

SOLAR FOR SCHOOLS PROGRAM GUIDEBOOK

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This Guidebook provides an overview of the eligibility requirements, available funding, and process for School Authorities to participate in the Solar for Schools Program.



Municipal
Climate Change
Action Centre

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1.0 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Solar for Schools (SFS) Program provides financial rebates to Alberta Public School Authorities who install grid-connected solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on new or existing school facilities or land in their jurisdiction and complete a student education initiative as part of the Project.

2.0 ELGIBILITY

2.1 Eligible Participants

The following organizations are eligible to participate in the SFS Program:

- a. Schools within the province of Alberta which serve Kindergarten (K) and/or a set of grades 1-12 and report to School Authorities classified as Public, Separate, Francophone, and Charter by Alberta Education are eligible to participate in the SFS Program.
 - i. Schools within School Authorities defined as Private, Provincial, Federal, and First Nations are not eligible for the program¹.

School Authorities can visit the Alberta Education Alberta Schools and Authorities website at <https://education.alberta.ca/alberta-education/school-authority-index/everyone/alberta-schools/> to determine if they meet the definition of a "School Authority" in the SFS Program.

2.2 Eligible Projects

To qualify for funding under the SFS Program, each Project² must comply with the following criteria:

- a. The system must be located on a facility or parcel of land wholly owned by the participating School Authority;
- b. The system must be paid for by the participating School Authority, with the exception of any external grant funding the school receives for the Project:
 - i. The Project may not be receiving combined funding in excess of 100% of eligible system costs;
- c. The system must be wholly owned by the participating school or School Authority for the life of the Project;
- d. The system must be grid-connected and compliant with the Government of Alberta's [Micro-generation Regulation \(AR 27/2008\)](#), as amended from time to time;
- e. The system must be greater than or equal to 2 kilowatts (kW DC PV array capacity);
- f. The system must be designed and installed by a qualified installer³ (not self-installed) who is a member of either the [Solar Energy Society of Alberta \(Solar Alberta\)](#) or the [Canadian Renewable Energy Association \(CanREA\)](#), and all system components must meet the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) requirements for electrical safety or an equivalent certification to applicable Canadian standards;

¹ Private schools were eligible for solar PV incentives through Energy Efficiency Alberta's Residential and Commercial Solar Program (RCSP), while First Nations schools were eligible for solar PV incentives through the Alberta Indigenous Solar Program (AISP)

² Project" means the solar PV system for which funding is requested through a single SFS Application

³ https://tradesecrets.alberta.ca/sources/pdfs/occupation_page_supporting/photovoltaic_info_sheet.pdf

- g. The system must be a new installation, where “new” is defined as installations that have an interconnection approval from the wire service provider signed no earlier than March 14, 2018. Additionally, all components must be new and cannot have been used in an energized solar array at any point in the past;
- h. The same parcel/property (based on site ID) must not have received an incentive for a solar PV system under another provincial solar incentive program;
- i. The following equipment must carry these minimum warranty levels:
 - i. Modules: 20-year power performance and 10-year manufacturing;
 - ii. Inverter(s) and/or micro-inverter(s): 10-year manufacturing;
- j. Expansions to existing systems installed prior to the launch of the SFS Program are eligible, however only the expansion portion of the system is eligible for funding.

2.3 Ineligible Projects

The following Project types are ineligible for the SFS Program:

- a. Projects that are eligible for the following programs;
 - i. Residential and Commercial Solar Program (RCSP);
 - ii. Alberta Indigenous Solar Program (AISP);
 - iii. Alberta Growing Forward On-Farm Solar PV Program;
 - iv. Alberta Municipal Solar Program (AMSP); and
 - v. Any other provincial solar incentive program that may follow;
- b. Projects that have received funding from Alberta Education’s capital planning cycle Solar Technology System (STS) Initiative:
 - i. New school constructions not receiving funding through the STS Initiative are eligible for funding through the SFS Program.
- c. Projects located on facilities or land owned by any other entity than a School Authority, including but not limited to the private sector, municipalities, universities, hospitals, and the provincial or federal governments;
- d. Projects located on temporary structures;
- e. Off-grid solar PV Projects;
- f. Solar thermal Projects;

3.0 FINANCIAL REBATE

School Authorities are eligible to receive a financial rebate for the completion of a Project through the SFS Program.

3.1 SFS Rebate Rates

The MCCAC agrees to pay a prescriptive per-watt incentive on total installed system capacity (\$/W), measured in nominal Direct Current (DC) watts, of each Project submitted through the SFS Application, in accordance with the incentive rates defined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: SFS Rebate Rates

Total Installed System Capacity (DC)	Rebate
<10 kilowatts	\$1.50/watt
10 kilowatts to <150 kilowatts	\$1.25/watt
150 kilowatts to <2 Megawatts	\$1.10/watt
2 Megawatts to 5 Megawatts	\$1.00/watt

In all cases, total rebate funding provided by the MCCAC will not exceed 50% of the total eligible expenses per Project, as defined in Section 3.4.

The MCCAC, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to adjust program rebate levels over time in accordance with changing market conditions (systems costs, electricity prices, etc.). Such changes will be announced publicly, highlighting a clear cut-off date for application approval under existing rebate levels.

3.2 Maximum Funding Limits

To ensure equitable and geographic distribution of program funds, total funding distributed to schools within a given School Authority is capped at:

- a. \$3,000,000 in allocated funding to schools within the School Authority district for one or more projects.
 - i. School Authorities can use up to \$1,500,000 of their available incentives towards new school construction projects.

3.3 Education Component

In order to participate in the SFS Program, participating schools must agree to integrate an educational component into the students' curriculum covering the importance of taking action on climate change and how renewable energy can help achieve this goal. The options for curriculum integration include:

- a. Agreeing to participate in an educational program for students and teachers through an MCCAC program partner. These may include:
 - i. [Inside Education - Climate Change Education Project](#)
 - ii. [People for Energy and Environmental Literacy \(PEEL\) – Lesson Plans](#)
 - iii. [People for Energy and Environmental Literacy \(PEEL\) – Educator Training](#)
- b. Proposing an independent educational component developed by the participating School Authority demonstrating how the school will embed an educational component into the curriculum that engages students with the solar PV system and meets the educational standards of the MCCAC-sponsored educational program.

Any School Authority wishing to develop an independent educational component of the Project must first receive approval from the MCCAC before proceeding.

3.4 Eligible Expenses

Eligible expenses incurred by the School Authority will be used to calculate the rebate value as described in Section 3.1 and must be outlined by the School Authority in the SFS Application. To be included in the rebate calculation, eligible expenses must be incurred by the School Authority prior to Project completion.

The following expenses will be included in calculating the maximum rebate:

- a. Expenses for the purchase of the solar PV equipment for the Project (i.e. solar PV modules, racking, inverters, transformer (if any), main distribution panel (if necessary), cabling, conduit, fittings, disconnects and monitoring interface);
- b. Expenses for fencing or any other protective infrastructure for the Project if required by the current applicable version of the Canadian Electrical Code;
- c. Expenses for the design, development, energy modelling, engineering (structural, electrical, civil, geotechnical), specification, procurement, and construction of the Project;
- d. Expenses for obtaining the required electrical permit and grid-connected approvals, and any required building and development permits; and
- e. Expenses for completing the required electrical inspection and building inspection for the Project.

3.5 Ineligible Expenses

Expenses that are ineligible for reimbursement through the SFS Program include:

- a. Goods and Services Tax (GST);
- b. Expenses for the operation and maintenance of a Project;
- c. Expenses for any security or protective infrastructure not required for the Project by the current applicable version of the Canadian Electrical Code;
- d. Expenses for roads or any other site access costs for a Project;
- e. Expenses for upgrades to electrical wires to the Project site or any other expenses which would fall within the purview of the Wire Services Provider (WSP);
- f. Lease payment expenses incurred after the Project is energized;
- g. Batteries or battery storage units connected to the solar PV system;
- h. Expenses incurred by the School Authority to complete the SFS Expression of Interest or SFS Application;
- i. Expenses incurred by the School Authority to prepare documents, process invoices, or other administrative and internal costs; and
- j. Any other expense deemed by the MCCAC to be ineligible.

3.6 Incentive Disbursement

The approval and allocation of qualified funds will occur on a first-come, first-served basis based on SFS Application approval dates. Applicants will be placed into the first-come, first-served queue in the order in which they submit a completed SFS Application to the satisfaction and approval of the program administrators and sign an SFS Implementation Funding Agreement.

Any School Authorities that do not complete the construction of their systems and submit completion documentation within 8 months of signing the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement are subject to removal from the payment queue and must contact the MCCAC if they still wish to participate in the SFS Program. On April 30, 2022, or when available funding is fully committed, the SFS Program will be closed to further applications.

The SFS Program rebate will be paid to the School Authority by cheque after the MCCAC has verified that the Project is complete. The Project verification process is described in Section 4.0

3.7 Incentive Stacking

The School Authority agrees to disclose to the MCCAC participation in any other government programs through which funding towards the cost of the Project is being pursued.

The School Authority is eligible to access other government programs for funding towards the cost of the Project. However, the maximum amount of combined funding towards the cost of the Project from all sources cannot exceed the total eligible costs of the Project.

The School Authority is not eligible to access multiple incentives provided through the Alberta Climate Leadership Plan for funding towards the same Project

4.0 HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Step 1: Submit the SFS Expression of Interest

School Authorities must submit the SFS Expression of Interest (EOI), accessible online at www.mccac.ca/SFS-expression-of-interest in order to notify the MCCAC of intent to participate and screen for high level eligibility. A single EOI submission may include multiple solar PV systems. When completing the EOI, please select "Add another item" for any Project pertaining to a separate facility, a separate electrical meter, or located on a different property.

It is recognized that values provided for the proposed installation capacity of the solar PV systems and the Project description are preliminary and may be updated prior to submission of the SFS Application.

The MCCAC recommends all School Authorities participating in the SFS Program solicit quotes from a minimum of two vendors prior to entering into any contract. The MCCAC has developed a [How to Choose a Solar Provider](#) guidance document to assist in the process of selecting a vendor, as well as a [Request for Proposals \(RFP\) Checklist for Solar PV Installations](#) document which provides a list of best practice items to include in any procurement processes should this be required for the Project.

The MCCAC will review all information provided in the EOI and will contact the School Authority to provide information regarding subsequent stages of the application process.

Note: Completion of the EOI does not secure funding or a place in the first-come, first-serve queue. For details on how this queue is established, see Section 3.6.

Step 2: Submit the SFS Application

School Authorities must submit the SFS Application and all required attachments to contact@mccac.ca or the designated MCCAC Project Coordinator. The SFS Application Form is available on the SFS Program webpage at www.mccac.ca/programs/SFS.

For each Project, School Authorities are required to provide a detailed description of the solar PV system as per the final design completed by the contractor. This includes:

- a. Location name;

- b. Location address;
- c. Site ID;
- d. Description of the solar PV system including:
 - i. Type and location of array mounting (e.g. roof, wall, ground, ballasted, attached, building-integrated);
 - ii. Array tilt (in degrees from horizontal) and azimuth angles (directional orientation, in degrees clockwise or counter-clockwise from due South);
 - iii. Make, model, and warranty for the solar PV modules, inverters, and racking;
 - iv. Any other relevant information;
- e. Rated capacity (watts DC) of each solar PV array; and
- f. Calculated energy yield of each solar PV array as installed (kWh AC per year / kW DC).

The following supporting information is also required for the Project as a whole:

- a. Project Contractor(s)⁴ engaged to complete the design, procurement and installation of all solar PV systems included in the Project;
- b. Wire Services Provider (WSP) through which the solar PV system is connected;
- c. Estimated Project completion date;
- d. Total Installed Capacity (watts DC) of each solar PV system included in the Project; and
- e. Total eligible expenses.

A list of the following documentation must be included as an attachment to the SFS Application:

- a. A signed copy of the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) required [Form A - Micro-generation Notice](#) and supporting documentation submitted to the Wire Services Provider (WSP) through which the solar PV system is connected;
- b. A copy of the final contract between the School Authority and the Contractor for the Project;
- c. If not included in the contract, a quote and detailed breakdown of the anticipated total eligible expenses and total installed PV array capacity (watts DC) of the Project; and
- d. A copy of a structural engineering assessment certified by a duly qualified engineer, for all building-mounted solar PV systems, indicating that the building can support all loads created by the addition of the solar PV system.

Upon submission, the MCCAC will review the full SFS Application. Approved Projects will proceed to Step 3.

While School Authorities may submit multiple SFS Applications, no more than one SFS Application may be submitted for any electricity meter (as per the site identifier number shown on the Micro-generation Notice)⁵. *The MCCAC, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to deny or limit approval of any SFS Application for reasons including but not limited to low energy yield and inappropriate or insufficient design.*

Step 3: Sign Funding Agreement

⁴ "Contractor" means a person or company operating in the Province of Alberta that is duly-qualified to carry out any or all of the activities involved in the design, procurement or construction of a solar PV system

⁵ In other words, individual solar PV systems are not eligible for multiple separate SFS rebates

Approved Projects will be issued an SFS Implementation Funding Agreement. The School Authority and the MCCAC must execute the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement, including the SFS Application (Schedule "B"). A signed copy of the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement must be scanned and sent to contact@mccac.ca or the designated MCCAC Project Coordinator. The MCCAC will return a final copy of the executed agreement to the School Authority.

The MCCAC must be notified of any deviation from Schedule "B" immediately, and an amendment must be duly executed should the Project scope, installation capacity, or completion date change.

Step 4: Project Construction

Once the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement is fully executed, Project funding is formally held and construction may begin. The Project must be completed and energized within 8 months of signing the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement. School Authorities are responsible for ensuring that construction is completed by the deadline. Should an extension of the completion deadline be required, the School Authority must submit a request to the MCCAC in writing detailing the nature of the request.

School Authorities are responsible for exercising due diligence in selecting qualified Contractors and ensuring that the Project is completed in accordance with all applicable municipal bylaws (e.g. permitting and inspections) and the laws of the Province of Alberta.

The MCCAC, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to provide a maximum 4-month extension for Project completion if the School Authority provides a written rationale that the MCCAC deems reasonable.

Step 5: Project Completion

Once the Project is energized, School Authorities must notify the MCCAC and provide the following documentation indicating that the Project was completed in accordance with the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement:

- a. A copy of the final interconnection and operating agreement with the interconnecting wires service provider;
- b. Final Project invoices demonstrating a detailed breakdown of the work completed as well as the cost of such work:
 - i. The invoices must at a minimum separate equipment costs, permitting costs, labour costs, and GST;
 - ii. The invoices must confirm the final installed system size (Watts DC);
- c. Confirmation of full payment by the School Authority for all invoices provided:
 - i. Proof of payment documentation must match all totals on the provided invoices and clearly demonstrate that all invoices have been paid in full. This may include accounts payable registers, electronic funds transfer (EFT) payment advice, cheque copies, or vendor confirmation.
- d. Proof of completion of the SFS Program education component requirement, which requires satisfaction of the following:
 - i. Providing proof of completion of a fully developed educational program offered or;
 - ii. A detailed outline, plan, and timeline for an educational program which will be offered to students and teachers at a later date

- e. A set of high-resolution photographs of the Project suitable for print publication. Photographs must show the Project during construction and after completion and include one photo in which all the solar PV modules are visible. Photographs including people are encouraged. In addition, please include:
 - i. A photograph of the module label that clearly shows the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), UL, or equivalent Canadian certification approval labels;
 - ii. A photograph of the inverter(s) or micro-inverter nameplate that clearly shows the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), UL, or equivalent Canadian certification approval labels
- f. A brief abstract describing the Project including one or more quotes from School leaders;
- g. Completion of program evaluation

The MCCAC will review the provided documentation and issue an SFS Project Completion Statement to the School Authority, outlining the final Project details and rebate. A signed copy of the SFS Project Completion Statement must be scanned and sent to contact@mccac.ca or the designated MCCAC Project Coordinator. The MCCAC will return a final copy of the executed SFS Project Completion Statement to the School Authority.

Step 6: Funding Disbursement

After the Project Completion Statement is executed the MCCAC will issue the SFS rebate cheque to the School Authority. The provided SFS rebate will be calculated based on the actual installed solar PV system capacity and eligible expenses listed in the Project Completion Statement.

5.0 EVALUATION, MEASUREMENT AND VERIFICATION

5.1 Evaluation

School Authorities will be invited to provide feedback on program implementation processes and operations to help inform the MCCAC's efforts to improve programs efficiency and cost-effectiveness, strengthen marketing, sharpen outreach, and increase the satisfaction of program participants. Municipalities will also be asked to help MCCAC determine the extent to which the programs intended outcomes and objectives are being met.

5.2 Verification

Any School Authority receiving grant money under the SFS Program may be contacted by the MCCAC or a third-party evaluator retained on behalf of MCCAC to verify Project installation or be asked to complete a written, oral, or electronic participant survey.

The School Authority must submit documentation to establish, to the satisfaction of the MCCAC, that the School Authority incurred and paid all eligible expenses reported. All items on an invoice submitted by the School Authority must be listed separately, and the cost for each eligible expense must be clearly identified.

The School Authority must also provide any other documentation requested by MCCAC. If the School Authority fails to provide information within a reasonable time on reasonable notice, as determined by MCCAC, for the audit and evaluation of the Project, the School Authority may be required to refund any and all payments received under the program, as well as forfeit any future payments under the program.

5.3 Inspection

If an SFS Application is approved, for three years following the execution of the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement, the MCCAC or its designees are entitled, at a reasonable time and upon reasonable notice to the School Authority, to attend the Project site for the purpose of examining items pertinent to the Project in order to assess whether the School Authority is in compliance with these program conditions, and to conduct other measurement and verification activities if necessary.

6.0 REMEDIES AND WARRANTIES

6.1 Refunds

The School Authority shall immediately refund to MCCAC any payment received under the SFS Program not in accordance with the SFS Guidebook and the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement upon notice being provided to the School Authority by the MCCAC. Failure to make repayment as required by MCCAC creates a debt owing to the Government of Alberta that can be offset against any money the Government of Alberta owes to the School Authority.

6.2 Right of Set-Off

The School Authority agrees that the MCCAC may off-set against any other grant or amount payable to the School Authority under any programs administered by the MCCAC any amounts that become repayable by the School Authority to the MCCAC under the SFS Program.

6.3 False or Misleading Information

If the School Authority provides any false, misleading, or incomplete information under the SFS Program, the School Authority shall forgo all rights to benefit from the SFS Program.

6.4 Environmental Attributes or Products

"Environmental attributes" means emission offsets, renewable energy certificates, renewable energy credits, and any and all other current or future credits, benefits, emissions reductions, offsets or allowances, however entitled, named, registered, created, measured, allocated or validated

- a) that are at any time recognized or deemed of value, or both, by any buyer, applicable law, or any voluntary or mandatory program of any government or other person and
- b) that are attributable to
 - i. generation by the Project and
 - ii. the emissions or other environmental characteristics of such generation or its displacement of conventional or other types of energy generation through the avoidance of environmental impacts on air, soil or water, including but not limited to the emission of greenhouse gases.

The School Authority or applicant will not register or claim any environmental attributes generated by the Project. The School Authority or applicant will not transfer or assign any rights, title and interests, if any, in all environmental attributes generated by the Project to any person.

The School Authority or applicant warrants that no environmental attributes generated by the Project have been claimed, sold or otherwise transferred to a third party and that no other person has any claim to or ownership of the environmental attributes generated by the Project.

6.5 Limitation of Liability

MCCAC's sole liability is limited to paying the properly qualified incentives specified herein.

The School Authority acknowledges that any service provider, solar installation contractor, or other solar provider selected by the School Authority is not an agent, contractor or subcontractor of MCCAC.

MCCAC shall have no obligation to maintain, remove or perform any work whatsoever on the solar PV system or equipment installed.

Neither MCCAC nor any of its affiliates shall be liable to the School Authority or to any other party for a Service Provider's and/or installation contractor's failure to perform, for failure of the solar PV equipment to function, for any damage to the School Authority's premises caused by the service provider and/or installation contractor, or for any and all damages to property or injuries to persons caused by or arising from any activities associated with this program.

7.0 SFS CHECKLIST

Step 1: Submit the SFS Expression of Interest

- Complete and submit the SFS EOI at www.mccac.ca/SFS-expression-of-interest
- Receive approval to proceed to Step 2 from the MCCAC

Step 2: Submit the SFS Application

- Complete and submit the SFS Application (Schedule "B") and all required attachments, available at www.mccac.ca/programs/solar-for-schools-program

Step 3: Sign the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement

- Review, sign, and submit the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement issued by the MCCAC upon approval of the SFS Application

Step 4: Project Construction

- Install and energize the Project within 8 months of signing the SFS Implementation Funding Agreement

Step 5: Project Verification

- Notify the MCCAC of Project completion and provide necessary documentation
- Complete program evaluation
- Review, sign, and submit the Project Completion Statement issued by the MCCAC upon approval of completion documentation

Step 6: Funding Disbursement

- Receive your SFS rebate cheque from the MCCAC

CONTACT US

Questions about the SFS Program may be directed to:

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780.433.4431
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