EMPOWER Project's
SOLAR FOR ALL APPLICATION

What is Solar for All?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has made available $7 billion nationwide for solar energy projects that benefit marginalized and underserved residential communities. Grant recipients commit to reducing the energy bills of participating residences by 20%. Alachua County is the only municipality in Florida applying for the grant.

What is our plan for Alachua County?

We are applying for a $25 million grant. We are proposing a solar lease program, which would place solar panels on municipal and educational buildings through a lease agreement. The funding raised by the lease will be placed in a fund managed by Alachua County, and disbursed for solar and energy efficiency improvements in the Springhill/Sugarhill, Duval, and SWAG neighborhoods.

Why solar leasing?

Solar leasing is a win-win for the EMPOWER Project and our leasing partners. Local communities get to stretch these funds for more than 30 years, and to customize improvements to fit their needs. Our leasing partners are able to access clean, renewable solar power and see the immediate budget impacts of utility bill decreases, without the upfront cost of paying for solar panels. The Empower Project projects a minimum 10% decrease in a building's utility costs as soon as the panels come online, with no need for our partners to buy, install, or repair the panels themselves.

What are next steps?

$25 million can lease a lot of solar panels! Alachua County and the City of Gainesville are putting together an inventory of what rooftop and ground-mount locations could be potential leasing sites. We're looking for partners to expand out list of sites to accommodate the amount of solar we could purchase with these funds.

Who can help?

A single lease can last the lifetime of the solar panels and the roof, which is about 30 years. That's a long time for a leasing agreement like this. We're looking for established, stable partners. Our current focus is on municipalities and educational institutions, but are open to other partners who meet these requirements.

Who are we?

The EMPOWER Project is a coalition of Alachua County 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 and Economic Development & Innovation Departments
- Community Weatherization Coalition/Rebuilding Together North Central Florida (CWC/RTNCF)
- Duval, Springhill, and Sugarhill neighborhoods
- NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee (NAACP ECJC)
- Solar Impact
- The Southwest Advocacy Group

Green Jobs Partners

- Alachua County Public Schools
- CareerSource
- Sante Fe College