

Solar Integrator designation makes Exergetic Energy eligible bidder for \$75 million federal work

Exergetic Energy is celebrating its recent designation as a solar integrator for the federal prison industries as it will not only make the company eligible to bid on federal work, it will also make them able to purchase competitively-priced solar panels for customers.

Clarence McCollum, chairman and CEO, described the advantages the Detroit-based company now enjoys in an interview Friday.

Exergetic Energy specializes in providing energy solutions for business and government. Its early roots are in renewable energy, designing, installing and maintaining solar photovoltaic systems. This year, the company broadened its reach and expanded into nonrenewable energy with the purchase of Specialized Services, a 20-year-old company that optimizes fuel use and supplies fuel to businesses.

This year's designation recognizes the extensive scientific and engineering acumen that are the core of Exergetic Energy's success. McCollum himself spent two decades in research engineering for Ford, NASA and other innovators and then served as the director of a major oil company before taking on his latest role. Other key players have decades of research and development experience, including Dr. Jeffrey Streator, associate professor of mechanical engineering at Georgia Tech and a specialist in friction reduction.

Possible sole-source bidder

Elevated into a premier tier of energy companies, Exergetic Energy is now placed in a small field of businesses able to bid on \$75 million worth of federal work. Further funding is possible as well, particularly if the solar integration creates expected savings for clients in the long run.

"A lot of the (federal) construction contracts are in solar design," McCollum explained. And unlike many of the chosen solar companies, Exergetic Energy is not simply a construction firm. Its team of experienced scientists and engineers can design a system that meets challenges in the environment or construction.

What kind of challenges?

"Hurricane zones are a major issue," McCollum said. "If you don't anchor the panels correctly, they can become projectiles on roofs in a storm. In construction, cities are highly condensed and the HVAC system takes up most of the roof space. We have to design around that."

Where these challenges are present for federal projects, only companies with specific experience in certain geographic regions are allowed to bid out of the small pool of designees.

"We could be the sole-source bidder depending on the location and complexity of the project," said McCollum.

Designated to purchase low-cost solar panels

A less-obvious benefit of the designation is Exergetic Energy's ability to purchase competitively priced solar panels built in the United States with labor from the federal prison system.

The prisoner-built panels are "the only way to produce cost-effective panels (in the United States) compared to Asia and other global producers."

Incredible price competition has led to bankruptcy this month for two American solar panel makers, SpectraWatt and Evergreen Solar. Unlike these companies, Exergetic “stayed clear from manufacturing solar panels,” McCollum said.

But while the costs remain competitive, the company still qualifies to bid on projects that insist hardware be American made.