

# Solar United Neighbors releases resources Ready, Set, Solar, REAP to assist farms & rural small businesses to go solar

*Solar United Neighbors releases resources and launches "Ready, Set, Solar, REAP" to assist farms and rural small businesses in going solar*

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EINPresswire.com/ -- As part of its mission to help people go solar, national nonprofit Solar United Neighbors (SUN) has launched "Ready, Set, Solar, REAP!" focused on helping applicants with the USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) application process.



Grand Rapids, Minnesota, berry farmer Stuart Lavalier

REAP offers grants and loans to make solar more affordable. These grants are for up to 50% of the system cost and loans are available through a competitive application process. The Inflation Reduction Act quadrupled funding for the program. The USDA has also increased the number of application windows per year to four (quarterly) through 2024. This means there is more opportunity to secure funding to add solar to farms and rural businesses.

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We're excited to offer this first-of-its-kind guide and resources to bring more solar power to rural communities.”

*Anya Schoolman, Solar United Neighbors Executive Director*

“If you own a farm or rural small business and have thought about going solar, now's your chance,” said Anya

Schoolman, Solar United Neighbors Executive Director. “Going solar lets you lower and control your energy costs. We're excited to offer this first-of-its-kind guide to bring more solar power to rural communities.”

Grand Rapids, Minnesota, berry farmer Stuart Lavalier added an additional crop recently to his

family's farm when he installed a 27.3 kW solar array. In its first year of operations, the financial benefits are clear.

"We're seeing a negative number on our electric bill," Lavalier said. "We don't have a huge electricity bill but the solar covers it. . . .We've been getting a check back each month of about \$300."

Lavalier's decision to add solar to his farm began a decade ago while attending a statewide growers conference. He went in thinking about finding solutions for the usual farm production challenges in the Upper Midwest: drought, insect and pest damage, changing weather patterns, hail, wind, and more.

But along with valuable production-oriented information from the conference, he was inspired by a fellow berry grower to consider a different set of issues related to his farm's future: installing solar panels.

"That grower talked about how he wanted to give back, to do what's right, to grow more on the farm than just berries," Lavalier said.

The USDA accepts applications throughout the year. The next deadline is December 31. The other dates in 2024 are March 31, 2024, June 30, 2024, and September 30, 2024.

SUN has also put in place Ready, Set, Solar, REAP!, a free program designed to make the application process easier by offering step-by-step guidance over 10 weeks to complete and submit a USDA REAP grant.

Those interested can join Ready, Set, Solar, REAP online: [Ready, Set, Solar!](https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/ready-set-solar-rural-businesses/)  
<https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/ready-set-solar-rural-businesses/>

As part of the program participants receive:

□ A week of emails introducing the REAP grant process and a [REAP guide](#), followed by an email a



Grand Rapids, Minnesota Berry Farm



Solar United Neighbors logo

week with bite-size to-do's for the remaining 9 weeks

- Unbiased, installer-neutral advice and expertise
- Support from a network of peers, including SUN staff and previous REAP grantees

Solar United Neighbors has helped dozens of applicants apply for a REAP grant or loan.

Additional resources provided by SUN include:

- An on-demand webinar 'REAP Solar Grants & Your Rural Business', in English ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43ckopX\\_5M8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43ckopX_5M8)) and Spanish ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q\\_w6h7u4sGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_w6h7u4sGQ))
- REAP guide in English (<https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/download-our-rural-business-guide/>) & Spanish (<https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/descarga-nuestra-guia-de-negocios-rurales/>)
- Solar Help Desk with hands-on support (<https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/go-solar/want-to-install-solar/go-solar-on-your-own/>)
- USDA website map to see if a rural business is in an eligible area (<https://eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov/eligibility/welcomeAction.do?pageAction=rbs>) (NOTE: qualifying farms are available regardless of location)
- USDA REAP FAQ (at the bottom of the page) (<https://www.rd.usda.gov/inflation-reduction-act/rural-energy-america-program-reap>)

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