
Vermont Solar For All Vermont Program
Questions and Answers Regarding the VT Public Service
Department's Request For Proposals (released 07/03/2024)

Answers below assume familiarity with the terminology and program descriptions in the Request For Proposals posted here: <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/renewables/solar-all-vermont>

Question(Q) 1: Regarding the solicitation, "Solar For All Vermont Program," can you please state the duration of the contract?

Answer(A) 1: The duration of the contract will depend on contract negotiations. The contract could be between 1 and 2 years, with the possibility of extensions.

Q2: Would the contractor engaged for this Planning, Design and Community Engagement project be precluded/disqualified from bidding on future Solar for All program administration and/or implementation opportunities?

A2: The Public Service Department (PSD) is aware of the potential for a conflict of interest if the contractor selected under this RFP were to submit a bid for a future SFA contract with the PSD. The PSD does not want to disqualify or preclude a contractor from submitting a bid in response to any RFPs the PSD may issue for implementation of the Vermont SFA program. To avoid a potential conflict of interest the PSD and the contractor selected under this Planning, Design and Community Engagement RFP will negotiate a scope of work and contractual provisions to avoid conflicts of interests for the contractor if bidding on a future Vermont SFA implementation contract.

Q3: In the Required Bid Information section, the RFP requires bidder fringe rate and indirect rate. Since this information is competition-sensitive, is it possible to share billing rates without the fringe and indirect rate?

A3: Yes, as long as all costs to be billed are included in the bid. Billing rates can be submitted that include fringe and indirect costs. Any costs that will be part of the firm's billing should either be listed separately as a percentage (%) of itemized costs or included in the firm's overall \$/hour billing rate that will not have any additional charges added to it. For example, a bid could include a billing rate of \$100/hr inclusive of fringe and indirect costs, or the billing rate could be \$80/hr as well as an additional 10% indirect rate and a 15% fringe rate.

Q4: Does the RFP have a preferred time frame for project start and completion?

A4: The PSD's preference is to have the contract executed and the period of performance to start no later than the first week of September. However, the actual timing will depend on PSD staff availability and the State of Vermont's contracting process. The soonest the contract would likely be negotiated and executed is three weeks from the selection of the preferred bid/contractor.

Q5: As part "public and targeted community engagement" has PSD already identified stakeholders for outreach or is it anticipated that the servicer would provide market research, stakeholder identification, and/or contractor market assessment activities?

A5: The PSD has identified some stakeholders, particularly for the ACRE and MASH projects. The PSD seeks to expand the breadth and variety of the community organizations and stakeholders to engage with regarding the designs of the program and anticipates the contractor will provide assistance in identifying and engaging with the stakeholders and identified communities.

Q6: Given the various past, current, and upcoming community engagement initiatives that are underway in Vermont related to energy transformation, is there an interest in trying to coordinate the SAV (Solar for All Vermont) outreach with other state-led, energy-focused public engagement efforts?

A6: Yes, there is interest in trying to coordinate with other community engagement and outreach initiatives, particularly when those initiatives are focused on connecting with disadvantaged communities and such communities' groups/leaders.

Q7: When do you hope to release the SAV implementation RFP? During the work of this RFP, or after the work identified in this RFP, has been completed?

A7: That has not been determined and will depend on the contract negotiations resulting from this RFP. The likely scenario is that it would be issued during the work of this RFP.

Q8: Is it possible for questions to be addressed before July 17th to allow bidders time to prepare an informed response by the proposal due date of July 23rd? Alternatively, would you consider extending the submission deadline to a later date?

A8: Yes, we moved the publications of these answers to July 15th by 4:30 PM and moved the deadline for bids to July 25, at 5:00 PM (EDT). The PSD has decided not to extend the deadline beyond that given that the bid information requested is not asking for detailed proposals for the SFA work and in the interest of finalizing the contract in a timely manner.

Q9: Can an applicant only apply for scope of work elements for specific markets? Example Multifamily and Community Scale, but not Single Family.

A9: Yes, however multiple contracts or contractors would not be preferred. Also note that PSD expects support services to be most needed for the Single Family (RAISE) market.

Q10: Will PSD consider multiple contractors under this RFP, if they serve different markets?

A10: Possibly, but it would not be the preferred outcome.

Q11: Is PSD able to provide additional clarity to what potentially might fall under item 10. "Other tasks as assigned"?

A11: This is to provide for unforeseen needs that the PSD might have in responding to the requirements of the EPA or for items inadvertently left out of the RFP. The tasks would be related to the SFA program and specifically to the design, planning, and community engagement of the PSD's SFA program.

Q12: Has PSD already concluded all program design and/or financial product design activities for all three SFA programs?

A12: No. Supporting the PSD in finalizing those designs would be part of the scope of services the PSD would be looking for under this contract.

Q13: Will PSD be seeking feedback on program design from the community engagement activities, or will it only be seeking feedback regarding the Workplan?

A13: The PSD will be seeking feedback from the public/targeted communities/potential beneficiaries mainly on the workplan/design of the program but will be seeking feedback from stakeholders on the design of the community engagement activities.

Q14: Would Quality Management Planning be primarily in reference to eligible installation/upgrade projects or in reference to program administration? Would this include subrecipient monitoring planning?

A14: The Quality Management Plan and Quality Assurance Plan work are specific to the requirements that the EPA has for the PSD to create these Plans and to develop procedures to carry them out.

Q15: Does PSD have an anticipated partner for expected website and/or platform support needs?

A15: No.

Q16: Does PSD have an anticipated partner for all programmatic loan servicing and/or payment authorization needs?

A16: No, but the PSD has reached out to some local financial institutions about providing the loan and possibly providing services for the Direct/Elective Pay tax credit opportunities.

Q17: Are there any page limits or formatting requirements for the response to this RFP?

A17: The PSD didn't include this in the original RFP, but would prefer responses to this RFP to be succinct and not to be over 10 pages (not including resumes if those are included).

Q18: The RFP states, "Bidding contractors must provide responses to all seven (7) bid questions listed below (Bid Information Requested)." Please confirm that this refers to the questions listed in "I. Required Bid Information."

A18: Yes, that is correct: PSD requires the information requested in I. Required Bid Information. As Answer #3 explains the bid rate information can be broken out to include the specific billing rate(s) + indirect & fringe rates, or it can be submitted as one \$/hr rate(s) that includes any indirect and fringe.

Q19: Please confirm that bidding contractors can provide supplemental information along with the bid questions listed in "I. Required Bid Information."

A19: Yes, bids can include supplemental information if it is listed as such and is separate from the responses to the items in "I. Required Bid Information."

Q20: Could PSD please provide more context to the budget estimate of \$245,000, as specified on the State's Business to Business site ([Vermont Business Registry and Bid System - Bid Detail](#))? Should this be treated as a budget cap by proposers?

A20: State of Vermont requires additional process and documentation for contracts over \$250,000. The PSD assumes that the services requested under this RFP can be delivered for under that amount. If the contractor cannot complete the work under the \$245,000 total, there would be an opportunity to address that during contract negotiations or possibly via a contract amendment.

Q21: The links to the State’s Solar for All grant application and executive summary provided on the website do not seem to be working. Could you please provide updated links with access to the application materials?

A21: Yes, these links have been corrected. There are at the bottom of this page:
<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/renewables/solar-all-vermont>

Q22: It is our reading that the PSD is seeking strategy support to plan ahead for Solar for All implementation, but the scope of work does not include implementation and administration. Can you confirm this understanding? If so, does PSD intend to implement the program internally or would there be a subsequent RFP associated with implementation and administration of the program?

- a. If there will be a separate RFP for implementation and administration, would supporting PSD on the scope of work outlined in this RFP preclude consultants from pursuing any subsequent implementation and administration RFP?

A22: Yes, the scope of work under this RFP does not include implementation or administration of the SFA program with the exception that it could include work related to public/community engagement that one could include in “implementation” of the overall program. Any contracted work for implementing and administering the overall program or the sub-program/projects will be done under a separate and subsequent RFP.

- a. See Answer #2.

Q23: Are there specific milestone dates by which the scope of services must be completed?

A23: Not at this time, but such milestones will be part of the contract negotiations.

Q24: In section II of the RFP, we note that the PSD requests contractors “develop implementation timeline for Vermont’s three SFA programs.” Are the three programs RAISE, MASH and ACRE, and if not, what are they?

- a. Will PSD require any assistance (e.g., program design, etc.) other than implementation timeline development for these programs?

A24: Yes, those are the three programs (sometimes also called sub-programs or projects).

- a. Yes, the PSD is looking for services to assist in the development of the workplan for these three programs – with the understanding regarding the issues discussed in Question & Answer #1 above.

Q25: Will the RAISE and MASH lending partners referenced on the website be responsible for the full life cycle of the SFA loans/grants, including the supporting people, processes, and technology?

- a. Do you anticipate any lending capabilities and technology to be established within Vermont's PSD and/or SEO?

A25: The PSD will need more information to determine the answer to this question other than to say the loan and grant "products" or programs have not been developed nor have the partnerships with potential providers of any loans or financing.

- a. No. These services would be provided by a contractor or sub-recipient.