



BIG SOLAR CO-OP

Workshop #3 - *Updates and learnings from the Stroud, Shropshire & Telford nodes*

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Aim of workshop

To share knowledge and expertise around updates and learning from Stroud, Shropshire & Telford nodes of the Big Solar Co-op

What we want to come out with?

- Volunteers that have a clear understanding of the progress made and learning from local coordination in 2 distinct geographical areas
- One page report summarising discussion. Plus, notes for individuals.
- Material for a short blog on what came out of the workshop

Format

Agenda

1. Intros MA/KO 1 min
2. The Big Solar Co-op process MA/KO 4 mins
3. Group discussion of the 3 questions below 15 mins
4. Feedback of group discussion in main group – what are your top 3 points 15 mins
5. General feedback from work done so far 10min

For discussion (40 mins)

1. What do volunteers want to do?
2. What do volunteers want/need from local coordinators/Big Solar Co-op (BSC)?
3. What training do volunteers want/need?

Supporting notes

1. What do volunteers want to do? Suggestions:
 - a. Find and perform initial triage for potential sites
 - b. Contact site owners/users
 - c. Attending events and networking
 - d. Deliver presentations to site owners/users individually and/or in groups
 - e. Solar mapping your local area
 - f. Design solar arrays
 - g. Produce indicative designs for initial contact with site owners/users
 - h. Carry out financial modelling and produce outline proposals
 - i. Build relationship with site owners/users
 - j. Other

2. What do volunteers want/need from local coordinators/Big Solar Co-op (BSC)? Suggestions:
 - a. Point of contact for advice/information
 - b. Regular meetings online or in person to discuss progress against local coordinator/BSC goals
 - c. Materials promoting the work of BSC
 - d. Support in building relationships with site owners/users
 - e. References and learning transferrable skills for career progression outside BSC
 - f. Other

3. What training do volunteers want/need? Suggestions:
 - a. How to contact site owners/users
 - b. How to deliver presentations to individuals and/or groups and slides to do so
 - c. How to use Open Solar (OS) to design solar arrays
 - d. How to use OS to produce indicative proposals for initial contact with site owners/users
 - e. How to use CiviCRM to keep up to date with progress
 - f. How to build relationships with site owners/users
 - g. Understanding solar PV
 - h. Understanding grid connection and other aspects around solar PV
 - i. Other

Summary

We had a main group discussion about the process from site identification to signing the solar on roof contract. The discussion was a powerful way of the group understanding how complicated the process is and introducing them to some of the tasks that volunteers might take on. The outline process we discussed was:

- Site identification
- Clarify you have the right site via W3W
- Identify a site contact
- Triage the site
 - o Suitable rooftop
 - o High daytime electricity usage
 - o Check grid capacity
- Approach the site contact
 - o Standard letter (first sentence needs to grab attention – handwritten envelope if snail mail)
 - o Array design – indicative design
 - o Presentation to individual or board
- Build relationship with site contact
- Energy usage for site (preferably half hourly but monthly will do)
- Outline proposal (includes financial modelling, proposal development, sending to client)
- Follow up with site contact
- Get exclusivity agreement signed
- Negotiate power purchase agreement (PPA) and other supporting information
- Client site sign on dotted line

We then split into groups to discuss what volunteers want to do, what they want/need from BSC and, in particular, what training is necessary. In the main group we wrote up key points from the discussion:

- Training for talking to businesses
- Training for giving presentations – how to make sure the quality of presentations is good enough
- People don't want to volunteer for all parts of the process – how do we ensure we have willing volunteers for every aspect
- Need to give volunteers opportunities to try different parts of the process
- Does BSC need an HR team to manage training/onboarding, etc, of volunteers?
- Important to get known locally and build local reputation
- Share offer promotion
- Case studies/short testimonials from existing sites
- Local coordinator as intermediary between specialise (paid) staff and volunteers
- Training in all aspects of process from using Slack to determining grid capacity
- Big Solar Co-op email addresses for paid for and volunteer staff, and email signatures, headed paper and other branded material
- Could use Mailchimp to email potential clients/clients to ensure not going to spam and measure open rates, etc
- Should we send a letter or an email at first contact?

The Process

- Identify a site
- Identify a contact
- Clarifying you've got the right site (WSW) - negotiate PPA
- Triage the site
 - check capacity/network
 - suitable rooftop
 - high daytime energy use
- Approach the contact
 - Standard letter (array design)
first sentence needs to grab them / hand write envelope
- Energy usage
- Proposal
- site visit
- relationship-building with site
- exclusivity agreement

Volunteering - Key ideas

- Training for talking to businesses + giving presentations.
- How do we make sure the quality of presentations is high enough?
- People don't want to volunteer for all aspects. How to ensure that we have willing volunteers for every aspect of the process?
- Give everyone the opportunity to try aspects of the process.
- Do we need an HR team to manage training of volunteers / onboarding etc.
- Getting better known locally / building a local reputation.

- share offer promotion.
- case studies / short testimonials from existing sites.
- Local coordinator as an intermediary between specialised ^(paid) staff + volunteers.
- Training in use of slack, and grid capacity.
- Big solar email addresses and email signatures / headed paper.
- Mailchimp? (so we know whether an email has been opened / so it doesn't go into spam automatically).
- Should we send a letter or an email to make first contact?