

National Community Solar Partnership: States Collaborative

About the National Community Solar Partnership

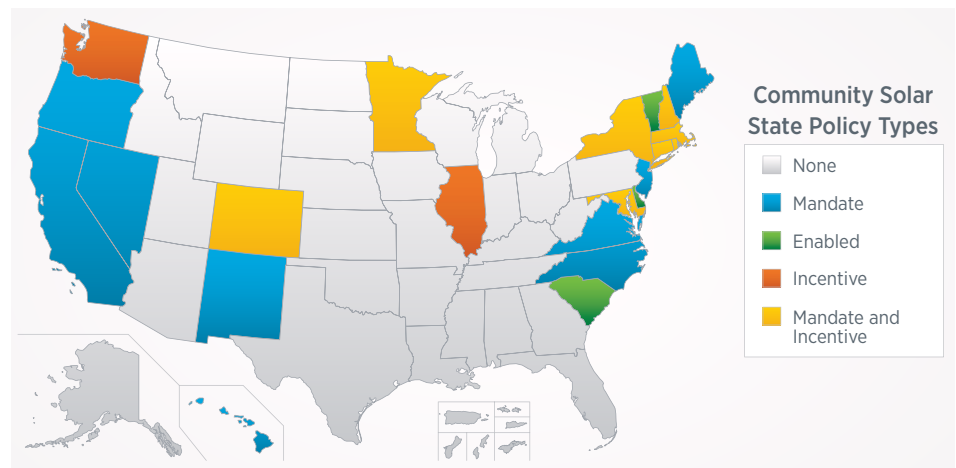
The National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) is a coalition of community solar stakeholders working to expand access to affordable community solar. Led by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), NCSP partners leverage peer networks and technical assistance resources to set goals and overcome barriers to expanding community solar access. NCSP is working towards a 2025 target of powering the equivalent of 5 million American households with community solar, generating \$1 billion in energy bill savings. Throughout 2021, NCSP provided a variety of stakeholder engagement opportunities to identify the **most persistent barriers to equitable community solar deployment**. Based on extensive feedback from community solar stakeholders across all industries, NCSP has developed a pathway to success designed to dismantle these barriers, especially for disadvantaged communities. As one initiative on the pathway to success, the States Collaborative will support peer exchange, technical assistance, and working groups to unlock barriers to community solar market expansion at the state level.

What is an NCSP Collaborative?

NCSP Collaboratives are groups of stakeholders with a common interest or background working together to expand access to community solar. Members of Collaboratives work together to identify and address common barriers. DOE supports these efforts by providing technical assistance, resource and tool development, and training, and by convening stakeholders. Collaborative members develop goals, evaluate progress towards defined metrics, and demonstrate practical, effective, and scalable community solar models. The expertise developed by NCSP Collaborative members will be shared with all NCSP partners.

States Collaborative Overview

Many states see community solar as a critical tool to ensure that all consumers—including low- and moderate-income (LMI) households—have access to clean, reliable electricity and that all communities realize the benefits of building our new clean energy economy. As of November 2021, 21 states and Washington, D.C. have government policies that support community solar deployment. These policies are a combination of mandated levels of community solar deployment, incentives for deployment, policies that make deployment easier, or some combination of these. While at least one community solar project exists in 39 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, nearly three-quarters of the market is concentrated in just four states.



During the summer of 2021, NCSP conducted multiple stakeholder engagement events with state partners to understand the barriers to equitable deployment of community solar across all states. NCSP heard that state partners at all levels of market maturity (new markets, emerging markets, and mature markets) would benefit from regular opportunities to engage with and learn from their peers in other states as they explore, design, launch, administer, and expand community solar programs in their states.

To address this need, the NCSP States Collaborative will:

- serve as a knowledge hub and a support network to help state actors (representatives from state energy offices, regulatory agencies, program administrators, and other critical partners) identify and overcome challenges as they work to expand affordable community solar access

- provide access to technical and analytical assistance as states seek to explore, launch, or expand community solar programs and maximize the benefits of deploying more clean energy
- facilitate peer networking to address barriers that states face when setting goals, designing and implementing community solar programs for their residents, and identifying and amplifying best practices
- develop relevant resources, discussions, topical briefings, and workshops with support from the DOE, its National Lab partners, and third-party advisors
- support and recognize states' efforts on community solar

By joining the NCSP States Collaborative, member States agree to develop community solar deployment goals and track and report on their progress towards these goals. NCSP will support states in developing and implementing plans to meet their stated goals. It will also promote and recognize public goals that are aligned with targets and metrics from NCSP and the Justice40 initiative.

Levels of Participation

Members of the NCSP States Collaborative can participate in a number of ways with progressively higher levels of engagement:

Collaborative Member: Collaborative members join regular Collaborative sessions and participate in other Collaborative activities such as goal setting and action planning. Collaborative members do not have to set a public goal to participate.

Working Group Member: In addition to participating in Collaborative sessions and other Collaborative activities, working group members may form or participate in working groups around specific community solar barriers or topics, as identified by the Collaborative. Time commitment and meeting frequency will be set by the working group members. States do not need to participate as a working group member to be a Collaborative member.

Goal Partner: Goal partners publicly share their support for the NCSP target to power the equivalent of 5 million households with community solar by 2025, realizing \$1 billion in bill savings. Goal partners also share deployment data with NCSP, but do not necessarily make a public deployment commitment (though they will be supported by NCSP in developing and sharing deployment goals if they are interested.) States do not need to participate as a Collaborative member to be a goal partner, though it is highly encouraged.

States Collaborative Process

The goal of the States Collaborative is to help states at varying stages of market maturity and development explore, design, launch, administer, and expand programs that improve affordable community solar access. To work toward this goal, members of the NCSP States Collaborative will engage in the following activities:

1. **Complete Partnership Memorandum of Understanding:** State representatives agree to participate in Collaborative

activities, including sharing information, setting goals, and attending Collaborative sessions. DOE will provide resources, technical assistance, and recognition to support states' efforts. State participation is not required for all Collaborative activities, but participation is highly encouraged since the value of the Collaborative relies on peer information exchange.

2. **Goal Setting and Action Planning:** DOE will help states to assess how community solar supports their existing solar energy access and affordability goals, as well as adjacent goals such as decarbonization and electrification. States will set community solar deployment goals or modify existing goals and develop action plans in alignment with NCSP target metrics and the [Justice40 initiative metrics](#). Goals developed do not need to be shared publicly to participate in the Collaborative.
3. **Facilitated Peer Exchange:** DOE will facilitate peer exchange sessions on topics identified by Collaborative members, potentially including but not limited to program planning, financing, state regulatory environments, subscriber outreach and acquisition, siting, and interconnection. NCSP anticipates conducting monthly facilitated States Collaborative discussions, though the pace may be adjusted based on feedback from Collaborative members. Participation in each peer exchange is not required but is highly encouraged.
4. **Technical and Analytical Assistance:** DOE will provide individual technical and analytical assistance to Collaborative members through its National Labs or other third-party advisors. Assistance can be delivered at any time and as frequently as needed.
5. **Working Groups:** States will have the opportunity to join working groups on specific challenges or initiatives, potentially including but not limited to developing community solar definitions and messaging, defining consumer protections, developing a Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) subscription platform, leveraging federal funds, or supporting workforce development. DOE will organize and support working groups with facilitation, speakers, and other tasks as needed.
6. **Report on Goals and Progress:** States will track and report on progress toward goals, including the new NCSP target metrics and the [Justice40 measures](#). DOE will identify and elevate best practices developed by states.

Join the Collaborative: For more information on joining the NCSP States Collaborative, please email community.solar@ee.doe.gov. ■



For more information, visit: energy.gov/communitysolar

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