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“Solarize” your community



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BULK PURCHASING BOOSTS DEMAND AND SAVES MONEY

Cities can work with local installers, nonprofits and community groups to run bulk purchasing programs that allow businesses, homeowners and nonprofits to purchase solar energy collectively, lowering the cost for everyone involved. Solarize programs are bulk purchasing programs that bring customers together to negotiate better rates, select an installer for the group and boost demand over a limited period of time. Solarize campaigns and other bulk purchasing programs help spur solar deployment while providing a myriad of benefits:

- Solarize campaigns educate the public about solar options and can create a surge in solar installations over a relatively short period of time.
- Bulk purchasing lowers costs so that more businesses and residents can afford to go solar and your community can achieve its solar goals faster.
- Residents also have more control and can make more informed decisions regarding installers when purchasing as a group.
- Solarize campaigns offer an opportunity to partner with local solar installers, non-profit organizations and even nearby communities.
- Installers can save on marketing costs, reducing total costs for everyone.

KICKING OFF A CAMPAIGN

While Solarize and other bulk purchasing programs can look very different, most successful efforts share a few common elements:

Competitive Selection: Most successful Solarize campaigns use a competitive process to identify a solar installer. Choosing one provider for your campaigns makes participation simple and less overwhelming. Doing so through a transparent, competitive process will also ensure that potential installers are treated fairly and customers can trust the decision. Some campaigns may prioritize different criteria in identifying an installer, from lowest price, to sustainable production to local job creation.

Community outreach and creative marketing: In order to recruit enough participants, Solarize campaigns require a significant amount of community outreach and creative marketing efforts. Cities often partner with state agencies, non-profit organizations, neighborhoods and the solar installer to amplify the impact of their campaign. Outreach efforts led by these partners will also allow the city and installer to save time and money on marketing.

A clear goal and deadline: A Solarize campaign should be a limited-time offer with a clear deadline to encourage residents to act before the deal expires. Communities should also establish a specific goal going into the effort, such as doubling the number of residential solar systems in the town or neighborhood where the campaign will take place. This will motivate all partners involved and provide a compelling vision to share with participants.

SOLARIZE CAMPAIGNS VARY WIDELY, BUT MOST INVOLVE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- Pre-launch planning with partner organization(s)
- Recruiting technical assistance and community volunteers
- Choosing an installer
- Community outreach and promotion
- Enrolling customers
- Project site assessments, contracts and financing
- Project installations
- Campaign evaluation



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Philadelphia Mayor and Council members celebrate Solarize Philly's 150th Installation

CASE STUDIES

Neighborhoods, towns and cities, counties and regions across the country have introduced Solarize and other bulk purchasing campaigns. The following are case studies of especially successful programs:

- **Portland, Oregon**, had the first “Solarize” bulk purchasing program in 2009. The initial campaign resulted in over 300 solar installation contracts within its first six months, ultimately saving participating customers 20 percent on costs. Three years of Solarize campaigns later, over 1.7 MW of rooftop solar capacity had been added throughout the city and the local solar industry had grown. Community members did the bulk of the outreach for the campaigns, supported by a well-established and respected neighborhood coalition and the city.
- In less than five months, “**Solarize Athens**” more than tripled the residential solar energy capacity in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. A coalition of community organizations, including Environment Georgia, the Georgia Climate Change Coalition, Georgia Interfaith Power and Light and Solar Crowd Source led the program. Solarize Athens reached the highest tier in its residential pricing, which means the price for solar dropped from \$3.19/watt to 2.90/watt for everyone involved, and included residential, nonprofit and commercial installations.
- **Solar United Neighbors**, a [nonprofit](#) that represents the interests of solar owners, has implemented their solar co-op model in communities across the country. Their co-ops organize 50 to 100 neighbors in a group to invest in rooftop solar together, helping them install an average of 7kw per roof and save \$35,000 on electricity bills on average over 25 years.

RESOURCES

- *The National Renewable Energy Lab put together a comprehensive guide for community Solarize campaigns called [The Solarize Guidebook: A community guide to collective purchasing of residential PV systems](#).*
- *The Clean Energy States Alliance provides a step-by-step guide for initiating Solarize campaigns geared towards state-level programs called [Planning and Implementing a Solarize Initiative: A Guide for State Program Managers](#).*
- *The SunShot Solar Outreach Partnership provides a [Solarize Programs Toolkit](#), as well as no-cost technical assistance.*