



**SF Environment**

**Our home. Our city. Our planet.**

A Department of the City and County of San Francisco



**For Immediate Release:**

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

Press Contact: Guillermo Rodriguez, (415) 355-3756, guillermo.rodriguez@sfgov.org

## Press Release

### **San Francisco Employees Pool their Solar Buying Power**

#### ***Employee group discount program reduces cost of residential solar, helps San Francisco and surrounding communities move toward climate goals***

The San Francisco SunShares program has re-launched in 2014 to make the process of going solar easier and more affordable for City of San Francisco employees and retirees who live throughout the Bay Area.

The 2014 participating employer organizations include some of the city's largest workforces including the City and County of San Francisco, Arup, Genentech, Salesforce, the San Francisco Unified School District, the University of California at San Francisco, United Airlines and Virgin America.

San Francisco SunShares was the City's first-ever employee group discount program for solar. In 2013, the program's inaugural year, San Francisco employees, retirees and some of the City's largest employer's workforces installed 105 solar photovoltaic systems on their homes. These solar rooftops added almost a half of a megawatt, roughly equivalent to a new fossil power plant, of new residential solar capacity in less than six months. By pooling their purchasing power, participants were able to secure solar pricing that was 20 percent less than average residential installation costs in San Francisco at the time.

Due to the success of the 2013 program, the San Francisco Department of the Environment, which leads the San Francisco SunShares initiative, in partnership with the Business Council on Climate Change's (BC3) member companies and the non-profit Vote Solar, has launched the program again during National Energy Awareness Month.

"The SunShares program makes solar more affordable and accessible for San Francisco's employees and retirees," said Debbie Raphael, Director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment. "The group purchasing aspect empowers employees to be part of a greater effort to protect the planet."

"Installing solar on my rooftop through SunShares was a no-brainer for my family," said William Lee, the first participant to install a system through the program in 2013. "While we had been considering installing solar energy for a while, the cost incentives and convenience of the program encouraged us to jump on this opportunity."

"The San Francisco SunShares program is a prime example of how San Francisco companies are working together to create local solutions to climate change," said Michael Parks, Director of the Business Council on Climate Change. "The program is especially innovative because it helps employees power their own homes and lives with clean energy, creating an impact that extends beyond the workplace."

The program is administered by Vote Solar, a local non-profit, which helps organizations develop employee solar group discount programs to address the soft costs associated with solar installations. Vote Solar provides due diligence on vendors, maintains the program's website, conducts educational workshops, and provides technical advice to help make the process of going solar easier for San Francisco SunShares participants.

"The cost of solar panels has decreased significantly in recent years, meaning that non-hardware 'soft' costs like marketing and customer acquisition represent some of the most significant opportunities for putting solar within reach of more consumers. San Francisco SunShares tackles these soft costs head on, all while empowering employees to get smart about solar and advance their communities' climate goals," said Jessie Denver, Vote Solar's GroupEnergy program director.

Sunrun, the nation's largest dedicated residential solar company with its headquarters in San Francisco, was chosen as the San Francisco SunShares program vendor by a selection committee comprised of volunteers from participating organizations. Sunrun pioneered solar as a service, a way for homeowners to go solar without the high upfront cost. The company designs, installs, finances, and insures the solar panels on a homeowner's roof, while families pay just for the electricity at a lower rate than their current utility. At the same time, homeowners benefit from system performance guarantees, online monitoring and ongoing maintenance.

"Home solar installations in the U.S. continue to grow rapidly, more than doubling in the last two years alone as Americans demand cleaner and more affordable energy," said Lynn Jurich, chief executive officer of Sunrun. "We are pleased to partner with the San Francisco SunShares program – it is increasing access to renewable energy in the Bay Area by making the process of going solar even easier and more affordable for consumers."

The San Francisco SunShares program is also contributing to regional solar market development and State distributed generation goals, including Governor Brown's goal of 12,000 megawatts of distributed renewable energy generation by the year 2020.

More information on the program and how to sign up can be found at:  
<http://mygroupenergy.com/group/sfsunshares>

###