

# NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools 2021

*Information for NC K-12 Schools Regarding the  
NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools Grant Application*

Issue Date: **January 2, 2021**

Application Deadline: **February 28, 2021, 5:00 PM EST**

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## Introduction

This document serves to notify educators, administrators and facility managers at public and private K-12 schools in North Carolina that NC GreenPower is providing grant funding for the installation of a small 3-5 kilowatt (“kW”) solar photovoltaic (“PV”) demonstration system with a weather station, monitoring equipment and a STEM curriculum. Now in the seventh year of the Solar+ Schools program, NC GreenPower estimates there will be funding for up to 15 school grants. This document provides program information, eligibility criteria, funding details, the application process and an estimated timeline for the program. (See page 3 for additional eligibility information.)

## NC GreenPower’s Mission

NC GreenPower’s mission is to expand public knowledge and acceptance of cleaner energy technologies to all North Carolinians through local, community-based initiatives. The nonprofit was founded in 2003 as a statewide program to connect consumers with renewable energy and carbon offset providers, creating positive environmental and economic impacts for our state. All projects supported by the program are located in North Carolina.

In 2015, NC GreenPower launched Solar Schools, a grant program to support educational solar PV installations at North Carolina K-12 schools. Contributions to NC GreenPower are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more information, visit: [www.ncgreenpower.org](http://www.ncgreenpower.org).

## About the Solar+ Schools Program

The addition of the Solar Schools pilot came after 20 months of development and with approvals by both the NC GreenPower and Advanced Energy Boards of Directors and the NC Utilities Commission (“NCUC”) to modify the current NC GreenPower program. The revisions allow NC GreenPower to not only continue support of renewable energy generators but also expand support for the installation of solar PV at schools across North Carolina.

This model will give financial support to schools that cannot afford a PV system and/or take advantage of tax credits. The Solar Schools grant covers a portion of the system’s costs and the selected school must fundraise to pay for the balance of the costs. This program also enables NC GreenPower to continue education and awareness efforts around renewable energy in communities and provide educational solar technology and curriculum to both educators and students in North Carolina.

In October 2019, the NCUC approved NC GreenPower’s transition from a pilot to the official **Solar+ Schools** program. We have also increased grant funding for each school selected for our program; the application will be available from January 2 - February 28, 2021.



## Eligible Applicants

Public and private K-12 schools in North Carolina that are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) or 170(c)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code are eligible to apply for the NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools grant.

We expect that the applicant will have the ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of solar technology across a broad range of subject areas/classes. The applicant must own the property on which the project will be installed or have *written* prior approval from the property owner when applying. Email the approval document to: [solarschools@ncgreenpower.org](mailto:solarschools@ncgreenpower.org). **The applicant should not already have solar PV technology installed on the property.**

Applying schools should have the full support of their school board, administration, superintendent, etc. for both the installation of the PV system, as well as for teachers attending curriculum training. Applicants should demonstrate that the school has educators who are committed to teaching students about energy and the benefits of solar/renewable energy, monitoring the data from the PV system, and integrating a deeper understanding of energy throughout the school.

Schools must be located in North Carolina and must be served by one of these North Carolina electric utilities:

- Investor-owned utilities (Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC, Duke Energy Progress, LLC, or Dominion Energy North Carolina)
- North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives or
- Electricities of North Carolina members

## Evaluation Process and Criteria

All applications will be evaluated by the NC GreenPower Board Review Committee to determine whether the project and fundraising are feasible at the school. Selections will be made based on a number of the following criterion:

- Applicant should not already have solar technology installed on school property.
- Program is open to all schools but some preference may be given to those schools in Tier 1 counties, defined by the [NC Department of Commerce as those that are most economically distressed](#). **However, schools in ALL counties are encouraged to apply.** For a list of past recipients, please [visit our website](#).
- Applicant school should be highly motivated to teach about energy and renewables.
- School should be able to demonstrate their ability to integrate the solar PV demonstration project into their curriculum.
- School will be required to do a Post-Installation Solar Evaluation to assess both the environmental and educational benefits from the solar PV system.



- The NC GreenPower Board Review Committee will strive to achieve geographic balance and diversity among grant awardees, if possible.

Applicants who are selected for the Solar+ Schools program will receive an award notice stating the amount of the school's required fundraising goal. Schools should contact their district facilities office and/or local school boards/commissions in advance of the award notice for approval to participate as schools will only have two to three weeks to accept the grant. Schools will have until the end of September to raise their funds.

## Funding

NC GreenPower estimates that there will be funding for up to 15 school grants for this year's program. The total number of awards will be dependent on donations made to the program. NC GreenPower's grant will pay for a portion of the project's construction cost. School fundraising goals will be fixed in the amounts of \$6,000, \$9,000, or \$12,000. Schools will be given their goal upon being selected and will have about five months to fundraise (May-September). Selected public schools who are successful in raising their portion of the funds may receive a grant between \$10,000-\$20,000 from the State Employees Credit Union ("SECU") Foundation to increase the size of the array from 3 kW to 5 kW. There is no separate application for the SECU Foundation grant. Interested schools should apply to NC GreenPower for consideration to receive a 3-5 kW solar PV system; systems larger than 5 kW may be allowed but the schools will need to raise the additional funds to support the effort.

**All awarded schools will be required to launch a fundraising "campaign" through our fundraising website [my.NCGreenPower.org](https://my.NCGreenPower.org).** The selected school should self-promote their campaign and may raise their funds using our website [my.NCGreenPower.org](https://my.NCGreenPower.org) (a crowd-source fundraising tool) or other method of the school's choosing. The online campaign makes it easy for communities to contribute funds to support the school's solar project. NC GreenPower will assist in marketing [my.NCGreenPower.org](https://my.NCGreenPower.org) fundraising campaigns through social media channels and at events to help the school with raising funds and awareness. Schools will be provided with a fundraising flier, an A-frame sign to display at school events and various other tools to assist with the fundraising efforts.

For all funds raised or obtained by the schools through the online campaign, grants, sponsorships or other means, NC GreenPower will retain a small percentage of raised funds to cover program and/or administrative costs as directed by the NC GreenPower Board of Directors; all remaining funds will be used to support the solar PV system at the school. Donations to NC GreenPower are non-refundable, tax-deductible and will be used to support only in-state projects.

Applicants who are selected to receive grant funding must demonstrate that their funds are available, in-hand or otherwise committed, before NC GreenPower will begin the installation process. Matching funds may not be in the form of in-kind goods or services.



If a school **does not raise enough** funds, it may have options such as:

- 1) requesting to extend their fundraising deadline by 30 days (one-time extension)
- 2) decreasing the size of the solar PV system to reduce project costs
- 3) asking NC GreenPower to use the funds to purchase renewable energy educational materials and classroom kits for the school from NEED.org

Additional options may be available to assist a school in its fundraising efforts.

If a school **exceeds** its fundraising goals, the school may use the additional funds to increase the size of the solar PV system or have NC GreenPower purchase additional curriculum, kits or learning tools on their behalf.

Projects are not eligible for NC GreenPower incentives (Renewable Energy Certificate, or “REC”, agreement) and all campaigns and projects must be authorized by NC GreenPower. Any RECs generated by the school’s solar PV system will be owned by NC GreenPower.

## Application Process

NC GreenPower, in its sole and absolute discretion, may accept or reject an application for any reason. Please submit the completed NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools application via the below Google Form link by **5:00 PM EST on Sunday, February 28, 2021**. Questions should be emailed to NC GreenPower at: [solarschools@ncgreenpower.org](mailto:solarschools@ncgreenpower.org) and applicants should state in the subject heading of the email “**Solar Schools Question – insert school name.**”

To apply for the NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools grant, [please click here.](#)

## Site Selection

The NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools Program is currently installing top-of-pole mounted systems, ranging from 8 to 12 panels (3.48 kW – 5.22 kW) on one galvanized steel pole. However, roof-mounted arrays may be considered if they can be installed in prominent, visible locations at the school (e.g. front of the school).

NC GreenPower’s solar technician will assist the school with the site selection for the solar PV installation. An ideal location will maximize solar energy production, have good visibility of the array for both the public and the school, have convenient access to an electrical and IT connection and ensure safety to the students. Based on these criteria, and considering the school’s preferences, NC GreenPower reserves the right to make the final decision for the location of the solar installation. Any changes to the site location may result in additional cost to the school.



## Installation and Management Process

NC GreenPower's qualified installer, NC Solar Now, will manage the installation process for the awarded school. To increase reliability and reduce maintenance requirements, the solar PV system should be grid-tied and should not be battery-based.

System installation must begin within ninety (90) days of fundraising deadline, unless approved by NC GreenPower. If any solar PV system construction or installation occurs before application acceptance, then NC GreenPower may, in its sole and absolute discretion, determine that the applicant's system is ineligible. In such event, NC GreenPower shall have no obligation to make any grant payment to or on behalf of the applicant.

School staff members should also be trained by NC GreenPower's installer to be the primary providers of operations/maintenance ("O&M") services; O&M services should be minimal and having trained staff will save the school the expense of hiring a contractor except for more serious issues. The school's fundraising goal will include raising an extra \$2,500 (\$500 x five years) so that future O&M expenses are covered after project's initial five-year installer warranty expires; these funds will be collected by NC GreenPower during the fundraising process but returned to the school to be held by the school in a special O&M account for future use.

NC GreenPower will hold all contributions and funds raised by the school to pay the installer upon satisfactorily completing the construction of the solar PV system. Completed projects will permanently display the appropriate signage/recognition of NC GreenPower and any corporate sponsors who donated to support the project.

## Curriculum

NC GreenPower will provide educational materials from The National Energy Education Development ("NEED") Project on solar PV for the schools to fully maximize the benefit of having the system as a teaching tool. The developed curriculum will consist of appropriate materials to engage both teachers and students in multiple subject areas. All NEED curriculum is approved to meet North Carolina Essential Standards for Science as adopted by the NC Department of Public Instruction. The curriculum may include information on other renewable energy sources as Solar+ Schools may expand beyond solar PV in the future.

NC GreenPower will also provide curricula training to educators from each awarded school; training will be a mandatory requirement for a minimum of three and up to five teachers per school. Training will be scheduled following the completion of fundraising. Educators will be required to provide feedback and recommendations on curriculum semi-annually through the school year so continuous program improvements can be made.



## Timeline

The following are dates associated with the NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools program:

Application period opens .....	January 2, 2021
Applications due to NC GreenPower .....	February 28, 2021 by 5:00 PM
NC GreenPower Board Committee review .....	March 2021
NC GreenPower notifies selected schools .....	by April 16, 2021
Deadline for school's acceptance of award .....	May 10, 2021
NC GreenPower announces selected schools.....	by mid-June 2021
Deadline for school to have funds raised.....	September 30, 2021
Extended fundraising deadline, if requested.....	October 31, 2021
School site walks with solar installer.....	Q4 2021-Q1 2022
Expected start/end dates for solar PV construction.....	Q1/Q3 2022