

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Below you'll find answers to frequently asked questions about the “K-Solar” program.

Q: Is my school eligible to participate in the program?

A: All public K through 12 schools in New York are eligible. Schools should have a sufficiently sized, accessible, unshaded area to accommodate the solar photovoltaic (PV) system.

Q: How will the PV system be installed on my school and how much space will it take up?

A: The PV can be ground-mounted or roof-mounted installations. Most PV systems produce about 8 to 10 watts of power for each square foot of roof surface. A typical 50 kW system will require approximately 4,000 to 6,000 square feet of unobstructed area.

Q: How will I know if my school is a good candidate for solar photovoltaic system? What should I consider?

A: You should have an adequate open space in the yard area or parking lot or on the roof—preferably south-facing, with no shading or obstructions. PV systems generally have a 20-year life, so no trees or buildings should block the sun in the future. A free solar site assessment is available through participation in this program at no obligation.

Q: Are there any application fees or charges?

A: The K-Solar program is free.

Q: If our school goes solar, what costs are involved?

A: NYPA will assist your school in developing a cost effective arrangement with a solar developer so that your school will not be responsible for any initial system costs or ongoing operation and maintenance costs. Under the terms of this arrangement, the solar developers will own, operate, and maintain the solar (PV) system and sell 100% of the solar electricity produced to the school at a contracted price for a term of 20-25 years. Federal and state tax credits which can offset 50% or more of the installed cost of a PV system are currently available to businesses. The solar developer qualifies for these incentives and will pass a portion of the savings on to the schools.

Q: What size systems are eligible?

A: In general, PV systems greater than 50 kW (50,000 Watts) are eligible to participate in this program. Such a system will take up approximately 5,000 square feet of space.

Q: Can a school participate in the program just to receive the solar energy assessment report?

A: Yes, schools are not obligated to see the project to completion and can stop the process at any time.

Q: What if the solar (PV) system doesn't generate as much energy as is claimed? Are there performance guarantees or warranties?

A: The solar developer that will be awarded the contract will guarantee the output of the solar (PV) system. The school only pays for the electricity that is generated by the PV system. If the production of electricity falls below the guarantee, the solar developer will compensate the school accordingly.

Q: Would you consider more than one solar PV installation in a school district?

A: There is no limit on the number of installations as long as they meet the criteria. School districts are free to submit multiple buildings for consideration in the program.

Q: How will the schools handle maintenance and repair of the system?

A: The solar developer that will be awarded the contract will operate and maintain the PV system.

Q: What are my next steps after I receive the solar assessment report?

A: Review your site report. If you are interested in proceeding to the next step, please contact us and we will provide you with detailed information on the process and opportunities for your schools to go solar.

Q: Does a solar system require installing batteries at a school?

A: No, the solar system will operate in parallel with the feed you are currently getting from your electric utility.

Q: Can I offset my electric use under this program?

A: Yes, energy produced by the solar system will offset your electric consumption.

Q: Will I still pay an electric utility bill?

A: Yes, but the amount you pay the electric utility will be less since the PV system will be producing a significant portion of the school's energy needs.

Q: How are the solar vendors being selected?

A: NYPA will issue a Request For Proposal (RFP) on behalf of schools statewide. NYPA will review the proposals and plans to create a short list of solar developers that best meet the criteria set forth in the RFP. The school district will then be able to select a solar developer from the short list.

Q: How will the PV system be installed on my school and how much space will it take up?

A: The PV can be ground-mounted or roof-mounted installations. Most PV systems produce about 8 to 10 watts of power for each square foot of roof surface. A typical 50 kW system will require approximately 4,000 to 6,000 square feet of unobstructed area.

Q: My district was approached by a solar developer to discuss a project that is not part of K-Solar. Should I wait for K-Solar or proceed with the existing solar proposal?

A: The K-Solar program is scheduled to issue an RFP later this year and select winning bidders in March, 2015. Schools that are able to negotiate a solar PPA on their own prior to that date should do so as long as the project meets their goal of saving money on their electric bill.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: E-mail us at solar@nypa.gov and we will respond quickly.