

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 to every American household by 2025. This U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) partnership, led by the Solar Energy Technologies Office and supported by the Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs Office, will convene multi-stakeholder teams around collective goals, provide technical assistance for specific local challenges, and develop an online community platform to support peer learning and exchange.

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.



Overview

The program has three goals:

- Make community solar subscriptions accessible to every U.S. household
- Ensure community solar is affordable for every U.S. household
- Enable communities to realize supplementary benefits and other value streams from community solar installation

Background

We broadly define community solar to include any solar project or purchasing program, within a geographic area, in which the benefits flow to multiple participants. According to analysis by the DOE National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), nearly 50% of households and businesses are unable to host rooftop solar systems.¹ Community solar enables more people to access solar energy regardless of where they live or the suitability of their rooftop, giving them the opportunity to offset and save on monthly energy bills while potentially enhancing resiliency and spurring economic development and jobs in the community.

Expanding Access

Low- and moderate-income communities, nonprofit organizations, governmental entities, and other community-serving entities face significant barriers to affordable solar deployment. The 2016–2019 DOE Solar in Your Community Challenge identified three main barriers to solar deployment:

1. Clear understanding of federal, state, and local policies that impact local solar projects.
2. Ability to build durable and long-term partnerships with community members and solar stakeholders.²
3. Expertise to develop a creative portfolio of financing solutions for small- and medium-size community solar projects.

¹ <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy15osti/63892.pdf>

² <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy19osti/72575.pdf>

NCSP builds on the successes of the Solar in Your Community Challenge to address persistent barriers and support the replication of new and existing community solar models by partnering with diverse stakeholders across America that are interested in expanding affordable access to solar.

DOE's Approach

To meet these goals, NCSP provides an array of stakeholders—state, local, and tribal governments, utilities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations—tools, technical assistance, and information they need to design and implement successful community solar models. The partnership will provide these through three major program elements:

- **Network Infrastructure:** Partners have access to an online community platform, virtual and in-person meetings, webinars and other tools to engage with DOE staff and other partners.
- **Technical Assistance:** Partners have the opportunity to apply for direct technical assistance resources from DOE, its National Laboratories, and independent, third-party, subject-matter experts for support on unique, local challenges.
- **Collaboration:** Multi-stakeholder teams of partners called “collaboratives” focus on achieving specific goals to address similar barriers to solar adoption through peer learning and technical assistance over 2 years. Other small, targeted working groups may form to address specific challenges that partners identify. To start, NCSP plans to focus on the following collaborative topic areas:
 - **Multifamily Affordable Housing Collaborative**, which aims to deploy community solar that reduces monthly energy bills or adds other value streams for low-income residents.

- **Municipal Utility Collaborative**, which aims to subscribe customers to community solar with inclusive targets for low-income residents.



A rooftop solar PV array on a multifamily apartment building in Brooklyn, New York. Photo credit Bright Power, Inc.

How to Get Involved

To join the partnership stakeholders should sign up through DOE's National Community Solar Partnership portal and complete a self-assessment. Once approved, partners are able to participate in DOE-hosted webinars and communicate with other stakeholders through an online forum. Partners interested in receiving technical assistance have the opportunity to apply online and applications will be reviewed and approved on regular time intervals. Partners may also participate in collaboratives around similar challenges to exchange knowledge, receive technical assistance, and develop solutions.

Other Resources

- [Solar in Your Community Challenge](#)³
- [Clean Energy for Low-income Communities Accelerator \(CELICA\) Online Toolkit](#)⁴
- [Solar for All Data Explorer](#)⁵
- [Low-income Energy Affordability Data \(LEAD\) Tool](#)⁶ ■

Interested in learning more
about the Partnership?

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

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& RENEWABLE ENERGY
SOLAR ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES OFFICE

For more information, visit: energy.gov/eere/solar

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³ <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/solar-your-community-challenge>

⁴ <https://betterbuildingsolutioncenter.energy.gov/CELICA-Toolkit>

⁵ <https://maps.nrel.gov/solar-for-all/>

⁶ <https://www.energy.gov/eere/slsc/maps/lead-tool>