

Solarize North Smithfield Question and Answers

Q&A session held live during the September 10, 2014 Solar Industry Stakeholder Meeting at Commerce RI.

Note regarding the timeline outlined in the RFP – The Installer Interview day is September 25th. However, that is the Rosh Hashanah holiday. For any Installer selected to be interviewed by North Smithfield who identifies this as a conflict, the Program Administrators will make another date and time available.

- ❖ Will Solarize Little Compton and Solarize Tiverton be one or two programs?

Each town will have its own solar installer RFP and the Program in the towns will be run at the same time, opening up the possibility of a friendly town competition.

- ❖ How will Solarize benefit residents?

The residents tend to receive a lower price than traditional solar pricing and the educational component of the Program raises awareness of energy efficiency and renewable programs that the State and National Grid offers. Also, residents will have volunteer opportunities during the course of the Program.

- ❖ If 30 customer sign up will Tier 3 be reached?

The tiers will be decided by the number of kW contracted during the sign up period rather than the number of residents and small business that choose to participate. To move into Tier 3 the selected Installer(s) must contract at least 151kW of total aggregate capacity.

- ❖ Will the Program be available for small business?

Absolutely! The Solarize Program will target both residences and businesses in all three communities.

- ❖ Is it possible for a Community Solar project to come from the Solarize Program?

Unfortunately, no. Currently RI does not allow virtual net metering outside of municipalities, waste water treatment plants, and other water facilities.

- ❖ There is a leasing option available included in the RFP. Are there currently 3rd party leasing and PPA companies active in RI?

No, currently there are no 3rd party financing parties working in the residential or small scale market in RI. Both Commerce RI and the Office of Energy Resources would welcome such financing companies to enter into the RI solar market. There are no legal barriers that would stop such financing arrangements. If such an entity would like to have such a conversation, please contact Shauna Beland at sbeland@commerceri.com.

- ❖ In Massachusetts it appears as though larger, national companies become the Solarize installer. Can the same be expected in this program?

The 2011 Massachusetts pilot had four communities with three different installers that ranged in company size. You can read more about the 2011 Solarize Massachusetts pilot program [here](#). A good example of a smaller company that did really well in past Solarize campaigns is SolarFlair Inc. They were able to ramp up and almost double their workforce as a Solarize installer. In Rhode Island all proposals will be scored equally regardless of company size. Smaller installers also have the option to form a consortium if they do not have the internal capacity to install the anticipated amount of projects.

- ❖ Connecticut has been experiencing a high rate of “boom” in the solar industry as a result of the Solarize program. This is also happening in Massachusetts. What is Rhode Island doing to address the bust cycle the solar industry may face after the boom ends?

The Program Administrators will be evaluating the success of both rounds of the Solarize Program and will use those evaluations to determine whether future rounds of Solarize will continue in Rhode Island. In addition, both the Renewable Energy Fund and Renewable Energy Growth Program are built into legislation and the Programs are set to continue for the next few years.

- ❖ How will the residential REG program work with the Solarize Program in 2015 for Tiverton and Little Compton?

OER, Commerce RI, and National Grid are still in the process of working on how that Program will work with Solarize. There will be more information in the next four months that will be available to the installer industry.

- ❖ How will the timing of the next round of the REF’s Small Scale Solar program work with Solarize North Smithfield?

The North Smithfield timeline outlined in the RFP is still in place and no changes have been made. The next round of Small Scale Solar is set to open on Monday, September 15, 2014 and will not coincide with the Program in order for some early installations to be operational before the Solarize North Smithfield sign up period ends.

- ❖ Will there be future rounds of the Solarize Program?

The Program Administrators will evaluate each round of the Program and work together to make the decision as to whether future rounds of the Program will occur.

- ❖ When the selected Installer contracts with interested program participants, how will they know what the final price is they will be paying?

In MA and CT some installers have put the total contract price in each tier in the contract. At the end of the Program sign up period, the homeowner will know which price to pay based on the tier reached by the community. However, it can be communicated any way the selected installer sees fit, making sure the process is transparent.

- ❖ Does the type of panel or components matter?

Yes, the installer is bidding on the types of equipment they will use during the course of the Program. Proposals will be evaluated on more than price and equipment type is another factor that is taken into consideration.