

# ADVANCING SMALL BUSINESS SOLAR EQUITY

# APPENDIX I: SOLAR INSTALLER LIST

LAKE STREET–WEST BROADWAY–UNIVERSITY AVENUE  
MINNEAPOLIS AND SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

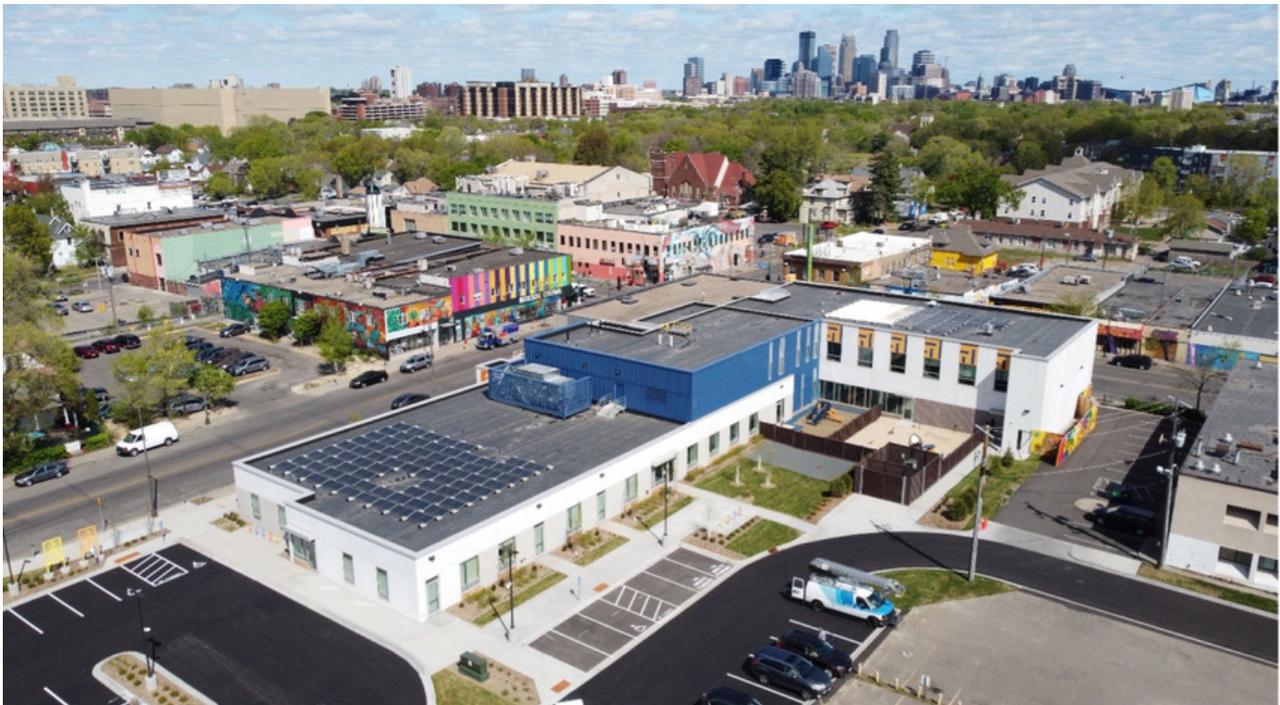


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#### **About this document**

This document is an appendix of “Advancing Small Business Solar Equity: Final Technical Insights Report” (Kazinka et al. 2024), a report published by Lake Street Council and its partners as an outcome of their participation in the Solar Energy Innovation Network. The full report and other appendices can be found at [www.visitlakestreet.com/business-blog/sein-report](http://www.visitlakestreet.com/business-blog/sein-report).

#### **About the Solar Energy Innovation Network**

The Solar Energy Innovation Network (SEIN) seeks to overcome barriers to solar adoption by connecting teams of stakeholders who are pioneering new ideas with the resources they need to succeed. SEIN is funded by the US Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office and is led by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

Teams that participate in SEIN receive direct funding and analytical support from the US Department of Energy national laboratories and participate in peer-to-peer learning with other teams tackling similar challenges. These teams are developing and documenting their solutions for solar adoption with scale in mind so that others can adapt those solutions to their own contexts. Ultimately, the true impact of these teams’ efforts will be to enable a wide array of communities to adopt solar solutions that meet their needs in their contexts.

#### **Disclaimer**

This work was authored by Lake Street Council et al. under Subcontract No. SUB-2022-10131 as part of the Solar Energy Innovation Network, a collaborative research effort administered by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory under Contract No. DE-AC36-08GO28308 funded by the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Alliance for Sustainable Energy, LLC, the DOE, or the U.S. Government.

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#### **Overview**

This “Solar Installer List” presents a selection of solar installers operating in the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota and lays out different criteria and equity considerations that may help support small businesses when selecting between installers. The Advancing Small Business Solar Equity team intends for this list to affirm the following project principles: exercising transparency and building wealth.

**Exercising transparency:** The solar field in Minnesota has its share of fly-by-night actors and rushed jobs. While not every small business or their space is prepared for solar, the project team aspires to ensure that those who are prepared have a good experience for a fair price. This also helps protect the reputation of legitimate solar installers in the area and facilitates and normalizes a culture of small-business solar adoption.

**Building wealth:** Solar is an opportunity for wealth building for small businesses if installed properly and fairly. Many solar installers in the Twin Cities also identify as small businesses, support mission-driven solar initiatives, and are business owners from communities impacted by systemic racism. Wealth-building opportunities may also be passed down to solar installer apprentices and employees if they hire from job training programs located within the project’s corridors or in other underserved and underemployed communities.

This list is prefaced by descriptions of the various considerations that the Advancing Small Business Solar Equity team made when deciding to include each solar installer on the list, as well as what would be useful for a small business owner to know when deciding on an installer. The considerations are grouped into three categories: general considerations, existing solar vetting programs, and equity considerations.

#### **General considerations**

In interviews conducted by the project team and documented in “Appendix B: Community and Partner Profiles,” small businesses voiced that they value cost-effective, trusted, and Twin Cities-based contractors when they need projects done. The list incorporates those values in addition to the more practical considerations that go into selecting an installer through fields such as the installer’s geographic location and the year a business was established.

#### **Existing solar vetting programs**

Various government entities that represent the project corridors have developed lists of solar installers they have vetted or pre-qualified for programs they administer. Many of these programs are designed to use solar to support wealth building in underserved communities. The following programs were included:

- **State of Minnesota, master solar contract:** In 2020, the Minnesota Office of State Procurement developed a master contract for solar. Vendors included on the list met the State’s design, equipment, construction, insurance, and experience qualifications and submitted references that attested to their quality service. This accelerates solar adoption for municipal governments

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and school districts by allowing them to forgo the need to hold a competitive bidding process (Clean Energy Resource Teams 2021).

- Metropolitan Council, Solar-for-Vouchers: Solar-for-Vouchers is a program for multifamily rental property owners that provides free technical assistance on solar installations in exchange for renting some market-rate units to Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program participants. As part of this program, the Metropolitan Council conducted a request for qualification (RFQ) process to pre-qualify solar developers for a master contractor list. The RFQ evaluated installers on experience, equipment and maintenance plans, and cost proposals (Metropolitan Council 2023).
- City of Minneapolis, Green Cost Share environmental justice projects: Green Cost Share is a competitive grant program operated by the City of Minneapolis Health Department. The grant is available to eligible business or property owners who add solar to their buildings or invest in property upgrades that increase energy efficiency or reduce pollution. An incentivized environmental justice rate is available to projects developed within the Minneapolis Green Zones or a Great Street Eligible Priority Area (City of Minneapolis 2023). While not explicitly a vetting program, solar installers who have developed environmental justice rate projects have worked with and have some familiarity with the focus communities for this project. See “Appendix D: Incentive Options Brief,” for more information on Green Cost Share.

### Equity considerations

Many solar installation businesses in the Twin Cities are owned by individuals from communities impacted by systemic racism or support job creation within these communities. These equity considerations highlight different associations, certifications, and programs that a solar installer might participate in. The following three considerations were confirmed using the Minnesota Unified Certification Program’s [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Directory](#):

- Minority Business Enterprise (MBE): A certification for businesses that are at least 51 percent owned by individuals who identify as ethnic minorities.
- Women Business Enterprise (WBE): A certification for businesses that are at least 51 percent owned by individuals who identify as gender minorities.
- Small and Underutilized Business Program (SUBP): The City of Minneapolis developed the Small and Underutilized Business Program to address disparities in how the city awarded contracts and granted more opportunities to MBEs and WBEs. For contracts greater than \$175,000, the city shall set goals for the participation of eligible MBEs and WBEs based on qualifications and availability. MBEs and WBEs must meet a few additional criteria to count toward SUBP goals—see the [City of Minneapolis SUBP webpage](#) for more information on qualifying criteria (City of Minneapolis 2022).

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#### Solar installer list

Table I-1: A list of solar installation companies and contractors.

| Company or organization                  | Year established | Location         | Website              | BIPOC- or immigrant-owned | Equity lens  | Existing solar vetting programs  |
|--|------------------|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| All Energy Solar                         | 2010             | Saint Paul       | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share environmental justice (EJ) project                    |
| Apadana Solar Technologies               | 2017             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project; Solar-for-Vouchers; Solar Master Contract |
| Banks Electric Co.                       | 2003             | Lake Street area | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       | Minority Business Enterprise; Small and Underutilized Business Program |  |
| Blue Horizon Energy                      | 2009             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project; Solar Master Contract                     |
| Blue Sky Electric Co.                    | 2016             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       | Minority Business Enterprise; Small and Underutilized Business Program | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |
| Cedar Creek Energy                       | 2007             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project; Solar Master Contract                     |
| Cooperative Energy Futures               | 2006             | Minneapolis      | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |
| EPF Solar, LLC                           | 2013             | Minneapolis      | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |
| Global Synergy Power                     | 2016             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       |  |  |
| GoSolar! Construction LLC                | 2021             | Metro area       | N/A                  | Yes                       | Minority Business Enterprise; Small and Underutilized Business Program | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |
| Greenway Solar                           | 2017             | Lake Street area | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |
| iDeal Energies LLC                       | 2009             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project; Solar Master Contract                     |
| Isolar, LLC                              | 2019             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |
| Lake Street Solar                        | 2021             | Minneapolis      | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |
| Live Wire Electrical Services            | 2006             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |
| NextLight Energy                         | 2019             | Lake Street area | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  |  |
| New Energy Equity/Impact Power Solutions | 1991             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project; Solar-for-Vouchers                        |
| MN Solar and More, Inc                   | 2017             | Metro area       | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |  | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project  |

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| Company or organization   | Year established | Location           | Website              | BIPOC- or immigrant-owned | Equity lens   | Existing solar vetting programs         |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| Renewable Energy Partners | 2013             | West Broadway area | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       | Minority Business Enterprise;<br>Small and Underutilized Business Program                               |   |
| Solar Bear                | 2018             | Minneapolis        | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       |   | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project |
| Solar Connection Inc      | 2010             | Metro area         | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |   | Solar Master Contract                   |
| Solar Farm                | 2008             | Saint Paul         | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       |   |   |
| SolarPod                  | 2009             | Metro area         | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       | Minority Business Enterprise;<br>Women Business Enterprise;<br>Small and Underutilized Business Program | Solar Master Contract                   |
| TruNorth Solar            | 2010             | Metro area         | <a href="#">Link</a> |                           |   | Minneapolis Green Cost Share EJ project |
| Wolf River Electric       | 2014             | Metro area         | <a href="#">Link</a> | Yes                       | Minority Business Enterprise;<br>Small and Underutilized Business Program                               |   |

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#### References

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