



## Marketing and Outreach Plan

The Needham Solarize Plus Campaign will use a multi-level, multi-strategy approach to build community awareness, interest and participation in the campaign.

Needhamites connect with each other through schools, sports, social groups, various committees and local organizations, and religious communities. We will build on those ties by including members of the many social webs that connect the community. Our experience has taught us that, in Needham, the best strategy is to get general information in circulation, followed by neighbors reaching out to neighbors. As previously described, we see the Solar Team as a key resource for the Solarize Plus Program and the Solarize Coaches.

### Preparation for Solarize:

Before the launch of the Solarize Plus Needham campaign, the Solar Coach and Solar Team will:

- Refine the outreach and marketing strategy
- Re-confirm the willingness of our Outreach Partners to participate and explore their ideas and level of involvement
- Create marketing materials and branding
- Create the Solarize Needham campaign messaging, including designing and producing posters and other outreach materials
- Once the installer(s) are in place and the program can formally get underway, we will conduct immediate initial outreach to prospects we have already identified through:

Through this jump-start, we hope to achieve some early conversions, creating a buzz and groundswell of interest that will reinforce the general outreach.

We envision starting the preparation during the summer, even before vendor selection is complete. We will leverage the enthusiastic base of homeowners who already have “gone solar” to identify potential Solarize Plus prospects among their friends and neighbors. Our Solar Coaches and core Solar Team volunteers will build on the MassCEC materials and prepare basic talking points for use in neighbor-to-neighbor conversations. In addition to personal networks, we believe that similarly situated homes within a neighborhood would be a good launching point. All of this can be done to build buzz and an awareness that Solarize Plus is coming.

We anticipate formally launching the program in September. This is an ideal time for outreach, since families are returning to the routine of the school year. It is also a great time to begin outreach to Needhamites with school-age children. We plan to enlist the support of organizations such as the Parent Teacher Councils at each school and the town-wide group Parent Talk, as we spread the word about the Solarize Plus program.

### General community outreach and awareness:

During the initial weeks of the Solarize Campaign, we will engage in general community outreach to build awareness about the program. We will continue with periodic outreach and updates throughout the Solarize Plus sign-up period. We will replicate the process that Green Needham used in its earlier efforts. This involves outreach through general community gatherings, through Solarize-specific events aimed at specific community groups, and through individual neighbor-to-neighbor communications.

The objectives of the community outreach and awareness strategy will be to:

- Alert residents that Needham is participating in the Solarize Plus Campaign
- Explain the main components of the campaign
- Articulate the benefits of Solar and of participation in the Solarize Plus Campaign
- Inform residents of where they can obtain further information on the Solarize Plus Campaign

The primary methods for general community outreach/awareness will include:

- Creation of a Solarize Plus Needham website which will serve as a central source for all Solarize Plus information, events, FAQ, etc.
- Announcement of the program through the Green Needham web site and the Green Needham email newsletter (~1,500 recipients)
- Creation of an integrated Social Media campaign using our Twitter and Facebook feeds, integrated with the Solarize Plus Needham website
- Coordination with the Needham Channel, our local Community Access TV Station, for both general promotion and filming/broadcasting the Solarize Plus workshops
- Solar coaches (or volunteers) will post more frequent, informal updates to generate attention on high-traffic social media sites (Facebook, possibly others)
- Working with the local Needham and MetroWest newspapers to publish feature article(s) about the launch, progress and impact of the Solarize Plus Campaign and related solar stories
- Presentations to community groups and organizations who hold regular meetings and allow guest speakers
- Program announcements made through partner organizations
- Distribution of Solarize Plus Campaign information at general community events and events run by partner organizations such as: the Town's New Year's Eve celebration, school and sports events, community concerts, and business events.
- Additional approaches requiring collateral material that will be evaluated for time and cost-effectiveness:
  - Lawn signs indicating a resident who has gone solar
  - Door knob hangers indicating that a resident's house is suitable for solar

### **Municipal Participation and Support**

The Solarize Plus campaign enjoys the full support of Needham's government, but it will be a fully independent effort. The Town's endorsement and general support will generally increase the impact of our Solarize Plus campaign. Some of the specific areas in which we anticipate municipal assistance are:

- Town-wide direct mail: Adding a notice to tax or water and sewer bill mailings
- Support from the Town GIS staff in mapping solar installations
- Support from the Assessor's Office in identifying homes with oil, propane or electric heat that might be candidates for heat pump systems
- Coordination with the Needham High School Environmental Science classes and Environment Club. Possible projects might include
  - Training students to evaluate potential solar candidates via Google Maps
  - Educating students about air source heat pumps and enlisting them as informal community mentors in our effort to increase people's understanding of this (sometimes) mysterious technology.



### **Targeted Prospect Identification and Outreach**

We plan to leverage community and installer expertise to identify streets and neighborhoods with good general conditions for solar PV (as well as those with already installed systems). We have access to extensive networks within Needham and a database of Town residents. We can combine this information to run targeted outreach programs in focused geographic neighborhoods or demographic groups ((i.e.: new residents, parents or young children). This may include door-to-door canvassing or “house parties.”

### **Outreach to Community Partners**

We have learned that outreach is most successful when it comes through trusted sources. Green Needham has existing relationships with many other school, environmental, faith-based, and community organizations and groups throughout the town. Green Needham has had prior success with conducting outreach through these existing member networks, utilizing organizational websites, social media networks, email lists, newsletters, and in-person announcements/events.

The Solar Team will identify and work with a group of Solarize Plus outreach partners (both via the partners’ leadership and directly in peer-to-peer communication) to broaden outreach and work within existing networks to build interest and participation in Solarize Plus Needham.

### **Ambassadors**

The Solar Team will invite any resident or business who has signed up for solar (or who already has solar installed) to act as a Solar Ambassador. The Ambassadors will be given materials and organizational support so that they can reach out to their own personal and community networks. We will also ask Solar Ambassadors to host open houses and other home-based events, allowing friends and neighbors to meet with the selected solar installer and other residents who have gone solar, in a more relaxed, low pressure social setting.

We will also profile residents who have installed heat pumps, particularly in instances where they have integrated heat pump systems into older homes or retained backup use of their old heating systems.

### **Community Education and Marketing**

The Needham Solarize Plus Campaign will also work to further educate those interested in solar, secure their participation, and maintain their enthusiasm while they await installation. We have a number of venues for these events, including several schools, the Needham Library, Town Hall, and religious buildings. The objectives of our education and marketing strategies will be to:

- Provide interested parties with more detailed information about solar and/or heat pumps, as well as the components of the Solarize Plus Campaign. Answer questions and address concerns regarding participation in Solarize Plus
- Forge personal relationships and connections with those interested in solar and/or heat pump technology
- Facilitate communication between the installer(s) and those who have signed up for Solarize Plus
- Maintain interest and enthusiasm for those who have signed up for Solarize Plus, but are waiting for their installation

### **Solar Education and Solarize Marketing**



The Needham Solar Team will host a number of informational events where those interested in solar can obtain both general information about solar power, as well as specific information about the Solarize Plus Campaign. Once installers have been selected, these efforts will be coordinated with the vendors. We envision frequent, small-scale events and informational sessions where residents can come speak directly with both the installers and the Solarize Ambassadors. We will also explore a number of other creative strategies through our Solarize Plus Partner such as sponsoring a solar sign-up competition or having a Solarize Plus evening/brunch at a local restaurant.

### **Securing Solarize Plus Sign Ups/Participation**

Aiming to translate interest into action, the Solar Coach and Solar Team volunteers will work with the solar installer to ensure that anyone who has attended a Solarize Plus educational event receives a personal follow-up (email, phone call, or postcard) offering to answer any questions they may have. In addition, regular communications about Solarize Plus Campaign events and progress will be sent to all residents and businesses who have signed up for the Solarize Plus campaign, to sustain interest and ensure follow-through with their installation during the sign-up period.

### **Other Education and Outreach Activities**

Our Solar Coaches and volunteers will also work on back-office efforts such as:

- Responding to questions/inquiries by potential customers (e.g. interested homeowners with questions about Solarize Plus, mechanics, and pricing)
- Helping homeowners assess their suitability for solar via web tools like the US Department of Energy's PVWatts website (<https://pvwatts.nrel.gov/>)
- Keeping-up regular communications with homeowners who have signed up, in order to maintain enthusiasm
- Making sure that Eversource is fully aware of the Solarize Plus effort, in hopes that interconnection delays are minimized. (This is one area where we had bottlenecks in our prior Solarize experience.)

### **Solarize Mass Plus (required if applicable):**

*(If not previously described in marketing and outreach plan)* Indicate additional technology. Include information on how you will model outreach to include the additional technology and why your Community may be a good fit for each additional technology. **Be sure to use your review of the Plus Technology Selection (pages 11-13 of the RFP) as a point of reference.**

We envision an integrated outreach program, so that our outreach will also include the paired heat pump technology. We don't feel that there's a need for a second marketing track. Although the community has a good understanding of solar energy, we feel that more educational outreach will be needed for heat pump technology. We will plan and schedule a technology basics workshop for early fall 2019. This will be based on the format we've used for our popular solar workshops – neutral technical experts, vendor exposure and neighbor testimonials.

The team will have to work closely with the installer to ensure that local residents are well-informed about issues such as:

- Physical requirements for the technology (electrical service, etc.)

