

Community Power Accelerator Prize

Team Name:	EMPOWER Solar
City and State:	Gainesville, FL
Submission Title:	Leveraging Community Solar in Challenging States



**Community
Power
Accelerator**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



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Organization Overview

EMPOWER Solar a coalition of municipalities, nonprofits, businesses, and community groups. The team includes:

- Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
- City of Gainesville-Gainesville Regional Utilities
- City of Gainesville's Community Reinvestment Area & Economic Development & Innovation Departments
- Community Weatherization Coalition/Rebuilding Together North Central Florida (CWC/RTNCF)
- Duval, Springhill, and Sugarhill LMI neighborhoods
- NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee (NAACP ECJC)
- Solar Impact, Inc
- The Southwest Advocacy Group

Our green jobs partners include:

- Alachua County Public Schools
- CareerSource North Central Florida
- Santa Fe College

Project Overview

We've had to be creative because of the lack of community solar friendly policies in Florida. We will install solar on public buildings within the community using a solar equipment lease. The lease payments are used to fund energy improvements resulting in at least 20% reduction in electricity costs for both homeowners and renters in LMI neighborhoods. This project approach results in more than double the environmental benefits of a traditional community solar project alone. Additionally, we will install solar and batteries on community centers serving LMI neighborhoods.

Projects include:

- MLK Jr Multipurpose Center – 75 kW + batteries
- Animal Services Building – 200 kW
- Communications Center – 225 kW
- Senior Recreation Center – 170 kW
- Star Garage – 330 kW

Meaningful Benefits

Community Ownership – We will provide community ownership of solar projects on community buildings.

LMI Household Access – Both owners & renters in LMI neighborhoods will get energy efficiency improvements.

Greater Household Savings – We will be using the solar lease payment to fund energy efficiency improvements in LMI homes which will allow many more homes to achieve 20% energy reductions than installing solar directly.

Resilience and Grid Benefits – We will be installing solar and batteries on a community center serving LMI neighborhoods. The grid will benefit from both the solar & from the improved energy efficiency of the LMI homes.

Equitable Workforce Development – The leased solar will require skilled labor for both installing and maintaining the lease solar. The energy efficiency improvements will also require skilled labor. We are working with our green jobs partners to develop an equitable workforce.

*A Public Document