# Asking the Right Questions

A question guide for identifying an electric vehicle (EV) charging vendor for your existing condominium project

**CHARGE at HOME**

This document is a guide for condominium subcommittees identifying potential vendors to engage. Leverage these questions to compare vendor capabilities and best fit for your project.

## For Energy Management Solution (EMS) Providers, Networked Service Providers
**Focus:** Load sharing, site infrastructure, panel capacity, and phased deployment

### Load Management & Capacity
- Can your Energy Management System (EMS) dynamically adjust loads to prevent overloading?
  - Does it require internet access to do so?
- If an EMS is used, is it certified, how does it work, and how is your product differentiated?
- Is there a minimum power output that you typically recommend setting the EMS?
- For direct-to-meter wiring EMS solutions, can the system be partially installed to allow for future full installation/activation when a unit owner purchases an EV?
- For panel or other EMS solutions, will backend modifications by your team be required for us to add chargers, or will our HOA/condo association be able to do this?
- How does your system factor in time-of-use rates, demand charges, or utility demand response programs

### Integration & Installation
- Can your system support both dedicated and communal (shared/first-come, first-served) charging business models?
- Is your Energy Management System (EMS) compatible with direct-to-meter wiring configurations?
- What upgrades (e.g., panels, transformers, meters) are required for your system?
- Does your system integrate with EMS hardware by other vendors?
- Do you provide a full turnkey solution, or must a separately contracted electrician handle installation and commissioning?

### Phased Deployment & Future-Proofing
- How does your system support phased installation and future expansion?
- Will we need to replace hardware or reconfigure load management to add more chargers in the future?
- Is your solution hardware-agnostic and open charge point protocol (OCPP)-compliant?[1]
- What would happen to our chargers if your company goes out of business?
- What is the process if we want to switch software providers? Would we work with you to achieve this?

[1] Open Charge Point Protocol (OCPP) is an open communication standard that ensures compatibility between EV charging hardware and network software, allowing flexibility in hardware choice and the ability to switch providers.

**Monitoring and Data Access**
- Is usage data made available to the HOA or residents?
- Can we monitor electrical loads and individual charger usage in real time?
- Is data exportable for incentive data reporting requirements?
- Are usage and performance data monitored through dashboards or something else?
- How will software be updated over time?

# Questions for Networked Charging Service Providers
**Focus:** User access, billing, reservation tools, operational management, and ongoing costs.
*For network service providers offering software-enabled energy management systems (EMS), reference questions from the section above, as well.

### Access Control and User Management
- Can we restrict charger access to residents only, or can we allow for open/guest access as well?
- Do you support scheduling, waitlists, or reservation-based use?
- Is access managed through a mobile app, RFID cards, or something else?

### Billing and Payments
- Can residents be billed directly through your platform, or must the HOA manage billing?
- Are there options for pay-per-use, monthly subscriptions, or time-based rates?
- How are electricity costs and transaction fees handled?
- Who sets the pricing: the vendor or the property owner?
- How is pricing be configured? Can prices range depending on the time of day, specific days of the week, by vehicle, or by account number?
- How are idle fees and grace periods configured? Can idle fees increase over time?
- What business models do you offer (CapEx, OpEx, revenue-sharing, etc.)?

### Hardware Compatibility ad Installation Modes
- Does your system support both communal (shared/first-come, first-served) and dedicated (assigned) chargers?
- Do you support direct-to-meter installations?
- Do your products use a proprietary software/hardware set, or do you allow a variety of hardware charging brands to be used (through OCPP - open charge point protocol)?
- What hardware and software options do you provide, and what features do they offer (e.g., load management, notifications, reservation systems, billing, revenue grade metering, tap to pay with credit card, etc.)?
- What are the costs of hardware such as pedestals, cable extenders, and retractors?
- Are there bulk order discounts?

### Support, Maintenance, and Uptime
- Who is responsible for charger maintenance and repair for different contract/service models?
- What is your service response time for hardware or network issues?
- Is 24/7 support available to users? What is the average wait time for residents to call to get a real person for support?
- What are your repair time guarantees and uptime commitments?
- What service-level agreements (SLAs) do you offer?
- Are maintenance services included, are optional O&M contracts available, or even service-level agreements? If so, what is the cost?
- What are the expected maintenance costs over time?
- Does your team provide training or support for property management and facilities staff?

### Reporting and HOA Oversight
- What reporting tools are available to the HOA (usage, revenue, performance)?
- Does your solution track charger use per resident or per unit and can this be shared with us?
- Are administrative dashboards and billing integration included in the base service or billed separately?
- Can reports be exported for internal analysis or rebate applications?

### Hardware and Software Flexibility
- Are extended warranties available? Cost?
- If the vendor's software becomes obsolete or unsupported, can we switch to another provider without replacing hardware?
- Does your system integrate with property management software?
- Are both the hardware and software components eligible for local/state/federal incentives?

### Ongoing and Bundled Costs
- What are the ongoing costs (licensing, networking, software updates, service fees)?
  - How are these costs bundled or itemized?
- What are typical markups per kWh or session, or other manner, that residents pay when they charge?
- Please provide a transparent breakdown of recurring fees for different contract models, including if Charging as a Service (CaaS) is used.

### Onboarding and Resident Experience
- What does the onboarding process entail for HOA/condo boards, property management, and residents?
- Are resources or tutorials available for residents to learn the system?
- Is training and onboarding supplied for property managers or the board?
- Are there demos of the resident driver app and the administrative/management portal?
- What is the user experience like for scheduling, payments, and support?

### Incentives and Turnkey Solutions
- Does the vendor provide support for applying for utility or government incentives?
- Can the vendor apply for incentives on our behalf?
- Are the software and hardware components currently eligible for incentives?
- Does the vendor handle all installation work, or will we need to contract separately?