

# Low-Carbon Solar RFP Guidance

The **Clean Energy Buyers Institute (CEBI)** engages leading organizations in the solar industry to raise awareness about the impact of embodied carbon emissions throughout the solar photovoltaic (PV) supply chain and related clean energy procurement decisions. To support this effort, CEBI has created a suite of educational materials for stakeholders along the solar supply chain. This document provides examples of low-carbon solar procurement language with increasing levels of rigor to assist energy customers in the process of building Requests for Proposals (RFP) and other procurement documentation.



## CEBI Low-Carbon Solar Resources

### Low-carbon Solar Primer



An introduction to solar PV supply chain challenges and the opportunity for energy customers to take action now toward decarbonization

### Letter of Intent



A letter for suppliers to signal energy customers' collective intent to prioritize embodied carbon in solar PV procurement

### RFP Guidance



An overview of how to integrate low-carbon solar preferences into procurement documents

### Embodied Carbon Analysis



An overview of key embodied carbon analysis terminology and documentation, along with existing national frameworks

## Common Introductory Language

Decarbonizing the solar PV supply chain and addressing emissions deep in a product supply chain requires a strong and uniform market signal from consumers. Project specifications in Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are an impactful tool for energy customers to demonstrate supply chain related priorities. RFP structure and language varies across organizations, so the CEBI Low-carbon Solar Community of Practice has created **Common Introductory Language** for inclusion at the beginning of RFP specifications to signal a collective interest in low-carbon solar:

*"In collaboration with the Clean Energy Buyers Institute and other concerned energy customers, project developers, and solar panel manufacturers, we recognize that the solar industry has an opportunity to strengthen its supply chain and optimize its environmental impact by reducing the emissions associated with the manufacturing of solar components. Given this, we seek information regarding embodied carbon of solar modules in our supply chain so as to make more informed decisions based on the upstream carbon-related impacts associated with our energy procurement and/or associated equipment."*

## Framework for Low-Carbon Solar RFP Asks

There are three prevalent approaches to ask for low-carbon solar equipment, each with increasing rigor: an informational request, preferential language, and outright specification. Below is a guiding framework for energy customers to leverage for organization-specific RFPs.

|                               | Description  | General Example  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Informational Request</b>  | Indication of interest in low-carbon solar and ask for product-specific carbon analysis documentation          | Please provide the following information...  |
| <b>Preferential Language</b>  | Inclusion of value-added criteria that gives price or non-price considerations to embodied carbon              | [above plus]...noting that bids with lower embodied carbon will be given preference... |
| <b>Outright Specification</b> | Requirement of product-specific carbon analysis documentation and a specific kgCO <sub>2</sub> e/kWh threshold | [above plus]...and all bids are required to meet the following minimum criteria...     |

To learn more about product-specific carbon analysis documentation for solar modules and related terminology, please see CEBI's [An Introduction to Embodied Carbon Terminology](#).

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## Examples of Low-Carbon Solar RFP Language

Below are examples of how different asks could show in an RFP, including different product-specific carbon analysis documentation and scopes that could be used.

### Example 1

#### Informational Request

Please provide any available information related to your consideration and analysis of the carbon emissions for the supply chain for this project. Documentation can include (for example):

- any carbon reduction targets set by your company and/or suppliers,
- a practice to use the Embodied Carbon Calculator for Construction (EC3) tool to evaluate the embodied carbon in different components of the project, and/or
- a product-specific carbon analysis such as a life cycle assessment (LCA) per the French ADEME process and tender system<sup>1</sup> or a Type III environmental product declaration (EPD) according to the Norwegian product category rules (PCR) for the solar modules, and/or any additional Type III EPDs for other components of the solar system.

### Example 2

#### Preferential Language

Please provide a life cycle assessment (LCA) per the French ADEME process and tender system<sup>2</sup> for the solar modules in this project. Bids submitted with this documentation and lower embodied carbon values will be given preference. If this documentation is unavailable, please submit a Type III environmental product declaration (EPD) according to the Norwegian solar module product category rules (PCR) and/or a description of your intentions, if any, to solicit or commission these types of product-specific carbon analysis, including participation in the forthcoming EPEAT Ultra-Low-Carbon Solar program.

*Note: this example is limited to the solar module and based on existing product-specific carbon analysis documentation.*

### Example 3

#### Outright Specification

All bidders are required to demonstrate [X] percentage of modules meet EPEAT requirements and are EPEAT registered in the country where the project is being built.

*Note: this example is limited to the solar module and based on a forthcoming ecolabel, which is expected to be available in the market in late-2022*

**For more information, please contact [communications@cebi.org](mailto:communications@cebi.org).**

<sup>1</sup> All information provided in an LCA through the French tender system remains confidential  
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