



Sustainable Energy & Economic Development Fund (SEED Fund) Program Overview

San Joaquin Valley (SJV) public entities are now eligible to join a regional solar procurement effort. Building off of the great success of the pilot program in the North Bay Area, the SEED Fund is launching a second round of collaborative procurement activities in the Valley. Many of the 14 public participants from Round 1 of the SEED Fund are moving forward with solar projects, and are receiving **better pricing on their solar systems** (an estimated 10-12% total project cost savings), **lower project risks with higher returns, reduced transaction costs, and reduced administrative effort** (resulting in an estimated 50-70% admin cost savings for participants). These results have been achieved at no upfront cost to any of the public participants, and their reimbursements to the SEED Fund (largely paid by the solar installer) will enable SJV agencies to join a new collaboration with no out-of-pocket costs, and with no commitment to move forward with solar projects.

Collaborative procurement is emerging as a powerful means to tackle the costs and technical barriers to public investment in solar energy projects. However, upfront costs for high-quality solar potential assessments, RFP/RFQ development, and vendor evaluations prohibit many public entities from identifying and pursuing potential projects. The SEED Fundⁱ is a unique 3-step opt-in program, partially funded by the State of California’s California Solar Initiative, and designed to empower public agencies to evaluate and participate in a regional group purchase of solar PV projects. A key feature of the program is that it does not require upfront allocation of funds from participants for project planning, site assessments, or procurement activities; rather these costs will be paid back through solar contracts that are developed with vendors to create a revolving fund for future workⁱⁱ.

Described below are the roles and responsibilities for all participating organizations and the three main steps of this program:

Roles for the SEED Fund

- **SEED FUND TEAM:** Comprised of Strategic Energy Innovations and Optony Inc., the Team will provide technical and logistical support to facilitate public participants’ evaluation of solar potential.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **LEAD AGENCY:** One participating public agency who has an interest in securing PV for their facilities and is willing to use their legal / fiscal staff to lead the development and issuance of a collaborative RFP/ RFQ. This role receives regional and national visibility and acknowledgement of the environmental and collaborative leadership exhibited by the Lead Agency.
- **PARTICIPANTS:** Local governments, agencies, and school districts in Fresno and other Central Valley Counties who want to evaluate their solar potential and who may want to participate in the collaborative procurement after evaluating their options.



Step 1

- **SEED FUND TEAM:** Organizes multiple informational webinars/conferences/calls to explain the details of the program, including process and opportunities.
- **PARTICIPANTS:** Provide electricity usage information and facility addresses for potential solar installation sites.
- **SEED FUND TEAM:** Evaluates pre-screening criteria for identified sites for technical and economic solar potential.
- **PARTICIPANTS:** Review screening report and determine if they would like to proceed with full feasibility studies at select high-potential sites.





Step 2

- **PARTICIPANTS:** Those who want to fully participate, sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining role and agreement to add SEED Fund costs into future solar contracts if they are implemented.
- **SEED FUND TEAM:** Performs solar feasibility assessments of selected sites to be included in procurement effort with no up-front funding required and provides information on solar financing options to participants.
- **PARTICIPANTS:** Review technical and economic feasibility studies and determine which sites should be included in the RFQ/RFP.
- **SEED FUND TEAM:** Develops RFQ/RFP documents, specifications, and templates, with terms approved by all participants.
- **LEAD AGENCY:** Issues RFQ/RFP for solar projects on behalf of entire group, with support of the SEED Fund Team.
- **ALL:** SEED Fund Team guides review and evaluation of vendor proposals in terms of capabilities, costs, and performance.
- **LEAD AGENCY and PARTICIPANTS:** Issue shortlist and award for winning vendor(s) and negotiate contract terms, assisted by SEED Fund Team.

Step 3

- **PARTICIPANTS:** Review options to install and finance solar installations. Present viable projects and negotiated contracts to Council or Board for approval, with on-going support from the SEED Fund Team.
- **VENDORS:** Build projects and provide reimbursement to SEED Fund to enable a sustainable third round of project development activity.
- **PARTICIPANTS:** Start producing renewable energy to reduce electricity bills and meet Climate Action Plan goals.
- **SEED FUND TEAM:** Issues project report to CSI detailing the regional impact of this effort, and begins Round 3, using the funds reimbursed from Round 2, along with additional investments to expand effort to new jurisdictions.

There are many resources available for participants, so please visit the SEED Fund website (www.solarroadmap.com/SEED) to learn more about project specifics, team background, solar financing, and case studies. If you would like to be a part of this exciting program, please contact us:

Karly Zimmerman

Associate Program Manager, Strategic Energy Innovations

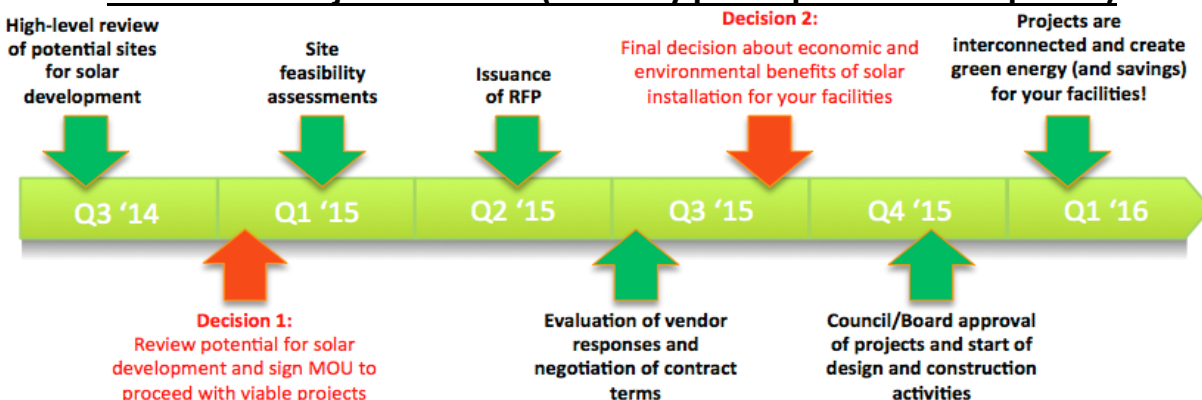
✉ karly@seiinc.org | ☎ (415) 507-1430

Jonathan Whelan

Senior Project Manager, Optony Inc.

✉ jonathan.whelan@optony.com | ☎ (415) 450-7032

SEED Fund Project Timeline (with key participant decision points)



ⁱ This program is funded through a grant from the California Solar Initiative to enable sustainable development of solar projects in the North Bay and serve as a statewide demonstration of innovative business models.

ⁱⁱ SEED Fund Participation costs are estimated at 1-2% of total Solar project costs, and Project Cost savings from participation are estimated at 10-12% of total solar project costs, resulting in a net cost savings estimate of 8-12% for participants.

ⁱⁱⁱ Strategic Energy Innovations (SEI), is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing pollution and saving money through energy and resource efficiency. Optony is an independent solar consulting firm specializing in supporting public and private solar programs and projects.