



Request for Proposals:

Solar Opportunities Indiana

External Evaluator Services

Date of Issue: April 14, 2025

Proposals Due: May 16, 2025, 5pm Eastern Time

All proposals must be submitted to:

soiprocurement@incap.org

1. Introduction and Purpose

Organization Overview

The Indiana Community Action Association (IN-CAA), a nonprofit organization based in Indianapolis, Indiana, leads Solar Opportunities Indiana (SOI), a coalition established to manage the \$117 million Solar for All (SFA) grant awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF). SOI unites a diverse group of stakeholders to expand equitable access to solar energy across Indiana, including municipalities, advocacy groups, educational institutions, faith-based organizations, and renewable energy experts. Key coalition members include the cities of Fort Wayne, Gary, and Indianapolis; Energy Matters Community Coalition; Indiana Solar Equity for All Alliance; Earth Charter Indiana; Solar United Neighbors; Faith in Place; Citizens Action Coalition; and the Indiana Energy Independence Fund.

As federal grant funding priorities may shift with changes in administration, SOI is closely monitoring any potential policy or budgetary changes that could impact program operations. At this time, funding for Solar for All remains available, and SOI continues to move forward with implementation.

About the Solar Opportunities Indiana (SOI) Coalition

The SOI Coalition's mission is to address structural barriers in the solar energy market, reduce upfront costs, and foster innovative policy solutions to expand solar energy access for underserved communities. Together, the coalition aims to solarize at least 3,537 low-income homes and serve an additional 4,430 homes through community solar fields and microgrids. By developing tailored financial products and incentives for low-income and disadvantaged community (LIDAC) residents, SOI seeks to catalyze Indiana's clean energy market while strengthening workforce development initiatives and forging partnerships that foster a grassroots-led transition to renewable energy. These efforts aim to create a resilient and equitable energy market that bridges the gap between current challenges and a sustainable future.

Each coalition member plays a distinct role in advancing these objectives. IN-CAA serves as the lead grantee, managing financial oversight, subawards, and compliance with EPA regulations. Five coalition members will implement solar projects, including the municipalities of Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Gary, as well as the Energy Matters Community Coalition and the Indiana Solar Equity for All Alliance. Their projects will vary from conducting feasibility studies and financing low-income solarization projects to piloting innovative community solar fields on brownfield sites and developing residential solar projects with battery storage. Additionally,

Faith in Place and Earth Charter Indiana will manage community outreach, education, and marketing. Finally, Solar United Neighbors and Citizens Action Coalition will provide technical and regulatory assistance to ensure projects are optimized and aligned with state policy goals.

Purpose of the Request for Proposals

IN-CAA seeks a qualified External Evaluator to evaluate a multi-million-dollar EPA Solar for All grant program for the Solar Opportunities Indiana (SOI) Coalition. The SOI program serves single- and multi-family residential homes, microgrids, and distributed solar sites throughout Indiana to maximize household savings by 20% over 5 years for low-income and disadvantaged communities. Other program goals include reducing or avoiding greenhouse gas emissions, implementing storage solutions, increasing the resilience of the power grid, increasing resilience of vulnerable communities during grid outages, and creating equitable access to affordable, resilient solar for low-income households, by providing subsidies, low-cost capital, and technical assistance to projects, communities, and developers. The External Evaluator will assess SOI's progress toward these goals and recommend strategies to enhance program outcomes. IN-CAA's SOI program includes working with Coalition partners from across the state to collect data where IN-CAA serves as the central hub for storing that data.

2. Scope of Work

Project Objectives

The primary objective of the selected Evaluator will be to conduct a comprehensive annual evaluation and develop an annual report that assesses the effectiveness of the SOI program in meeting its key targets and outcomes and to make recommendations for improvement. The secondary objectives of the selected Evaluator will be to 1) create brief, focused reports on specific topics for stakeholders and the public; 2) support IN-CAA in developing regular semi-annual reports to EPA; and 3) review and recommend improvements to existing quality management processes and documents.

A. Comprehensive Annual Report (60%)

SOI anticipates a performance period beginning in 2025 and ending April 30, 2029. Annual reports will assess project activities implemented in the previous program year, where the program year is May 1 – April 30. (For example, an annual report delivered in late 2027 would review project activities implemented from May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027.) The Evaluator will develop an annual report that recounts the projects and project outcomes and assesses the effectiveness of the SOI program in meeting its targets and key outcomes. A critical component of this report includes recommendations for actionable steps the Coalition can implement to improve program performance to achieve its goals. Key elements of the annual report include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Evaluation, Assessment & Analysis
 - A logically organized list of the researchable issues, discussion of data collection, analysis methods, and limitations of any data collected
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of program implementation across Indiana, including program delivery, targeted budget, quality control, as well as data tracking, auditing and reporting systems
 - Measure progress toward quantitative program targets, outputs, and outcomes based on key performance metrics and planned timelines
 - Qualitatively assess participant experiences with program delivery to low-income and disadvantaged community residents
 - Ensure that the Coalition avoids duplicating services with other entities throughout the state
 - Assess the net effect of program activities, i.e., the proportion of the outcomes that can be attributed to the program instead of other influences
 - Summary of any supplemental issues that are critical to the program
 - Review the program's planning, design, implementation, and evaluation against industry best practices
- Recommendations
 - Clear, actionable, and prioritized recommendations supported by data analysis
 - Recommend program elements, components, and processes that should be enhanced, reduced, or eliminated based on past performance and provide clear, actionable steps for implementation
 - How to streamline, refine, redesign the program, or discontinue ineffective delivery components
 - Where additional outcomes are possible recommend clear, actionable steps for achieving them, including timeframes and targets
 - Reports should include metrics, analysis, and program improvement recommendations. They should also include an accompanying summary report that condenses key metrics and recommendations and presents annual evaluation report findings and recommendations to the Coalition and stakeholders.

B. Additional Reports for the Coalition (20%)

- IN-CAA may also request periodic brief, focused reports on specific program topics that provide targeted, pertinent information and analysis to SOI Coalition Members, the public, and other stakeholders.
- Provide data in a prescribed format allowing the Coalition to develop a "data dashboard" that serves as a real-time tracker of required outcomes and outputs, publishable on the SOI website

C. Supports for IN-CAA's semi-annual reports to EPA (15%)

IN-CAA is required to submit two semi-annual reports to EPA: 1) the transaction- and project- level report (TPL) and 2) programmatic progress report (Progress Report). The EPA has established a template with required information for both reports. While IN-CAA staff are primarily responsible for completing and submitting the reports, the Evaluator will contribute to the development of data collection for those reports. Project information required for these reports will be entered and stored in the Grant Management Database. IN-CAA is currently procuring grant management services and anticipates that the database management software and services will be established or in development at the time the Evaluator begins.

- **TPL Report:** The TPL Report focuses on a wide variety of quantitative information about individual projects, including environmental benefits, household saving, and technology specifications. The TPL report includes unique identifiers that tie project information to financial transactions. IN-CAA will complete all financial information. IN-CAA anticipates that all data fields needed to complete the TPL reports will be stored in the Grant Management Database.
- **Progress Report:** The Progress Report focuses on the programmatic elements of the SOI program, including technical assistance, participatory governance, workforce development, community benefits, changes to market structure and regulatory policies, and community and stakeholder engagement. This report requires narrative fields that will be provided by Coalition members and reported to IN-CAA staff.

D. Review Quality Docs & Data Processes (5%)

As a SFA grantee, IN-CAA is responsible for 1) capturing data that enables us to respond comprehensively for required reporting purposes and to track progress toward accomplishing targeted goals and outcomes; and 2) establishing internal and Coalition-wide quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) processes, policies, and procedures that ensure the quality of the information that is being collected, stored, and reported. EPA requires that these policies, procedures, and processes are detailed through the Quality Management Plan (QMP), Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). IN-CAA anticipates that initial versions of these documents will be approved by EPA by the start date of the final contract with the selected Evaluator. Streamlined data collection policies, procedures, and processes are critical and necessary for required reporting (detailed below). In the first year, the Evaluator will assess the established processes for data collection and recommend improvements to these activities and contribute to the quality documents detailing them. IN-CAA anticipates that the Evaluator's initial review of the policies, procedures, and processes, and the QA/QC

documents will occur at the beginning of the contract period. Adjustments to processes may be made throughout the project period but are anticipated to be minor. Initial evaluation of quality processes includes the following:

- The Evaluator will review existing data collection processes and documents, and make recommendations for improvement to the following documents and processes:
 - **QMP:** The QMP describes the organization's quality program, documents the technical activities to be performed, and details how the program will integrate QA/QC controls, procedures, and training into its environmental information operations.
 - **QAPP:** The QAPP documents the project planning process and serves as a blueprint for how the project will operate the "who, what, when, where, and why" of the project's environmental information operations. The Evaluator should be able to ensure, describe, and assist with implementing the following data quality indicators by EPA standards: precision, accuracy, representativeness, comparability, completeness, and sensitivity.
 - **SOP:** IN-CAA anticipates developing standard operating procedures to ensure consistent and efficient execution of tasks by providing clear, step-by-step instructions, contributing to improved quality, reduced errors, and streamlined processes. The Evaluator will be expected to contribute to elements of the SOP related to data quality and reporting requirements.
 - **Data collection and management system(s):** IN-CAA anticipates contracting with a grant management software firm to build a grant management and data collection database. The Evaluator will provide input into the architecture of this database to ensure that it facilitates capturing and reporting data necessary to complete the reports required in this scope of work.

Milestones/Deliverables

IN-CAA will regularly meet with the Evaluator to ensure timely completion of tasks and mutual understanding of deliverables.

- Monthly status updates: brief progress reports that highlight the following:
 - Key Coalition activities completed
 - Any Coalition challenges encountered and how they were addressed
 - Upcoming Coalition tasks and milestones
 - Requests for additional information from IN-CAA
- Quarterly data quality and program evaluation briefings: The Evaluator will produce targeted reports that assess data quality, highlight emerging trends or challenges, and provide early recommendations to inform real-time program adjustments.

- Invoice support documentation: IN-CAA requires contractors to submit monthly itemized invoices that include a) the amount spent to-date against the total approved contract amount and b) with clear descriptions of completed deliverables tied to the approved scope of work.
- Presentation of findings: Periodic formal, virtual presentation of annual evaluation findings and recommendations will be provided to IN-CAA staff, the SOI Coalition, and other key stakeholders.

Expertise & Experience

While IN-CAA will issue just one prime contract, it will entertain proposals in which multiple entities collaborate to complete the entire scope of work.

- Preferred demonstrated expertise OR commitment to developing deep familiarity with applying EPA regulations and data quality standards, including familiarity with SFA program requirements.
- Preferred direct experience evaluating low-income energy programs.
- Preferred experience in evaluating solar energy programs.
- Experience working with stakeholders in public and community engagement processes.
- Preferred experience with quantitative data collection strategies for diverse and low-income populations, including assessing data gaps and providing recommendations for improved data collection and reporting processes.
- Proven experience in community-driven participatory evaluation, ensuring local stakeholders are meaningfully engaged in program assessments.
- Demonstrated cultural competence and experience implementing culturally responsive evaluation methods
- Experience modeling job creation impacts and evaluating the economic and social benefits of clean energy programs.
- Experience in the evaluation of economic and social benefits of energy programs.
- Adequate resources to perform and fulfill the required functions and responsibilities
- Demonstrated capacity to manage a multi-year, multi-million-dollar program evaluation, including analytical tools, and technical resources to meet program reporting and evaluation timelines.
- The absence of a conflict of interest and inappropriate bias for or against potential program participants, the State of Indiana, or affected electric utilities.

3. Proposal Guidelines

Each proposal must contain sufficient narrative responses that provide sufficient information to accomplish the activities described in the **Scope of Work**, directly above. Failure to include all the information may be cause for rejection. Additional information may be provided if it is

relevant to the goals of the RFP. Any additional information included that is not specifically requested should be included as an appendix to the proposal.

Executive Summary: Provide a high-level overview of the proposed solution, outlining how it meets the objectives and scope of this RFP. Highlight key differentiators that set your solution apart.

Qualifications and Team: Describe your organization (i.e., team, firm, or company) and provide a statement of qualifications for performing the requested or similar services. Please include an organizational chart and any variation in staffing levels over the past three years. Provide a summary of the role, qualifications and experience of each team member, and designated project manager assigned to this project. Include length of service for each team member. Please identify the key personnel who will be assigned to these activities and what role each will play in enabling the organization to successfully meet the scope of services. Include resumes of only those personnel who will be assigned to these activities.

Detailed Technical Description: Include a thorough description of the proposed solution, addressing your team's strategies and tactics for assessing program the effectiveness, and its ability to meet the specified project objectives. Clearly state how the solution prioritizes equity, supports multi-stakeholder collaboration, and facilitates the required data management functionalities.

Project Plan: Provide a detailed discussion of your organization's approach to the successful completion of this project. Include thorough discussions of methodologies you believe are essential to accomplishing each task. Include a proposed work schedule and timeline to accomplish all the required tasks and identify the team member responsible for each.

Cost Breakdown: Provide a detailed cost breakdown, including:

1. Initial costs (e.g., licensing, setup, hardware, or customization)
2. Ongoing maintenance costs (e.g., support, updates, or subscription fees)
3. Optional or add-on features and their associated costs

Demonstrations or Trial Capabilities: If applicable, include information on any available demonstrations, trial access, or sandbox environments that allow proposal evaluators to explore the proposed solution. Specify the process for requesting access and any associated costs or conditions.

Competency: SOI seeks to ensure that the selected proposer possesses the necessary resources, expertise, and experience to deliver the specified services in a timely and satisfactory manner. To evaluate your organization's competency, please provide the following information:

- A list and explanation of any pending bankruptcies, liens, judgments, lawsuits, arbitrations, or similar actions filed or resolved within the past seven (7) years.
- An indication of whether any client has ever terminated a contract with your organization for breach of contract. If applicable, please provide a detailed explanation of the circumstances surrounding the termination.

4. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals should be clear, concise, and free of promotional material unless directly relevant to the proposed solution. The evaluation process will prioritize proposals that effectively address the objectives outlined in the RFP while demonstrating a strong commitment to equity and inclusivity in advancing solar adoption. Successful proposals must meet the following mandatory requirements: the ability to integrate all required functionalities, scalability to accommodate future growth, and compliance with applicable regulations, including federal grant requirements and data security standards.

Scored Criteria: Proposals will be scored on the following merits:

No.	Scoring Factor	Points Available
1	Capacity & Qualifications Prior experience of all team members (including any subcontractors), strength of proposed staffing, and relevant expertise in assessment and analysis.	25
2	Project Delivery & Approach to Data Collection Understanding of evaluation goals and topics, the ability to successfully address the scope of work, and the proposed approach to data collection and any risks to successful completion.	25
3	Cost-effectiveness Considers the overall cost, in relation to the proposed value, and reasonableness of pricing including billing rates	20
4	Experience & References Relevance & strength of references	15
5	Timeline Ability to meet the proposed timeline and deliver a phased or full implementation on schedule.	10
6	Inclusive Workforce Engagement Awards points to those demonstrating efforts to employ minorities and women, per EPA guidelines, particularly in project roles tied to this RFP.	5

5. Timeline

Date	Milestone/Event	Description/Focus
Monday, April 14, 2025	RFP Issued	Release RFP
Friday, April 25, 2025	Questions due	Deadline for respondent questions due to SOI by 5:00 p.m. Eastern.
Friday, May 2, 2025	All answers to questions will be made available	SOI will post questions and answer to the SOI Public Notices webpage
Friday, May 16, 2025	Proposal Submission Deadline	Final Day to submit proposals
Monday, May 19 - Friday, May 30, 2025	Evaluation Period to select finalists	Finalists will be notified of the date and time for virtual interview
Monday, June 2 - Friday, June 6, 2025	Finalist virtual interviews	Virtual interviews of finalists
Friday, June 13, 2025	Evaluator Selection Notification	Evaluator Selected
Beginning Monday, June 16	Contract Finalization & Initial Onboarding	Alignment on project goals, deliverables, and timelines

6. Submission Requirements

All proposals must be submitted by the specified deadline to ensure consideration. Late submissions will not be reviewed. **Proposals should be submitted via email with the subject line “SOI Evaluator Proposal,” at soiprocurement@incap.org no later than May 16, 2025, by 5pm Eastern.** Submissions must be provided in electronic format, preferably as a **PDF** or **Microsoft Word document**, to ensure compatibility and ease of review. Proposers will also be notified of our selection by email.

- **Proposal Length:**

- Proposals should be **concise yet comprehensive**. Proposers are encouraged to focus on addressing the key requirements and evaluation criteria outlined in the RFP. Additional appendices, such as case studies or technical specifications, may be included if necessary.

- **Attachments:**
 - **Qualification Cover Sheet:** The Respondent must submit a completed Cover Sheet which is located in **Appendix A** of this RFP, including the Summary of Qualifications and the table at the bottom of the page.
 - **Certification:** Please complete and attach the Respondent Certification located in **Appendix B** of this RFP.
 - **Vendor Certification Forms:** Include any relevant certifications or licenses demonstrating the vendor's qualifications.
 - **Cost Worksheets:** Provide a detailed cost breakdown as outlined in the Proposal Guidelines, including initial costs, ongoing maintenance, and optional features.
 - **References:** Submit at least **three (3) references for projects, case studies or services similar in nature and scope that have been completed within the last five years** to demonstrate **your** experience and reliability. Include brief description of the projects, dates, **and reference contact information. Nonprofit and other public sector references are preferred.**
 - **Additional Supporting Documentation:** Any other documents or forms that support the proposal, such as organizational charts, resumes of key personnel, or technical specifications, may be included as appendices.

7. Federal Requirements

This procurement is subject to all applicable federal and state laws and regulations. SOI encourages participation from small businesses, including Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, and labor surplus area firms. All contractors must certify that they are not debarred or suspended from receiving federal funds. The following terms and conditions, when applicable, are incorporated by reference and apply to this solicitation and resulting contract(s). These requirements may also need to be flowed down to lower-tier subcontractors as appropriate.

For All Solicitations and Contracts

- 2 CFR 200.322: DOMESTIC PREFERENCES FOR PROCUREMENTS
- 2 CFR 200.216 PROHIBITION ON CERTAIN TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT
- 40 CFR 33 APPENDIX A TERM AND CONDITION:

“The contractor shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex in the performance of this contract. The contractor shall carry out applicable requirements of 40 CFR part 33 in the award and administration of contracts awarded under EPA financial assistance agreements. Failure by the contractor to carry out these requirements is a material breach of this contract

which may result in the termination of this contract or other legally available remedies.”

For All Solicitations and Contracts in Excess of \$10,000

“All contracts in excess of \$10,000 must address termination for cause and for convenience by the non-Federal entity including the manner by which it will be effected and the basis for settlement.”

For All Solicitations and Contracts in Excess of \$150,000

- 42 USC 85 CLEAN AIR ACT
- 33 USC 26 FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT

By submitting a proposal, your entity agrees to comply with all applicable standards, orders or regulations issued pursuant to the Clean Air Act (42 USC 7401-7671q) and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act as amended (33 USC 1251-1387).

For All Solicitations and Contracts in Excess of \$25,000

- 2 CFR 180 DEBARMENT AND SUSPENSION (EXECUTIVE ORDERS 12549 & 12689)

For All Solicitations and Contracts Equal to or in Excess of \$25,000

- 2 CFR 1532 NONPROCUREMENT DEBARMENT AND SUSPENSION
- For All Solicitations and Contracts in Excess of \$100,000
- 31 USC 1352 LIMITATION ON USE OF APPROPRIATED FUNDS TO
- INFLUENCE CERTAIN FEDERAL CONTRACTING AND FINANCIAL
- TRANSACTIONS

By submitting a proposal, your entity certifies to the tier above that it will not and has not used Federal appropriated funds to pay any person or organization for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with obtaining any Federal contract, grant or any other award covered by 31U.S.C. 1352. Each tier must also disclose any lobbying with non-Federal funds that takes place in connection with obtaining any Federal award. Such disclosures are forwarded from tier to tier up to the non-Federal award.

8. RFP Terms and Conditions

SOI reserves the right to:

SOI reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals and/or bids if, in its sole discretion, doing so is in its best interest; rebid this RFP by requesting new proposals from qualified firms; waive or modify minor irregularities or inconsistencies in proposals received; engage in negotiations with proposers, within the requirements outlined in this RFP, to determine the best solution for the Solar Opportunities Indiana program; require proposers to submit modifications or additions to their proposals as a condition of further participation in the selection process; fund proposals in full or in part, at its discretion; decline to make an award at the conclusion of the evaluation process, with this RFP not to be construed as a guarantee that one or more proposers will be awarded contracts; adjust the RFP calendar dates for any reason deemed appropriate by SOI; contact proposers to clarify any portion of their submission; and amend or cancel this RFP at any time, for any reason, without liability or obligation to any proposer, with any modifications communicated to all known proposers in a timely manner.

Confidentiality & Conflict of Interest:

The Proposer acknowledges that any data, materials, and information disclosed to the Proposer in connection with this project may contain confidential, proprietary, or legally protected information. The Proposer agrees that all such information gathered, accessed, or disclosed for the purpose of this project shall not be shared with, disclosed to, or discussed with any third party without the prior written consent of SOI. The Proposer further agrees to take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality and security of SOI's data, including compliance with applicable federal and state data protection laws.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

Proposers must disclose any existing or prior business, personal, or financial relationships with SOI members, board members, or affiliates within the past five years that could create a perception of bias or influence. This includes, but is not limited to, any relationships, financial interests, or affiliations that could be perceived as influencing the fairness and integrity of the procurement process. By submitting a proposal, the Proposer affirms that it has not provided, and does not intend to provide, any economic opportunity, future employment, gift, loan, gratuity, special discount, trip, favor, or service to any SOI employee, public official, or representative in connection with this procurement.

Failure to fully disclose a conflict of interest—whether intentional or unintentional—will result in immediate disqualification of the Proposer's submission. If a conflict is discovered after a contract has been awarded, SOI reserves the right to terminate the contract immediately.

SOI has sole discretion in determining whether an actual or apparent conflict of interest exists and whether such a conflict may negatively impact SOI's mission. An award will not be made where a conflict of interest is deemed inconsistent with SOI's ethical and operational standards.

Ownership:

All costs incurred in the preparation and submission of the Proposal shall be borne solely by the Proposer. SOI shall not be responsible for any costs associated with the preparation, development, or submission of the Proposal. Any and all documents, reports, analyses, or other materials used or developed by the Proposer during the course of this project shall be made available to SOI upon request. Such materials shall become the exclusive property of SOI, and the Proposer shall not assert any copyright claims or other proprietary rights inconsistent with the full transfer of ownership to SOI. If this RFP results in a software-related contract, the Proposer acknowledges that all documents, reports, analyses, software configurations, or other deliverables developed by the Proposer during this project shall become the exclusive property of SOI upon creation. The Proposer shall not assert any copyright, trademark, or intellectual property claims inconsistent with SOI's full ownership of such materials, except as explicitly agreed upon in writing by both parties.

Upon expiration or termination of the contract, the Proposer must securely export all SOI-owned data in a structured, industry-standard format that ensures seamless migration to another system. This data must be provided at no additional cost and remain fully accessible and usable. The Proposer is responsible for implementing appropriate security measures to protect SOI's data from unauthorized access, disclosure, or loss throughout the transition process. Additionally, within 30 days of contract termination, the Proposer must provide written certification that all SOI data has been securely transferred and that no copies remain in its possession, unless otherwise authorized in writing by SOI. The Proposer must also offer reasonable technical assistance during the transition period to prevent any disruption to SOI's program operations.