

## Conduit Technical Assistance Request

Although it represents the vertical with the greatest opportunity for solar deployment, commercial and industrial (C+I) solar significantly lags behind utility-scale and residential solar. Some of the key hurdles to this vertical, according to NREL, have been “contracting challenges... and high transaction costs relative to project sizes.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, while the solar industry as a whole continues to expand with remarkable year-over-year growth, C+I solar projects are cast aside due to avoidable transactional issues.

Conduit’s software as a service (SaaS) solution will change the solar industry by drastically reducing the time, cost and hardship required for a project developer to find and complete a transaction with an investor or owner. With an expected influx of billions of dollars in capital over the next year, the solar industry needs a solution like this in order to efficiently place that capital into worthy projects. Facilitating a faster transaction process will have significant impact on the American solar industry and correspondingly increased demand in American manufacturing.

At this point the Conduit team is focused on the following key tasks, which could be aided through the American Made Network:

- **Development of a “Challenge network:”** This is a group of individuals that represent key customer-types (project developers and project investors). These individuals will provide feedback as the functionality of the product is developed. The goal is to build something that the market wants and needs, as opposed to what the team thinks the market wants and needs.
- **Product prototyping:** As a software-based product, prototyping the product will mostly amount to wireframing the user experience (UX) and functionality of the product. Additionally, some embedded calculations will be used as well.
- **Development of a go-to-market strategy:** From prototype to beta testing to minimum viable product to a full product launch and marketing strategy, the seasoned entrepreneurs available through the Challenge Network and the American Made Network will provide valuable insights.
- **Identification of state, municipal and utility-specific solar development requirements:** Aside from the basic steps nearly all C+I projects must undergo, there are specific permits, regulations, and other steps imposed by local and state governments, as well as utility companies. Assistance in identifying and compiling this list, and building a database to maintain it will improve the functionality and utility of the product.
- **Consultation with software engineers and UX experts:** Meeting and learning from software engineers or UX experts will provide useful initial guidance on the product, architecture, and software that will inform the prototype.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy16osti/65938.pdf>

Conduit's solution is a software platform that offers a neutral, third-party forum for developers and investors. Beyond these key user types, Conduit will also facilitate coordination and communication with other parties such as engineers and solar contractors (EPCs) to efficiently move from project development to a completed, investor-owned project.

The Conduit team has made excellent progress validating the need, the lack of a current solution, and the general architecture for a software solution but would greatly benefit from the types of assistance available through national labs, private facilities and the American Made Network. Specific partners and anticipated areas of collaboration are listed below:

**Elemental Excelerator:** A preliminary call with Shawn Moorhead of Elemental Excelerator highlighted some potential areas of collaboration if Conduit were offered a Ready! Award for Round 3.

- Product market fit intelligence
- Honing a SaaS go-to-market plan and defining the market
- Customer discovery process and feedback from potential customers
- Introductions to past SaaS-based solar companies that Elemental has worked with to understand how to get to a successful marketable product.

**NREL:** NREL's work identifying challenges and proposing solutions as they relate to financing for solar can also improve Conduit's product and development process:

- Further assistance identifying research and resources to demonstrate the persistent inefficiencies hampering the transaction process
- Determine if elements of existing NREL-developed software tools such as SAM could provide additional functionality to the Conduit platform
- Additional assistance from NREL researchers involved with the Renewable Energy Project Finance Site