

Solar Group Purchase: Call for Partners

Opportunity

Spark Northwest plans to launch a series of community group purchase campaigns for solar energy in 2019. Our successful Solarize campaigns simplify the process of buying solar and help residents and small businesses take action together to lower their carbon footprint, build energy independence and save money.

Spark Northwest is seeking **local governments, tribes, or community-based organizations** across Washington and Oregon to serve as the community partner in a community energy group purchase campaign with an emphasis on serving underserved constituents – low and moderate income households, rural homes and businesses, and communities of color. As community partners, selected groups will receive assistance from Spark Northwest to competitively select an installer, conduct community outreach and education, implement a series of free workshops, and facilitate the installation of the solar in homes and small businesses.

Selected Community Partners will receive solar training, equipping you with the knowledge, tools and connections to begin planning a project. In addition, you may receive ongoing coaching and seed funding for project management, depending on the scope of the project and the applicant need. Up to 6 communities may be selected for solar group purchase projects in 2019.

Project Background

Spark Northwest is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to create communities powered by locally controlled clean energy. Since 2001, we have worked with communities across the Northwest to accelerate the adoption of clean energy and energy efficiency.

In 2011, Spark Northwest launched the Solarize program to help neighbors come together to achieve significant discounts through the group purchase of solar PV systems. With community participation, competing contractors can decrease the cost of installing a residential solar system, providing neighbors a discount on the purchase and installation of solar PV systems.

Key features of Solarize include:

- Competitively selected contractor with set group discount prices
- Grassroots outreach and promotion by community volunteers
- Free educational workshops for all registrants
- Free site assessments for all registrants to determine feasibility
- Limited-time offer to get a great deal on solar

These campaigns are a community-led effort. With assistance from Spark Northwest, each community partner undertakes a competitive selection process to choose an installation contractor to serve the community's campaign. A competitive contractor selection process provides transparency, prioritizes the values of the community, and builds confidence that the selected contractor presents the best package of services to campaign participants. Community Partners typically then take the lead on convening workshops, and organizing outreach to bring people to the workshops. Spark Northwest works in the background, providing the technical expertise, the workshop templates, the connection to financing and utility rebates, and years of energy experience to guide the community project to success.

In the past eight years, we have launched 22 group purchase campaigns across Oregon and Washington that resulted in:

- 4,500+ people educated about solar
- 1000+ installations of solar energy on homes and businesses in OR and WA
- \$21 million injected into the local economies
- 29 green jobs created

Spark Northwest Commitment

Community partners will receive technical assistance from Spark Northwest in the areas of campaign setup and planning, contractor selection, design and provision of outreach materials, development and presentation of educational workshops, participant communication, project management, and logistical support. As a non-profit organization, Spark Northwest has secured funds from project partners to help offset the costs of providing this program to the community. Therefore, the selected community partner will receive the following services from Spark Northwest at no cost:

- Assistance with project coordination and implementation of the campaign
- Project fundraising to help cover program setup, administration and outreach costs
- Assistance with drafting the request for proposals to installers
- Assistance with interviewing and selecting installer(s)
- Outreach templates and use of Solarize or Energize brand and messaging
- Assistance with media and outreach planning
- Scheduling, organizing and co-leading of partner meetings
- Scheduling, organizing and co-leading of workshops with the community partner and selected installer
- Campaign webpage development and online registration form
- Management of the participant registration process and maintenance of the participant database
- Documentation and distribution of meeting materials, agenda and notes
- Project reporting to funders
- Technical assistance
- Project evaluation with the community partner and the selected installer



Community Partner Commitment

Community partner duties may include:

- Serve as the local community liaison
- Recruit volunteers and coordinate volunteer assignments
- Form a steering committee and designate a lead to work with the project team on implementation
- With support from Spark Northwest, draft the request for proposals, publish, interview and select the installer(s) in the best interest of and value for the community
- With support from Spark Northwest and the selected installer, market the program and generate attendance at informational workshops
- Attend and participate in informational workshops
- Schedule, organize and lead community meetings and outreach activities
- Provide press interviews as needed under coordination by project partners
- Assist with other neighborhood outreach support as needed
- Assist with project reporting
- Participate in project evaluation

Below is a sample breakdown of tasks and estimated time commitments from a community partner to complete a group purchase campaign. Each project may vary depending on partner, resources, and community needs.

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
Campaign Manager Training/Kickoff									
Announce campaign training; Seek volunteers	5								
Host and participate in training	5	4							
Installer Selection									
Review RFP template		1							
Evaluate and score proposals (optional)		3	3						
Interview and select installer (optional)			3						
Review and sign MOU			3						
Workshops									
Create outreach materials (template provided)				4					
Schedule and conduct community workshops				5	12	12			
Promote workshops				30	20	10			
Website & Customer Tracking									
Set contracting deadline				1					
Monitor progress					1	1	1	1	
Reporting & Evaluation									
Plan and execute celebration								5	10
Participate in evaluation								1	
TOTAL PARTNER STAFF TIME	10	4	9	40	33	23	1	7	10



Partner Eligibility & Criteria

Eligible community partners include local governments, tribes, or community-based non-profit organizations in the states of Washington or Oregon. Projects must be focused on increasing the amount of renewable energy or energy efficiency within the applicant's community. Preference will be given to projects that:

- Serve a community that has not previously hosted a Solarize campaign
- Specifically benefits low to moderate income residents, rural businesses or residents, or people of color
- Are led by organizations embedded in underserved communities
- Can be completed by December 2019 at the latest
- Demonstrate a strong base of community support
- Identify a staff person to lead the project locally
- Include active involvement of the local jurisdiction, with a primary point of contact identified
- Include participation and support of local utility

How to Apply

1. Contact Linda Irvine (206-267-2215, linda@sparknorthwest.org) to discuss your interest in applying.
2. Following your conversation, submit a letter of interest by email to linda@sparknorthwest.org. The letter of interest should be no longer than 3 pages and should include:
 - a. A description of your organization and of other key partners and their roles in the project
 - b. A description of the project's objectives
 - c. The anticipated timeline for project activities
 - d. A project budget showing anticipated project cost for your organization, sources of funding or in-kind match, and additional funding required, if any, to complete the project
3. Spark Northwest will review applications on a rolling basis. Earlier applications will have a better chance of being selected. Spark Northwest may follow up with additional questions or requests prior to selection.

Selected community partners are expected to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Spark Northwest and campaign partners to undertake and implement a community energy campaign. The MOU solidifies the roles and responsibilities of each campaign partner.

Contact Linda Irvine with any questions: 206-267-2215, linda@sparknorthwest.org.

