

Scope of Solar Array Lands Supporting Agribusiness Pilot Project

I. Introduction

- What is SALSA?
 - The Solar Array Lands Supporting Agribusinesses (SALSA) Program aims to showcase how solar arrays can provide access to land for underserved populations to develop successful agribusinesses that create jobs and culturally appropriate agricultural products for select communities. The Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center (CALC) will leverage existing relationships with solar companies operating solar arrays along the Front Range to pair them with ten Latinx and immigrant community members interested in starting agribusinesses within their arrays. Since January 2024, the CALC team has been reaching out to solar companies owning and operating solar arrays along the Front Range.
- Program Overarching Goals
 - SALSA participants will be expected to come to the table with existing agricultural expertise (2 years minimum) for the activities they wish to undertake - CALC will not be providing specialized agricultural trainings. SALSA's dual land-use strategy and incorporation of marginalized community members into agrivoltaics will offer numerous examples of how agrivoltaics can create local agribusiness opportunities within existing solar arrays, providing land access to those in need.
 - The goal of this program is to improve climate resiliency for the agricultural industry using microclimates to dampen temperature swings while keeping more moisture in the ground longer. SALSA works to add inclusivity with underserved populations and facilitating land access for Latinx and immigrant communities along the Front Range of Colorado to initiate agribusinesses in existing solar arrays.
- Program Specific Goals
 1. **Increase Land Access:** SALSA seeks to directly address the critical challenge of land scarcity for farmers, particularly for Latinx and immigrant communities, by providing access to underutilized solar array land.
 2. **Promote inclusivity** by facilitating land access for Latinx and immigrant communities on the Front Range to establish agribusinesses within existing solar arrays.
 3. **Foster Economic Development:** By supporting the creation of new agribusinesses, SALSA aims to stimulate economic growth, job creation, and increased revenue for participating communities.
 4. **Promote Sustainable Agriculture:** The project emphasizes the integration of agriculture and renewable energy, demonstrating the potential for agrivoltaics to create sustainable and resilient food systems.

5. **Build Community Resilience:** By empowering underserved communities to become food producers, SALSA contributes to building community resilience, reducing reliance on external food sources, and increasing access to fresh, healthy food.
6. **Demonstrate Agrivoltaic Potential:** Through the SALSA project, CALC will showcase the viability and benefits of agrivoltaic systems, providing valuable data and insights for future development and policymaking.
7. **Strengthen Partnerships:** Building strong partnerships with solar companies, government agencies, and community organizations is essential to the success of SALSA. The project aims to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders.

By achieving these goals, SALSA will create a model for sustainable and equitable land use that can be replicated in other regions.

- Why should you participate?
 - SALSA will subcontract up to ten startup agribusinesses for a 12-month performance with sufficient funds to showcase the potential of agrivoltaics. As SALSA participants, these new agribusiness owners will receive training in agrivoltaics, milestone-based payments to decrease the financial risk associated with starting a new agribusiness, community networking and marketing opportunities, and further support from CALC to facilitate their success.

II. Benefits of SALSA for Farmers

- Land Access
 - The Solar Array Lands Supporting Agribusiness program provides land access opportunities to farmers via pre-existing solar array sites. Sites are context specific. However, in Colorado, land access is borderline impossible for up and coming farmers as well as experienced farmers. Through this program, this opportunity works to promote multiuse systems that create efficiencies in land use for the future.
 - Currently the Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center also partners with landowners that are Solar Developers to provide that access to varying landscapes for agricultural opportunities. Our goal with this is to create sustainable long standing relationships to fortify our local farm systems of the future.
- Financial Support
 - Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center will work with each farmer to provide a multi-phase financial support system for the first year of the farmer starting their agribusiness in the paired solar array. Funding options that the Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center will be provided during the planning process for the next season in November and December 2024 respectively.

III. Becoming a SALSA Farmer

- Eligibility Requirements

To participate in the SALSA program, farmers and agribusinesses must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Agricultural Experience

- **Minimum:** 2 years of agricultural experience.
- **Preferred:** 5+ years of agricultural experience.

2. Identification

- Must possess one of the following:
 - Social Security Number (SSN)
 - Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)
 - Driver's License number

3. Residency and Work Authorization

- Must have permanent residency or an authorized work permit.

4. Financial Requirements

- Must have a bank account.

5. Background Check

- Must be able to do a background check as verified by a third-party.

6. Business Operations

- Must demonstrate the willingness and ability to register, start, and operate a business.
- Application Process
 - Interested farmers and agribusinesses that meet the eligibility criteria are encouraged to apply for the SALSA program. The application process includes providing detailed information about your agricultural experience, identification, residency status, financial stability, business operations capability, and consent to a background check.
 - By meeting these eligibility criteria, participants can take advantage of the opportunities provided by the SALSA program, contributing to a more sustainable and productive agricultural landscape while benefiting from renewable energy integration.

IV. The SALSA Program Experience

- **Demonstration and Retrofit Site Visits**
 - CALC will host an agrivoltaics workshop at Jack's Solar Garden to showcase the agricultural opportunities and necessary safety precautions within a solar array while answering questions for community members and solar companies. This way, CALC will expand its agrivoltaics demonstration site at Jack's Solar Garden by aiding selected agribusiness startups to build on our knowledge.
 - Participants will have access to online and in-person resources to facilitate their continued education in agrivoltaics.
 - At Jack's Solar Garden, CALC will provide opportunities for participants to gain hands-on experience working within a solar array.
 - CALC will provide field days at amenable solar companies' solar arrays to bring out potential SALSA participants to see what lands would be accessible to them

- **Business Launch and Operations**
 - Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center will assist farmers in the beginning process of starting their business. This consists of
 - Registering with the state
 - Insurance considerations for multi use systems
 - Support and approval of a multiyear business plan designed by the farmer
 - Support to understand the multiphase funding opportunities for the first year of the SALSA program.

- **Ongoing Support from CALC**
 - Ongoing support will be provided throughout the duration of the first year of the program. A farm liaison / contact will be established and will connect with each farm project weekly, biweekly and monthly for different support activities to ensure the successful implementation of the agrivoltaics operation. Farmers will have this liaison contact information so they can be supported in day to day needs, questions, emergencies or other opportunities that can provide the best possibility for success.

V. Conclusion

- **Recap of Program Benefits**
 - The Solar Array Lands Supporting Agribusiness (SALSA) program offers several key benefits to participating farmers. By joining SALSA, farmers gain access to valuable agricultural land under existing solar arrays, receive financial support to start and grow their agribusinesses, and benefit from valuable training and mentorship. Additionally, SALSA provides opportunities to network with other farmers and industry professionals, contributing to the overall success of the program and the well-being of the farming community.

- **How to Apply**
 - Application link will be provided after completion of the intake form.

- Contact Information
 - For more information or to apply, please visit the SALSA webpage on the Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center website or contact Nelson Heider-Kuhn via email (nelson@coagrivoltaic.org).

Timeline for Solar Array Lands Supporting Agribusiness Pilot Program

1. Intake form - 7/1/24 - 12/1/24
 - a. Eligibility
2. Engaging community visits for considered farmers -
 - a. Orientations for new farmers 8/1/24 - 10/1/24
 - b. Webinar series review - 9/1/24 - 12/1/24
3. Business plan - 9/1/24 - 1/1/25
 - a. Application form
 - b. 1-2+ (minimum 2 year commitments) year business plan
4. Matchmaking - 10/1/24 - 1/1/25
 - a. For Solar Site Partnership
 - i. Includes photographs
 - ii. Site description
 - b. Visit Farmer - Solar collab site for each farmer
5. Business Setup 11/1/24 - 2/1/24
 - a. Register a business (State and Federal)
 - b. Business Bank Accounts
 - c. Insurance
6. Funding (Quarters) Year 1
 - a. (Phase 1 - Spring) - 1/1/25 - 4/30/25
 - b. (Phase 2 - Summer) - 5/1/25 - 7/31/25
 - c. (Phase 3 - Summer/ Fall) - 8/1/25 - 12/31/25
7. Reporting & Updating - 1/1/25 - 12/31/25
 - a. Monthly reports to Project Manager
 - b. How did the month go
 - i. What small and large scheduling plans are on horizon for next month
(Transparency with Solar Developers)
 - ii. Watering Schedule