

National Community Solar Partnership: Municipal Utility Collaborative

National Community Solar Partnership Overview

The National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) convenes stakeholders working to expand access to affordable community solar to every American household by 2025. Led by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), partners leverage peer networks and technical assistance resources to establish goals and address persistent barriers to expanding community solar access to underserved communities.

What is a Collaborative?

NCSP collaboratives are made up of stakeholders working together to expand access to community-based solar. Partners in collaboratives work together to identify and address common barriers over roughly a 2-year period (Summer 2020–Summer 2022); DOE supports these efforts by providing technical assistance and convening stakeholders. Collaborative members demonstrate practical, effective, and scalable community solar models, and will develop goals and evaluate progress through defined metrics.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY SOLAR PARTNERSHIP



Municipal Utility Collaborative Overview

Given their connection to their local government, municipal utilities are uniquely positioned to pilot new models such as community solar. Municipal utilities were some of the first entities in the nation to pioneer community solar development in 2011. Despite those early successes, persistent barriers have limited the diffusion of these models to municipal utilities across the country. The sector shows great potential to grow as solutions are implemented and replicated. NCSP's Municipal Utility Collaborative will convene stakeholders to address critical aspects that influence the development and implementation of a successful community solar program. The collaborative will address a variety of barriers that municipal utilities face when deploying community solar for their customers including, but not limited to:

• **Utility Systems:**

- The interplay between community solar programs, other renewable energy programs and new rate tariff structures that may already be implemented or are planned for in the near future (e.g. time of use rates).
- Determining the appropriate program design, including demand, desired mix of subscribers, income qualification, the most appropriate ownership models, and payment options in addition to the system requirements related to accounting and billing.

- **Siting Locations:** Siting considerations, including the economical use of large rooftops, brownfields, parking lots, and other locations, to host community solar projects.

- **Procurement:** Streamlining the procurement process, whether it is a designbuild contract (Energy Performance Contracts) or a partnership with a solar developer through a power purchase agreement (PPA).

- **Contracting:** Procurement processes and opportunities to streamline to avoid cost or time loss.

- **Joint Action:** Address unique structures related to Joint Action Agency (JAA) requirement contracts and the opportunities created by leveraging economies of scale under joint action agreements.

- **Project Finance and Structure:** Municipal utilities are considered non-profit, public entities and like other public entities that don't pay federal taxes, these utilities are unable to take advantage of the tax incentives available to tax-paying entities.

The goal of the Municipal Utility Collaborative is to create or scale programs that expand affordable community solar access to low-income and other underserved communities. Through DOE partnership and peer learning, the NCSP's Municipal Utility Collaborative will concentrate on the following objectives:

- **Program Design:** Identify and implement best practices and lessons learned on customer engagement and outreach, including pre-qualification of income status and navigating the third-party support ecosystem (e.g. community solar subscription companies, developers, etc.);
- **Financing:** Demonstrate sustainable customer financing options, such as on-bill financing and monthly subscription products as well as subsidy options for low income residents;
- **Service Integration:** Develop models to integrate community solar with other utility programs and technology offerings, for example with demand response, energy efficiency, weatherization, electric vehicle charging, utility rate assistance programs or other low income programs;
- **Additional Customer Benefits:** Assess and quantify supplementary benefits of community solar. For example, resiliency attributes to both the subscriber and the utility through the incorporation of battery energy storage systems (BESS) into community solar projects. ■



U.S. Department of Energy – Moapa Band of Paiute Indians Utility-Scale Solar Array.

Solar Energy Technologies Office

The U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office supports early-stage research and development to improve the affordability, reliability, and performance of solar technologies on the grid. The office invests in innovative research efforts that securely integrate more solar energy into the grid, enhance the use and storage of solar energy, and lower solar electricity costs.



U.S. Department of Energy – Lincoln Electric System community solar facility in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Interested in learning more
about the Partnership?

Email community.solar@ee.doe.gov
or visit energy.gov/community-solar

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For more information, visit: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/national-community-solar-partnership>