



CASE STUDY : GRID ALTERNATIVES

Those That Grow Together, Go Together; A Collaborative Approach to Contractor Capacity Building

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GRID Alternatives (GRID) is a national leader in advancing access to clean, affordable solar energy and solar workforce opportunities.



BACKGROUND

The organization has experienced significant growth over the last decade, with a notable increase in projects after the Inflation Reduction Act was passed.

As GRID's footprint grew in California, the organization formalized its contractor capacity building model. This model was designed to build wealth in local communities, retain, uplift, and empower a quality network of contractors, and implement quality assurance strategies to establish trust among partners.

The contractor capacity building model is being applied as a core pillar of GRID's national expansion, as identifying and retaining reliable contractors requires ongoing focus to successfully deliver on the volume of incoming projects.

WHO IS GRID?



Founded in 2001, GRID Alternatives is a 501(c)(3) certified non-profit organization based in Oakland, California, with eight offices serving all of California, Colorado, Washington D.C., Virginia, Maryland and Delaware.

THE GREEN CONTRACTOR ALLIANCE

GRID established the Green Contractor Alliance (GCA) to efficiently procure and support high-quality contractors, as a core strategy for advancing wealth-building in the communities GRID serves.



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

GRID's mission is to make renewable energy technology and job training accessible to underserved communities. To deliver this mission, GRID hires contractors to complete solar, energy storage, electric vehicle charging, and energy-efficient infrastructure installation projects across the regions it serves.

Geography

California (HQ), Colorado, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Washington DC

Type of Work

Solar, energy storage, electric vehicle charging, and energy-efficient infrastructure and installation projects.

Company Profile

Installed 25,046 systems; 106,311 kW
Delivered a total of \$853,546,907 savings
Prevented 2,344,756 tons of greenhouse gas emissions
Trained 53,627 participants

GOALS AND CHALLENGES OF CONTRACTOR MANAGEMENT

CONTRACTOR PROCUREMENT

GRID's contractor procurement process prioritizes engagement with local, small, and diverse contractors through targeted outreach that highlights opportunities to partner with GRID on community-driven projects. Beyond access to projects, GRID offers a strong value proposition that includes training, technical assistance, and other support services that many contractors may not otherwise have access to at their current scale.

This procurement approach is critical for demonstrating GRID's commitment to growing alongside its contractor partners as the organization expands its portfolio of contracts and projects across its service areas.

GRID identified gaps in the industry: contractors are often motivated by available projects, which can be inconsistent. While smaller businesses typically handle their own procurement for cost-effectiveness, they often lack the capital to compete with larger companies.



<u>Contractor Actions</u>	<u>Challenges</u>	<u>GRID's Goals</u>
Contractors often rely on short-term project availability.	This makes it hard to plan, grow, or have contractors engaged over time.	Engage local, small, and diverse contractors through targeted outreach focused on community-driven projects.
Small contractors frequently operate with limited capital and resources.	This makes it difficult to compete with larger firms or absorb risk.	Support contractors beyond individual projects by offering training, technical assistance, and hands-on guidance that helps them grow sustainably.
Contractors invest more in relationships that demonstrate commitment and continuity.	Without intentional investment, even strong contractor relationships can become fragile or unsustainable.	Create consistency and stability for contractor partners as GRID expands its portfolio.
Contractors continue partnerships when there is transparency, fair processes, and mutual accountability.	Finding and keeping dependable contractors requires trust, time, and ongoing support.	Develop reliable contractor partners by working with them extensively and investing in their long-term capacity and success.

GRID recognized that a lack of investment in its contractors poses a risk. Finding and retaining reliable contractors across California is difficult. Therefore, once GRID finds good partners, they aim to work with them extensively and support their development to make them a valuable asset to GRID's growth.

CONTRACTOR CAPACITY BUILDING APPROACH

*How can this apply
to your business?
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Contractor Playbook!](#)*

As GRID scales its operations, contractors must consistently meet GRID's quality control standards to protect and strengthen the organization's reputation. GRID's GCA operates under the assumption that contractors are willing to invest in training, that quality improves through targeted support rather than experience alone, and that GRID can influence contractor performance without direct managerial control. By investing in contractor capacity-building and alignment with its standards, GRID can improve overall quality and reliability, enabling scalable growth.

GRID is able to accomplish this offering a variety of targeted support systems for contractors interested in being apart of the Alliance. These services include: connecting participating contractors to lenders, capital sources, technical expertise, and procurement strategies that help them scale their business.

GRID's capacity-building model guides contractors from targeted outreach and screening through onboarding, compliance, and project matching. At each stage, firms gain access to new business opportunities that strengthen both their growth and GRID's partnership network.

GRID has a four-prong approach to contractor capacity building:



1. Identification



2. Assessing Need



3. Financial
Support



4. Technical
Assistance

1. IDENTIFICATION



Finding reliable partners is the primary goal of a procurement strategy, which begins with clarifying goals and values. GRID seeks contractors that share its core objectives and align with its mission, which streamlines decision-making and leads to successful project execution.

Goals for Identification include:

1. Mission and Objective Alignment

Ensuring contractors align with GRID's core objectives and mission.

2. Financial Strength

Assessing financial stability as a measure of reliability and risk mitigation.

3. Geographic Alignment

Confirming that target territories complement each other.

GRID continuously reviews its RFP process, evaluation criteria, and interview methods to ensure contractors meet its evolving needs.

2. ASSESSING NEED



A Needs Assessment helps directly identify strengths and gaps, uncovering issues that can be a barrier to future growth for GRID and its contractors. GRID assesses potential contractor growth areas to understand how the organization can support contractor businesses either directly or by connecting them to other partners.

Goals for Assessing Need include:

1. Capacity and Gap Identification

Understanding operational, financial, and workforce strengths and gaps that may limit contractor growth.

2. Targeted Support Planning

Identifying the most effective type of supports to strengthen contractor capacity.

3. Transparency and Trust

Clarifying current capacity and revisiting needs regularly to support accountability and long-term engagement.

This process includes establishing clear touchpoints to create a baseline and then reassess needs periodically. Needs Assessments build trust and increase contractor buy-in by demonstrating GRID's investment in their businesses.

3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT



GRID does not offer finance products to contractors, but financial support does not have to mean providing direct funding. GRID refers contractors to partners that help provide access to capital and resources. The Center by Lendistry has partnered with GRID to help identify financial products that can help contractors scale up their operations by providing connections to lenders that have contractor-focused lending solutions.

Goals for Financial Support include:

1. Access to Capital

Connecting contractors to trusted financial partners and products that support sustainable growth.

2. Financial Readiness and Fit

Guiding contractors toward financing options aligned with their capacity, project pipeline, and growth stage.

3. Reduction and Stability

Helping contractors strengthen financial resilience while reducing delivery risk for GRID.

A Needs Assessment further determines the most meaningful financial support for each contractor. Ultimately, GRID's main role in financial support is to convene partners and provide guidance.

4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



GRID connects contractors in its network to various supports, including training, access to capital, subcontractors, and business opportunities. Trainings cover solar installation basics, marketing and sales, project management, bidding and licensing, and accessing capital.

Goals for Technical Assistance include:

1. Capacity and Skill Building

Strengthening contractor technical, operational, and business capabilities to meet GRID's quality and compliance standards.

2. Targeted and Responsive Support

Delivering training and resources informed by Needs Assessments and aligned with contractor growth stages.

3. Performance and Partnership Strengthening

Improving project outcomes while reinforcing contractor commitment and long-term partnership with GRID.

Technical assistance further demonstrates GRID's investment in contractor growth. A Needs Assessment informs which areas require more support and where contractors can be the greatest asset to GRID. These findings are then used to incorporate relevant trainings into the support frameworks provided to contractors.

SUCCESS STORY: KS ELECTRIC

Kuykendall Solar (KS Electric), a woman-owned solar installation company based in California, has supported residential and commercial solar providers with reliable installation and electrical services for over 15 years. KS Electric has powered more than 6,000 homes and looks to install more residential and commercial installations. Its service team provides comprehensive support, including solar panel inspections and diagnostics; inverter, wiring, and battery system troubleshooting; site assessments for system upgrades; de-installations and re-installations; abandoned project remediation; site transfers; EV charger installations; and small residential electrical hookups.

THE KS ELECTRIC-GRID PARTNERSHIP

KS Electric entered into a partnership with GRID Alternatives in 2025, supporting approximately 33 PV and energy storage installations, 44 service or repair cases, and 25 main panel upgrades across California. KS Electric's emphasis on relationship building, high-quality service delivery, and workforce development closely aligns with GRID's mission and operational standards. Through this partnership, KS Electric has consistently delivered clean energy projects while meeting GRID's quality, safety, and compliance expectations.

SUCCESS STORY: KS ELECTRIC

Over time, GRID and KS Electric have established a relationship centered on consistent project collaboration. GRID has primarily supported KS Electric by matching the company with project opportunities, including PV installations, battery storage projects, service work, and main panel upgrades. GRID has also connected KS Electric with local IBT green energy alumni to help meet workforce requirements tied to state-funded projects. This steady flow of work has enabled KS Electric to expand its operational capacity, take on more complex projects, and grow revenue while creating additional jobs. As a B2B subcontractor that performs installation and electrical work for other solar providers, KS Electric benefits not only from this consistent pipeline of projects, but also from the added credibility and industry trust that comes with partnering with a large, nationally recognized organization like GRID, while continuing to maintain a diversified portfolio of partners beyond this collaboration.

The GRID-KS Electric partnership illustrates how contractor capacity building can serve as a scalable, community-centered strategy for delivering clean energy, strengthening local economies, and advancing national climate and energy equity goals.



OPPORTUNITIES TO SCALE

GRID's contractor capacity-building model, proven in California, offers a roadmap for national growth. Expanding its network of small and diverse contractors while providing capital access, specialized training, and the GCA can drive community wealth and deliver high-quality solar installations.

To scale successfully, GRID will focus on its core value of trainings, support, and project acquisition, supported by local partners, anchor projects, and dedicated contractor services staff. The result will be a robust nationwide network that positions GRID and its contractors as the go-to choice for solar projects.



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