



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
**ENERGY**

**NREL**  
Transforming ENERGY

 **BERKELEY LAB**



# Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform

---

## National Community Solar Partnership

August 2, 2022

# Zoom Housekeeping

## Two Options for Audio (select audio mode):

1. Listen through your computer:  
Click the 'up arrow' next to the "mute" button in the bottom left corner.  
Under "Select a Speaker," click "Same as System."
2. Listen by telephone:  
Click the 'up arrow' next to the "mute" button in the bottom left corner.  
Click "Switch to Phone Audio."

**Panelists** – reminder to mute your audio device when not presenting.

## To Ask a Question:

- Select the 'Q&A' button at the bottom of your screen and type in your question.

## Having Trouble with the Webinar?

- Chat the event host for technical troubleshooting.

## We are Recording

- A video/audio recording of this webinar will be made available after the presentation.

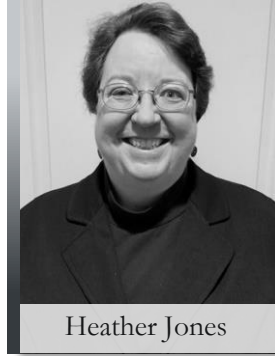
# Webinar Speakers

DOE



Nicole Steele

HHS



Heather Jones

NYSERDA



Christopher Rogers

New Jersey BPU



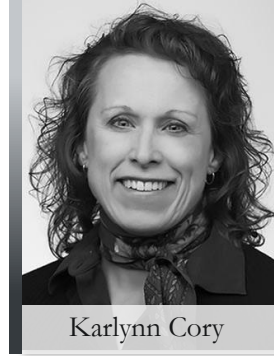
Veronique Oomen

DOE



Ariel Drehobl

NREL



Karlynn Cory

New Mexico PRC



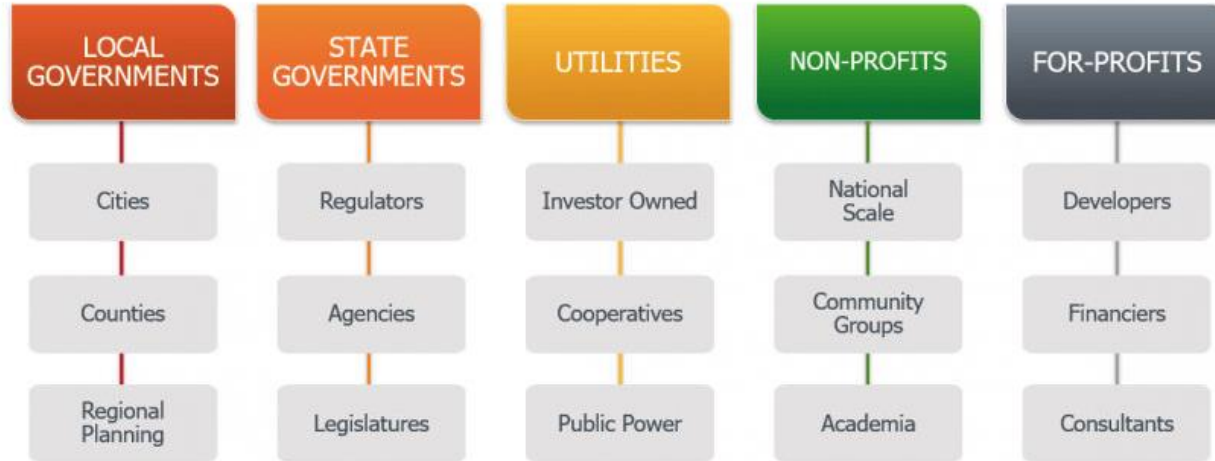
Mary Jane Parks



An aerial photograph showing a vast array of blue solar panels installed on a flat rooftop. The panels are arranged in neat, parallel rows, stretching across the roof surface. In the background, a suburban neighborhood with green trees and houses is visible, followed by a range of rugged, green mountains under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. A brick building is partially visible on the right side of the roof.

# The National Community Solar Partnership

# National Community Solar Partnership Online Platform



# National Community Solar Partnership Target



**5 million**  
HOUSEHOLDS\*  
\*EQUIVALENT



**\$1 billion**  
IN ENERGY BILL  
SAVINGS



BY **2025**

Represents an increase  
from **3 GW to 20 GW** of  
community solar capacity



\$1 billion in savings  
reflects an average  
**bill reduction of 20%**



# Pathway to Success

National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP)

## Pathway to Success

TECHNICAL  
EXPERTISE  
AND CAPACITY  
BUILDING



STATE  
ENGAGEMENT



ACCESS  
TO CAPITAL



CUSTOMER  
ENGAGEMENT



HEARTS  
AND MINDS



**NCSP  
TARGET**

5 million households  
and \$1 billion  
in savings

### Resulting in...

- ★ An average 20% energy bill reduction
- ★ 700% increase in community solar capacity
- ★ Meaningful benefits such as resilience, career opportunities, and community wealth building

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS | STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT | DEVELOPERS | LENDERS | PHILANTHROPISTS | UTILITIES | CUSTOMERS

# Meaningful Benefits of Community Solar

## Low Income Access



Include at least 40% subscribers from low- to moderate-income (LMI) households

## Electric Bill Savings



Provide at least 20% reduction in electricity bills for residential subscribers to a project

## Resilience & Grid Benefits



Include capability to deliver power to households and/or critical facilities during a grid outage or strengthen grid operations through demand response and other actions

## Community ownership



Include community ownership of, or equity in, project assets (e.g., community benefits agreements or partnership flip models)

## Workforce development



Advance high wages, reduce demographic income disparities, ensure a trained and available workforce reflective of the community, and creating a safe work environment





# Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform

---

Project overview and next steps



# The Challenge

- Households who receive Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assistance can benefit from long-term electric bill savings provided by community solar subscriptions
- Low-income community solar is not being developed fast enough to meet the demand across states with LMI-specific policies
- LMI community solar developers face barriers with customer acquisition that raise project risks and costs

# Overview of LI Community Solar Platform

## Who

- The U.S. DOE's National Community Solar Partnership, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, National Energy Assistance Directors Association, and the National Association of State Energy Officials

## What

- Develop and pilot a digital platform that will serve as a bridge platform to connect community solar subscriptions with verified savings and related benefits to recipients of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

## How

- Coordinate with utilities, state and local governments, community action agencies, consumer advocates, community stakeholders, and industry to connect LIHEAP-eligible customers with low-income-focused community solar subscriptions with verified savings



# Goals of the Platform

Lowering household energy bills



Lowering electricity bills and high energy burdens for LIHEAP-eligible households over the long-term through enrollment in community solar subscriptions

Increasing investor confidence



Building investor confidence in low-income community solar programs by minimizing the perceived risk of low-income subscribers

Expanding LI Community Solar Market



Expanding the community solar market to reach its multi-gigawatt potential; speeding clean energy deployment

Creating clean energy jobs



Creating clean energy jobs in solar system project development and operations and maintenance

Lowering customer acquisition costs

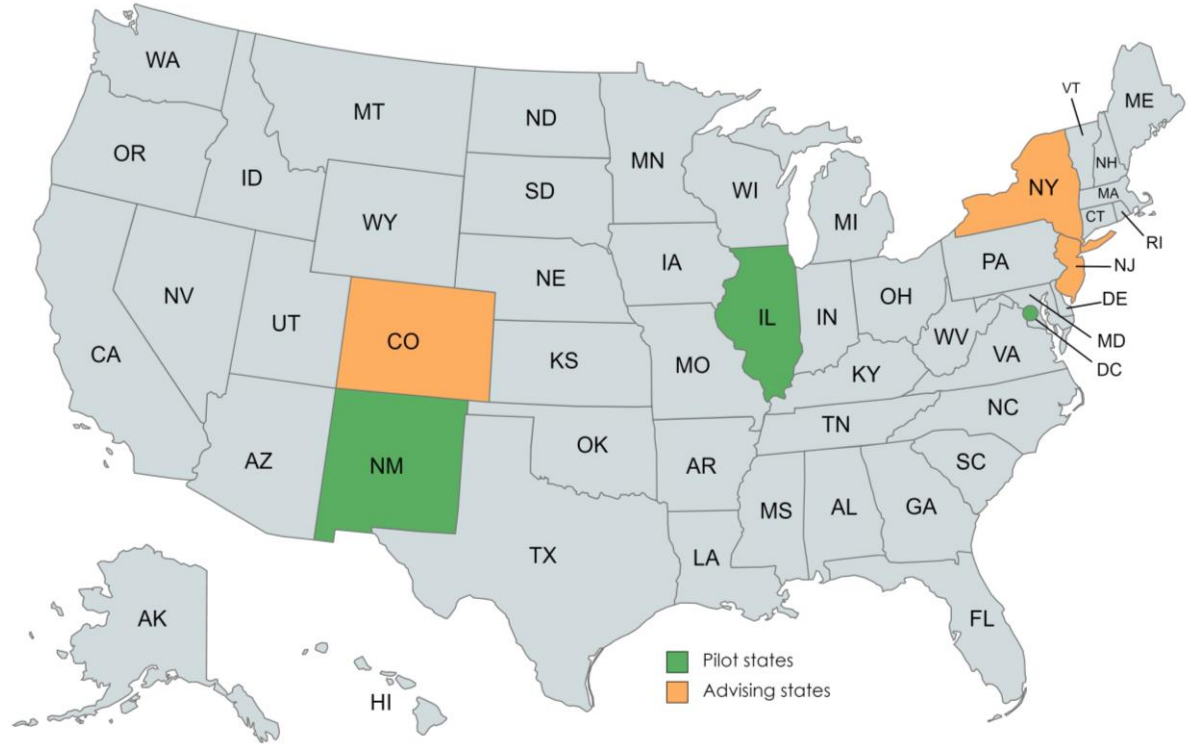


Reducing customer acquisition and management costs of LI subscribers for community solar system developers and managers by connecting them to pre-qualified applicants through LIHEAP



# Pilot and Advising States

- State LIHEAP Office and Energy Office or Public Utility Commission jointly supporting the development of the platform
- **Pilot States:** Illinois, New Mexico, Washington, DC
- **Advising States:** Colorado, New Jersey, New York



# HUD Utility Allowance Guidance

## Problem

- Households receiving federal assistance face barriers due to the potential impact of community solar savings on monthly rent payments or utility allowances
- Don't want community solar savings to increase costs for participants in HUD-assisted housing

## Solution

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in partnership with DOE, issued guidance to enable HUD-assisted housing residents to access community solar subscriptions without inducing a rent increase or utility allowance adjustment

## Next Steps

- HUD has issued guidance in CA, DC, and IL, and HUD is working on guidance for the additional pilot and advising states
- Additional states interested in guidance can reach out to [community.solar@ee.doe.gov](mailto:community.solar@ee.doe.gov) for assistance



## How the Platform May Work

- When customers sign up for LIHEAP, they can choose to opt-in to a local low-income community solar subscription with verified savings
- Possibly, the community action agency or entity signing customers up for LIHEAP can use the platform to identify available community solar subscriptions and connect customers
- We will be exploring how to ensure that this process will work for community action agencies, customers, and community solar subscription managers

# Development of LI CS Subscription Platform

## Short-term Goal:

- Create a bridge software to give the opportunity for low-income LIHEAP recipients to opt-in to connect with available local community solar subscriptions with verified savings

## Long-term Goal:

- The platform creates competition for developers to create low-income community solar projects that provide deep savings and meaningful benefits

## Process (next steps this fall):

- Hold three pilot state (DC, IL, NM) workshops with key stakeholders, such as community action agencies, utilities, subscription managers, consumer advocates, etc. for feedback on platform development
- Hold meetings with six states (DC, CO, IL, NJ, NM, & NY) advising on the development of the platform for feedback throughout process
- Respond to and incorporate RFI stakeholder feedback into the development of the project
- Develop beta version to test in early 2023



# Key Considerations

Ensuring participant  
privacy and  
data security

Verified bill savings  
for LMI participants

Integration with utility  
billing and/or  
community solar  
subscription services

Designed to meet the  
needs of diverse  
stakeholders

Opt-in and  
transparency

Excellent customer  
experience

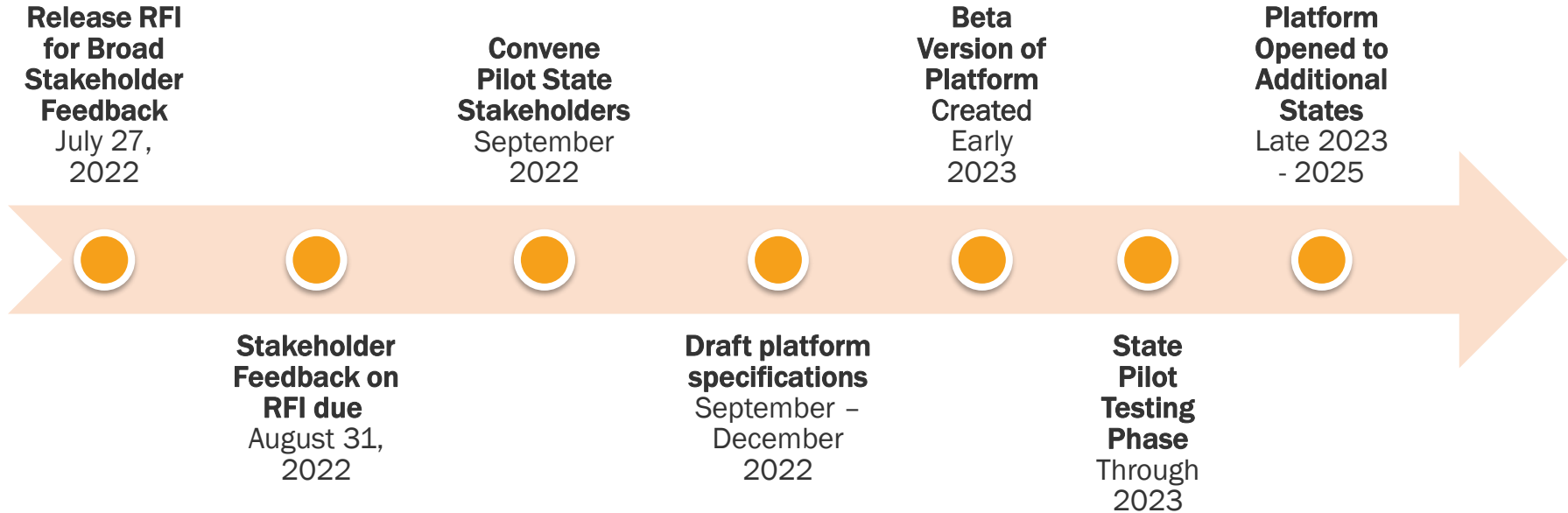
# Input Needed!

## Request for Information

- RFI provides opportunity for the public to provide input on the development of the LI Community Solar Subscription Platform
- DOE has several outstanding questions that we are seeking feedback on to inform the development of the platform:
  - How should the platform work? Who should participate and how?
  - What demographic and/or personal identifiable information is needed for the platform to work? How can this platform best suit the needs of community action agencies and low-income households?
  - How should community solar companies and projects be vetted to ensure savings and meaningful benefits? By whom? And how?
- You can respond to as many questions as you would like in the RFI
- Please send responses by August 31:  
<https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/request-information-low-income-community-solar-subscription-platform>



# Timeline and Next Steps



*For more information and updates on this project, see*

<https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/liheap-community-solar-subscription-platform>

# The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services

---

LIHEAP AND COMMUNITY SOLAR

**HEATHER JONES**, POLICY AND EVALUATION BRANCH CHIEF, DIVISION OF ENERGY  
ASSISTANCE



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



# LIHEAP Partnerships

---

- ❑ LIHEAP brings a substantial amount of equity to residential weatherization. This is an excellent example of public and private partnership.
- ❑ Braiding of resources with the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program is an excellent partnership example.
- ❑ Braiding of resources with the Department of the Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance Program helps maximize home energy bill payment assistance.
- ❑ LIHEAP flexibilities allow households to receive temporary help, such as utility reconnections, cooling intervention, temporary housing, etc.
- ❑ Partnerships with utility companies prevent disconnections and offer past due bill payment assistance.
- ❑ Referrals between energy assistance and the medical community can ensure health and safety.



# Renewables - Solar

---

## Things to consider...

- ❑ LIHEAP restrictions on land improvements and constructions.
- ❑ The Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform can securely link interested electric LIHEAP customers to solar energy. It has many inclusion potentials.
- ❑ It can create new partnerships among local agency, state LIHEAP and energy efficiency offices, stakeholder organizations, utility companies, and federal departments.
- ❑ Consumer protection, transparency, and savings are important. Make sure it's an excellent customer benefit experience!

# Renewables - Solar

---

- ❑ Focus on energy consumption rather than energy burden to prioritize LIHEAP households.
- ❑ Target households that are weatherization ready. Also, LIHEAP households should provide consent. Avoid automatic enrollment.
- ❑ Focus on equity and justice so that the subscription does not exclude certain geographic areas, communities, and groups of households.
- ❑ LIHEAP is a block grant so each state will make their own decision and policies around Community Solar.



# Resources

---

- ❑ [The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- ❑ [Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#)
- ❑ [LIHEAP Projected Increase in Energy Bills Dashboard](#)
- ❑ [LIHEAP National Energy Assistance Day](#)
- ❑ [The Earth Day Celebration](#)
- ❑ [ARP One Year Anniversary](#)
- ❑ [Heat Stress Dashboard](#)
- ❑ [Environmental Justice and Climate Change](#)
- ❑ [LIHEAP and Extreme Heat Blog](#)
- ❑ [OCS Earth Day Page](#)

**OCS joined Twitter! Follow us [@OCS\\_ACFgov](#)**

**Search your local providers at: [www.energyhelp.us](http://www.energyhelp.us)**





# State Presentations and Panel Discussion

New Jersey PRC



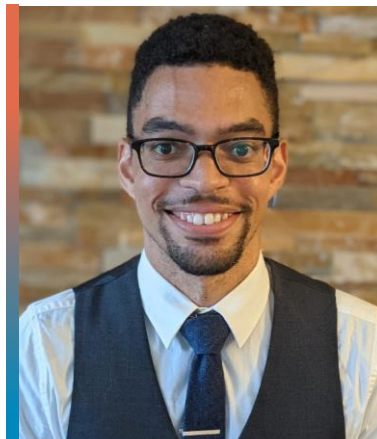
Veronique Oomen

New Mexico PRC



Mary Jane Parks

NYSERDA



Christopher Rogers

# New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

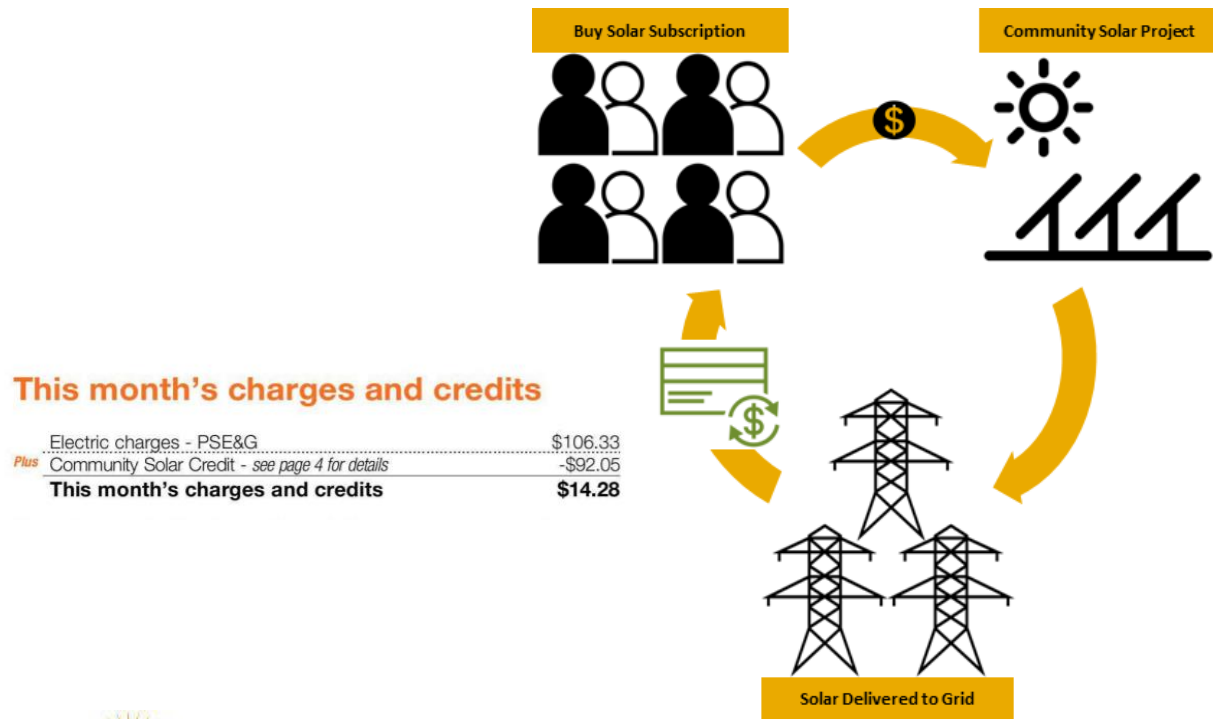


The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBP) is the state agency with authority to oversee the regulated utilities, which provide critical services such as natural gas, electricity, water, telecommunications, and cable television.

NJBP ensures safe and adequate utility services are provided at reasonable, non-discriminatory rates by developing and regulating a competitive, economically cost effective energy policy that promotes responsible growth and clean renewable energy sources while maintaining a high quality of life in New Jersey.



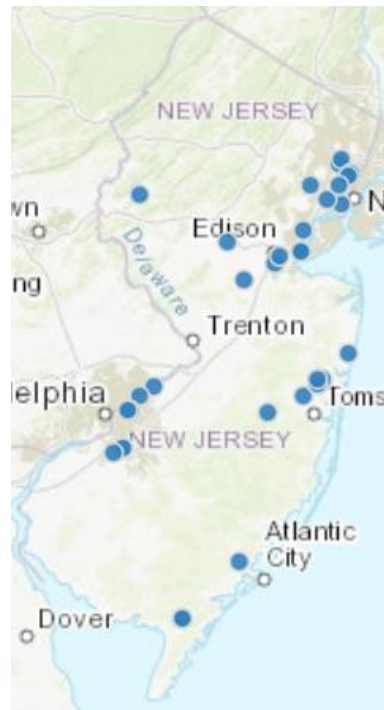
# Community Solar



# Pilot Program Awards

## **150 applications selected** (approx. 243 MWdc)

- All selected projects are defined as LMI
  - At least 51% will be allocated to LMI subscribers (124 MW)
- 126 projects located on rooftops
- 24 projects located on landfills, parking canopies, combined rooftops and parking canopy, a brownfield, and a former sand and gravel pit



Map Credit:  
NJDEP  
(PY1 projects only)



# Low-Income Eligibility in NM's Community Solar Program



August 2022





# Qualification to Participate in NM Low Income Community Solar

## **Automatic qualification:**

- Medicaid; *(133% of Federal Poverty Level, FPL)*
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); *(130% of FPL)*
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); *(150% of FPL)*
- First-time homeowner programs and housing rehabilitation programs;
- Living in a low-income/affordable housing facility; or

## **Other ways to qualify:**

- 80% of area median income with confirming documentation\*

# Signing up Low Income Subscribers

- Legislative Requirement is 30% of each Community Solar Project capacity is for low-income subscribers. 5MW Project Cap
- NM Subscribing Organizations include: utility, municipality, county, for-profit or non-profit entity, Indian Nation/tribe/pueblo or tribal governance structure. Not considered a utility just for operating a CS project.
- PRC Recommendation: Work with CBOs to gain trust in the community
- Approximately 12,000 of 239,000 Low Income households need to be subscribed (source: Prosperity Works and Coalition)
- Approximately 12,000 Tribal LIHEAP households (source HHS 2012)

# New York LMI Community Solar Overview

August 2, 2022



**NYSERDA**

# Background

# Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act)

- > Path to carbon neutrality
- > Legally-binding commitment to environmental justice, disadvantaged communities, and a just transition
  - 85% Reduction in GHG Emissions by 2050
  - 6 GW of Distributed Solar by 2025
  - 70% Renewable Energy by 2030
  - 100% Zero-emission Electricity by 2040



# Solar Energy Equity Framework



**NYSERDA**

# Solar Energy Equity Framework (SEEF)

- > No less than **1,600 MW** of new capacity by 2030 will be targeted toward low-to-moderate income (LMI) residents, regulated affordable housing, disadvantaged communities (DACs), and environmental justice communities
- > Current SEEF programs would be continued, and at least half of the new capacity would be targeted to LMI residential customers with **direct electric bill savings**
- > Co-design of programmatic support for community-led solar projects with stakeholders representing DACs
- > Increased integration with Statewide Energy Affordability Policy and the LMI Portfolio, including building electrification, heat pumps, efficiency, and energy storage

# Community Solar SEEF Programs

## > **Expanded Solar For All**

- Will provides community solar credits for 170,000 Home Energy Assistance Program customers in National Grid service territory

## > **Inclusive Community Solar Adder**

- Additional incentives for CDG projects serving eligible customers
- ICSA structure, rules, and incentive levels will be adjusted based on outcome of Roadmap process and lessons learned from first round of funding

## > **Multifamily Affordable Housing Incentive**

- Provides increased incentive for projects (including community solar) built upon regulated multifamily affordable housing

## > **Affordable Solar and Storage Predevelopment and Technical Assistance Program**

- Provides grants supporting community-based planning and predevelopment work on projects benefitting LMI households, DACs, and affordable housing

# Future Low Income Platform Integration

- > Currently, New York provides detailed census tract information regarding the location of potential LMI households
- > The Low-Income Community Solar Subscription platform can streamline this process
- > **Lower Outreach Costs**
  - Community solar projects owners will be able to identify customers
- > **Confirmation of Savings**
  - Administrators will be able to monitor savings without utility input
- > **Low-Income Customer Empowerment**
  - Customers will have quick access to project information

# Thank you and Next Steps



## LEARN MORE

Visit and bookmark the project landing page for more information and updates:  
<https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/subscription-platform>



## RESPOND TO THE RFI

Submit your response by **August 31:**  
<https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/request-information-low-income-community-solar-subscription-platform>



## CONTACT US

Reach out if you have any additional questions or want to discuss this project further  
[Ariel.Drehobl@ee.doe.gov](mailto:Ariel.Drehobl@ee.doe.gov)  
[Karlynn.Cory@nrel.gov](mailto:Karlynn.Cory@nrel.gov)



# Speaker Contact Information

## Ariel Dreobl

[Ariel.Dreobl@ee.doe.gov](mailto:Ariel.Dreobl@ee.doe.gov)  
Solar Energy Equity Analyst,  
Supporting U.S. DOE

## Karlynn Cory

[Karlynn.Cory@nrel.gov](mailto:Karlynn.Cory@nrel.gov)  
Group Manager – Community  
Energy Transitions,  
National Renewable Energy  
Laboratory

## Nicole Steele

[Nicole.steele@ee.doe.gov](mailto:Nicole.steele@ee.doe.gov)  
Workforce and Equitable Access  
Program Manager,  
U.S. Department of Energy

## Heather Jones

[Heather.Jones@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Heather.Jones@acf.hhs.gov)  
Policy and Evaluation Branch  
Chief, Division of Energy  
Assistance, U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services

## Veronique Oomen

[Veronique.Oomen@bpu.nj.gov](mailto:Veronique.Oomen@bpu.nj.gov)  
Project Manager Renewable  
Energy, Division of Clean Energy,  
New Jersey BPU

## Mary Jane Parks

[MaryJane.Parks@state.nm.us](mailto:MaryJane.Parks@state.nm.us)  
U.S. DOE Solar Innovator for  
Community Solar,  
New Mexico PRC

## Christopher Rogers

[Christopher.Rogers@nyserda.ny.gov](mailto:Christopher.Rogers@nyserda.ny.gov)  
Project Manager, NY-Sun,  
NYSERDA

