

Marketing and Outreach Plan

Our approach to marketing the Solarize program is to engage Lowell's extensive and active network of community groups to advocate for the program for the benefit of their constituents and the good of the planet.

Lowell is a diverse city with a network of neighborhood, ethnic, religious and environmental groups that serve the population.



Over the years the Lowell Sustainability Council and Core Volunteers have developed relationships with leaders in most of these organizations. We have a database with current contact information and a group of volunteers who are ready to approach these organizations as soon as we are approved. Our volunteers include members of the Sustainability Council, Lowell Telecommunications Corporation (LTC), 350Mass, Sierra Club and others who have lived in Lowell for many years and who are

passionate about moving our energy supply away from fossil fuel sources and toward renewable energy.

Our marketing campaign will consist of five phases: 1) Preparation, 2) Engagement with community leaders, 3) Contractor marketing, 4) Kickoff event, and 5) Community outreach.

Preparation

Once Lowell's application has been accepted by the Solarize Mass Plus program, we will begin preparing content for the website, as well as press releases for local the Lowell Sun & the Khmer Post newspapers. Local group contacts from our database will be divided among our volunteers based on existing relationships with these leaders. A training protocol will be developed to help volunteers explain the program to these community leaders and solicit additional support for the campaign.

Engaging Local Community Groups

If and when we are approved for the Solarize Mass Plus program by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, our volunteers will begin to personally contact local community organizations. We will help them understand how the program will help their constituents and help protect the planet from climate change.

Part of the engagement strategy involves helping local community organizations understand the basic metrics of the program (e.g. price, number and size of arrays, solar/capita) as well as associated greenhouse gas emissions reductions and monetary savings. In explaining how the Solarize Mass Plus program works, our volunteers will convey the benefits of pairing heat pumps with solar, as well as the standalone benefits of both technologies.

By engaging with these key stakeholders prior to the official launch of the Solarize Mass Plus program, we believe that we will be able to develop advocates throughout the City to help enhance program objectives. During this phase of the marketing, we will also be looking for key champions within the community to become Solar and Air Source Heat Pump Ambassadors that can further be utilized to share the benefits of these technologies with their neighbors. We anticipate potential events at Ambassador homes, as well as Q&A sessions at various community venues where a “real person” can provide insight into the benefits of the chosen technologies.

In order to maximize participation with our community partners, Lowell is interested in learning from prospective contractors whether they are willing to offer incentives for referrals or other creative mechanisms to further engage these valued partners.

Contractor Marketing Campaign

After the contractor is approved, we will engage with them to determine their marketing budget and how to leverage their resources for maximum impact. Key team members will coordinate with the selected contractor to plan for kickoff events and ongoing community outreach.

In addition to this coordination, we will work with the contractor to develop a large community thermometer that can be displayed in prominent areas of the City, as well as our dedicated website. We will work to track metrics for the program and compare them to other towns/cities that have participated in the Solarize Mass program. We believe that the emphasis on competition with Lowell Pride will drive higher participation rates.

Kickoff Event

Once the contractor is in place, Lowell plans to kick off the program with a Gala Event at Lowell Telecommunications Center on or before August 13th. A broad coalition of partners and supporters will be invited to attend this event. Potential invitees can include, but not be limited to: the Lowell Sustainability Council, the Mayor and other City Councilors, the City Manager, our state delegation, partner organizations such as UMass Lowell, Merrimack Community College, Community Teamwork Inc., Coalition for a Better Acre, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Organization, United Teen Equality Center, and others. The City and the Sustainability Council will use their resources to assist in this outreach and make the launch of Solarize Mass Plus Lowell as successful as possible.

Community Outreach

After the kickoff, Lowell intends to utilize multiple avenues of community outreach and major promotional events with Partner Organizations.

Lowell has several existing partnerships that could be leveraged to promote the Solarize Mass Plus Program. The City of Lowell works with programs that regularly interact with new and existing homeowners, including First Time Homebuyers programs. These channels could be utilized as a means to educate residents about the Solarize Mass Plus program through informational presentations or distribution of program literature.

Lowell has 15 neighborhood groups that typically meet on a monthly basis. City staff regularly attend these meetings and have established relationships with the major players involved. The neighborhood groups would be able to add local credibility for promotion of Solarize Mass Plus programs to their residents. The City would work with selected installers to get on agendas of these neighborhood groups. Information about the program can also be communicated through newsletters and other electronic correspondence within the neighborhood group networks. Outreach to each neighborhood group will allow for maximum penetration of the program.

Lowell is a Festival City, with dozens of festivals throughout the year. These festivals provide opportunities to promote the Solarize Mass Plus program and provide information to a large number of residents of varying demographics. Some of the larger festivals, such as the Lowell Folk Festival (end of July) and Southeast Asian Water Festival (early August) often include attendance numbers in the tens of thousands.

The Solarize Mass Plus team has begun assembling a spreadsheet with all known festivals and community events throughout the City. We will be working with the selected contractor to build a schedule of events for the program. Known events that may be utilized throughout the anticipated time frame of the campaign include: Puerto Rican festival (August), Lowell Food and Wine Festival (September), Sustainability Summit (October), Bay State Marathon (October), Monster Bash and Halloween Stroll (October), and City of Lights Parade and Celebration (November).

Smaller tabling events are also anticipated to be helpful in reaching our community. Events that could be utilized in this category include: Farmers Markets, Solar and Heat Pump Ambassador Workshops, Partner Organization-sponsored events, Hazardous Waste Collection Days, and Workshops in City of Lowell facilities, including public schools.

Since Lowell is a multi-ethnic City, we also plan on working with community partners to create an outreach flyer that is language-specific, translated into four languages and printed/broadcast on radio and local access television. It is anticipated that these flyers will also be part of the website developed as part of the Solarize Mass Plus Lowell campaign.

Lowell believes that utilizing this multi-pronged approach to outreach will help us help our residents to invest in sustainable technologies. Additional outreach avenues may be developed as the program progresses in conjunction with the selected contractor(s).