

Solar America Showcase Grant

The Solar Schools Assessment and Implementation Project (SSAIP) is a collaborative effort by Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD), West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD), Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), the Sequoia Foundation and its sponsored project, KyotoUSA, and MIG, Inc., to prepare each school district and its community for the installation of photovoltaic (PV) systems on all appropriate district schools and administrative buildings.

The partners will receive a US Department of Energy (DOE) Solar America Showcase (SAS) grant worth up to \$500,000 in technical assistance. The grant will enable the Districts to develop "Solar Master Plans" (SMP) that are intended to lead to the installation of PV systems throughout each district.

The development of a formalized planning process and SMP for K-12 public schools will help the Department of Energy achieve its goal of removing market barriers and speeding the transition to the widespread installation of PV systems throughout the state's K-12 public school system. The SSAIP is built upon the recommendations and guidance provided by California Department of General Services, Division of the State Architect (DSA) in its guide on how to create "grid- neutral" school campuses and facilities. The work done by the DSA and its wide ranging partners demonstrates that comprehensive planning is the key to making it possible for schools throughout the state and country to make solar installations an integral part of their operations.

Each district in this partnership also offers a conditional commitment to selecting one school for a PV installation during, or at the conclusion of, the SSAIP that will demonstrate the Project's success. The combined total project size will meet or exceed the 250 kW SAS threshold for this program.

California school districts are facing significant financial challenges. Nevertheless, many are considering seeking voter approved bond measures and/or applying for federal opportunities like Clean Renewable Energy Bonds to underwrite the capital costs of installing PV. Districts are well served when they first conduct comprehensive assessments of their schools and facilities to determine their overall energy characteristics and their energy generation potential. Doing so allows the school districts to:

- better understand their overall energy use and its cost;
- identify opportunities for energy conservation and improved efficiencies;
- determine which schools are the best candidates for PV installations;
- assess the costs of PV, new technologies, and financing options;
- prepare to comply with California's Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB32) that may require school districts to determine by 2010 their greenhouse gas emissions;
- evaluate the role that the environmental attributes of renewable energy generation may play in financing PV systems or in meeting state greenhouse gas emission reductions;
- consider methods for making the PV systems and their benefits visible to the public, e.g. the installation of monitoring kiosks and additional media coverage;
- determine their student energy intensity ratios; and
- lay the groundwork for the introduction of science curricula associated with energy issues.

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