequalification).

The participating municipalities will then be provided a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) document for each participating municipality to review. Once each municipality has signed off on the RFP, the *GET Solar* team will release the RFP to qualified regional and state-wide solar developers to request bids for their projects. During the RFP process, the *GET Solar* team will facilitate all necessary communication between the participating municipalities and the interested solar developers to ensure a streamlined and unbiased process, including hosting a virtual presentation and site visits in coordination with the host municipality (page 5 for timeline).

The Decision Phase

Once the solar developers have provided completed project proposals by the proposed deadline, the *GET Solar* team will review the proposals with each participating municipality, providing easy-to-understand “apples-to-apples” comparison tools. Throughout this process the *GET Solar* team will provide the participating municipalities with resources describing solar finance at both a high-level and specific to their organization and project, including benefits from the Inflation Reduction Act, Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), and grant opportunities.

The *GET Solar* team will provide support to participating municipalities to fully understand their solar project proposals and their financial roadmap. At the end of this process, we believe municipalities will be knowledgeable and empowered enough to elect to contract with a solar developer or to forego installing solar. Regardless, those municipalities have completed the *GET Solar* program.

G.E.T Solar CONNECT Timeline

Application Phase	
Application period begins for <i>GET Solar: CONNECT</i>	Thursday, March 16, 2023
<i>GET Solar</i> team hosts informational webinar and Q&A forum. Register on the PA Solar Center website HERE.	Tuesday, April 11, 2023
Deadline for municipalities to request prequalification estimate of solar potential. Go HERE to make a request. Please include all addresses of interest	Wednesday, April 19, 2023
Application period ends	Friday, April 28, 2023
Deadline for signed Letter of Intent/MOU	Friday, May 12 2023
Request for Proposals Phase	
<i>GET Solar</i> team issues RFP to regional solar developers on behalf of cohort of municipalities	Monday, May 15, 2023
<i>GET Solar</i> team and municipalities hold virtual presentation for developers outlying high-level scope of project, including site identification, goals, & challenges	Tuesday May 23- Thursday, May 25, 2023
<i>GET Solar</i> team and municipalities host site visits for interested solar developers	From Monday, June 5 to Friday, June 9, 2023
Complete RFP due from solar developers	Friday, June 23, 2023
Decision Phase	
<i>GET Solar</i> team provides each municipality with their portfolio of solar proposals along with toolkits to understand and compare proposals	Monday, July 10, 2023
<i>GET Solar</i> team hosts webinar to walk entire municipal cohort through understanding solar proposals and using their comparison toolkits	Monday, July 10, 2023
<i>GET Solar</i> team works with each municipality individually to develop a financial roadmap and plan next steps. Municipalities select a developer's proposal.	From Tuesday, July 11 to Friday, August 4, 2023
Municipalities decide to contract with their chosen developer or hold off until a later date. <i>GET Solar: Connect</i> has been completed.	Monday, September 11 2023
Support Phase	
Get Solar team helps navigate funding opportunities and assists in communication and project completion.	Tuesday, September 12, 2023 to <i>Project Completion</i>

Eligibility

CONNECT Member Municipalities

Pennsylvania municipalities that are active members of the Congress of Neighboring Communities in Allegheny County are eligible to participate in *GET Solar: CONNECT*. All properties and electricity bills owned by the municipal organization may be included as part of a single application. In certain circumstances, tax exempt organizations that provide essential community services may be included as part of a municipality's application.

The following criteria will be used to identify an organization's solar feasibility as part of the prequalification or application review process (organizations that do not meet at least one of the criteria are likely unsuitable for *GET Solar*):

- The organization owns their building or the property/land where the solar will be installed OR can provide documentation of a long-term lease and sign-off by property owner to pursue a solar project on the property.
- If the solar is intended for the property's roof, the roof is less than 10 years old, has a remaining lifetime of more than 25 years, or the organization is currently renovating or planning to renovate its roof. Roofing will need to be completed before solar is installed;
 - If the roof requires upgrades or replacement, organizations may choose to bundle these costs with the solar installation as one project proposal. Some roof replacements also qualify as energy property when combined with certain types of solar and roof systems and may be eligible for tax benefits.
- If the solar is intended to be a ground-mounted system, the property/land is suitable for development (e.g., it is located on relatively flat, stable ground that is clear of obstacles and shading; the property is not located in a floodplain and there is access to an electric meter or distribution lines nearby. Essentially, the property is "shovel-ready" to build solar);
- The organization has reserve funds available to purchase a solar system, the organization is willing to fundraise, OR the organization is amenable to acquiring solar through a commercial loan, Power Purchase Agreement, or other financing;
- Complete all submission requirements by the dates indicated under the Timelines in order get an RFP from developers for solar project on their property.

Because the *GET Solar* timeline is rather succinct, we will be seeking organizations that are nimble in their decision-making capabilities and can abide by the timeline outlined in this RFP document.

Solar Developer Selection

The *GET Solar* team will assist each participating organization in issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to choose the solar installation developer for their project. Organizations may wish to issue their own RFP, but we are available to assist. The *GET Solar* team will provide organizations with assistance to evaluate solar developers and proposals by using an "apples-to-apples" comparison method to compare all relevant information provided in the proposals. Information about the solar developers that will be collected to help organizations select their solar developer will include:

- NABCEP certification – at least one member of the solar development company should have a current certification from the North American Board of Certified Energy Providers ([NABCEP](#));
- Relevant experience of the solar developer and its staff to install commercial-scale solar systems;
- Overall quality and value of the proposed services and equipment;
- Pricing proposal offers good value and is based on reasonable assumptions;
- References – The *GET Solar* team will collect at least three references for commercial scale projects completed by the solar developer;
- Geographic location of the solar developer’s staff and offices; developers located in near the proposed sites will be given selection preference and other Pennsylvania-based developers will be given preference over out-of-state contractors.

Application Requirements

Municipalities and/or Community Leadership Organizations interested in applying should **submit the following documents to leo@pasolarcenter.org by 11:59 PM, Friday, April 28, 2023**. Include in the subject line of the email: GET SOLAR: CONNECT APPLICATION from [name of municipality]:

1. Completed *GET Solar* application form signed by a designated representative of the applying municipality
 - a. Including all address(es) of structures in question for solar analysis.
 - b. Identifying at least two official representatives of the municipality to participate in the *GET Solar* program.
2. Recent, complete electricity bill for each account associated with the application
3. Documentation identifying potential location for solar installation, which may include:
 - a. Aerial image of roof or ground highlighted or circled. This can be done with Google Maps or a comparable program.
 - b. Copy of technical drawings/blueprints/surveys for any roof or parcel considered for solar if satellite imagery does not show current imagery of the building or parcel.
 - c. [Preferred] Photograph of electrical infrastructure, including panels, switchboard, generators, transformers, etc.

The following items are due Friday, May 12, 2023 for municipalities accepted into the program.

4. Signed MOU (*GET Solar* team will send this out to applying municipalities who meet the above requirements).
5. Signed Letter of Commitment from applying municipality outlining the community’s interest in participating in the program and identifying at least two official representatives of the municipality selected to work with the *GET Solar* team throughout the program (see Appendix 1 below for template)

Evaluation Process

The *GET Solar* team will evaluate applications based on the following key criteria and will score each project as described below.

1. **Leadership and Commitment:** Assignment of key staff and decision makers from applying municipality outlined in application materials. Individual experience/expertise with sustainability initiatives and/or capital works projects.
2. **Commitment to Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency:** Overall record of expanding and/or developing initiatives to expand renewable energy and energy in the community, including consideration of adopting best practices with respect to solar PV zoning and permitting.
3. **Community Diversity:** Diversity with respect to economics and demographic data, keeping in line with the PA Solar Center's mission to ensure all Pennsylvanians share in a clean energy future. Special consideration will be given to communities identified as Environmental Justice communities (PA DEP) and/or Enterprise Zones (PA DCED).

Application Scoring

Each application will be evaluated against the Key Criteria listed above using this valuation system: Low = 1-2 points, Medium = 3 points, and High = 4-5 points. Total scores will be used to rank the applications.

The scoring results will only be available to the *GET Solar* Team and will not be revealed publicly nor will they be shared with the applicant. Regardless, each applicant will be provided detailed feedback about their application.

The team will attempt to select as many viable projects as possible and will use the ranking system to choose the highest scoring applications only if necessary.

Final Proposal Designation

All applicants will receive a definitive response from the *GET Solar* team **by Thursday, August 25, 2022**. The designation will be noted as one of the following:

- 1) Application Selected. The community has been selected to participate in *GET Solar: CONNECT 2023*.
- 2) Invitation to Apply to Future Round. The applying community met the eligibility requirements yet was not ranked highly enough to be selected for this round.
- 3) Application Declined. The application did not meet the eligibility requirements for *GET Solar: CONNECT*. A reason for declining inclusion will be provided.

Fees

Municipalities Participating in *GET Solar*

There is no fee for municipalities and community leadership organizations to apply to *GET Solar: CONNECT*.

Solar Developers Submitting Project Proposals

If an organization participating in *GET Solar* program signs a contract with a solar developer who has submitted a proposal as part of the program, the Solar Center asks for an assistance fee **from the solar developer** of a one-time fee of \$0.02 per installed watt_{dc} (\$20.00/kilowatt_{dc}). Alternatively, If the contract is for a Power Purchase Agreement and the solar developer is retaining the SRECs, **the developer** may agree to provide 10% of the annual SRECs produced for the life of the PPA to the PA Solar Center.

Our research shows that that customer acquisition costs for solar developers range from \$37/kilowatt_{dc} to \$50/kilowatt_{dc}. The Solar Center is essentially providing “shovel-ready” projects to developers so we are saving them money and time educating the client. Our fee for service is very reasonable. This assistance fee will allow the Solar Center to continue to provide vital support for organizations and businesses seeking solar for many years to come, while reducing overall costs to solar developers and customers.

Questions

All questions should be directed to Leo Kowalski, Consulting Director of Programming of the Pennsylvania Solar Center at leo@pasolarcenter.org (preferred communication) or if necessary, via phone at 412-742-0019. Please include “GET SOLAR: Question” in the subject line of the email.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter of Commitment Template

[LETTER SHOULD BE ON MUNICIPAL LETTERHEAD AND NO MORE THAN 3 PAGES IN LENGTH] [NOTE: DO NOT MAIL – please scan and include in digital application submission]

[INSERT DATE]

Pennsylvania Solar Center
c/o Energy Innovation Center
1435 Bedford Avenue, Suite 140
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

RE: GET Solar Application for [NAME OF COMMUNITY]

Dear *GET Solar* Team:

On behalf of [NAME OF COMMUNITY], [NAME OF APPLYING ORGANIZATION] **is pleased to submit our application for *G.E.T Solar CONNECT*.**

[Include brief statement describing the community and role of applying organization, its mission, and how it how serves the applying community.

[NAME OF COMMUNITY] is interested in participating in the *GET Solar: CONNECT* program, because *[add brief explanation about why the community is interested in participating in this program. Describe any climate change plans or sustainability initiatives underway or being entertained by the applying community.*

We have selected the following people to serve on our Solar Community Ambassadors (SCA) team as liaisons between our organization and the *GET Solar Team* [list all members of your committee, three are required]:

- List Name, phone number, email, organization, current role with organization
- List Name, phone number, email, organization, current role with organization
- List Name, phone number, email, organization, current role with organization

[Briefly discuss why each individual was chosen, describing their role in the community, previous experience with community engagement or environmental/sustainability initiatives, and any additional skills, talents, or connections they provide.]

We, the undersigned agree to abide by all the requirements and timelines specified in the *GET Solar: CONNECT* RFA document.

Sincerely,

A lead staff member of the organization (Council Person, Treasurer, Mayor, etc.)