



Putting **Community** in Community Solar

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Community Solar Resources & Guide

solarunitedneighbors.org/learn-the-issues/community-solar/

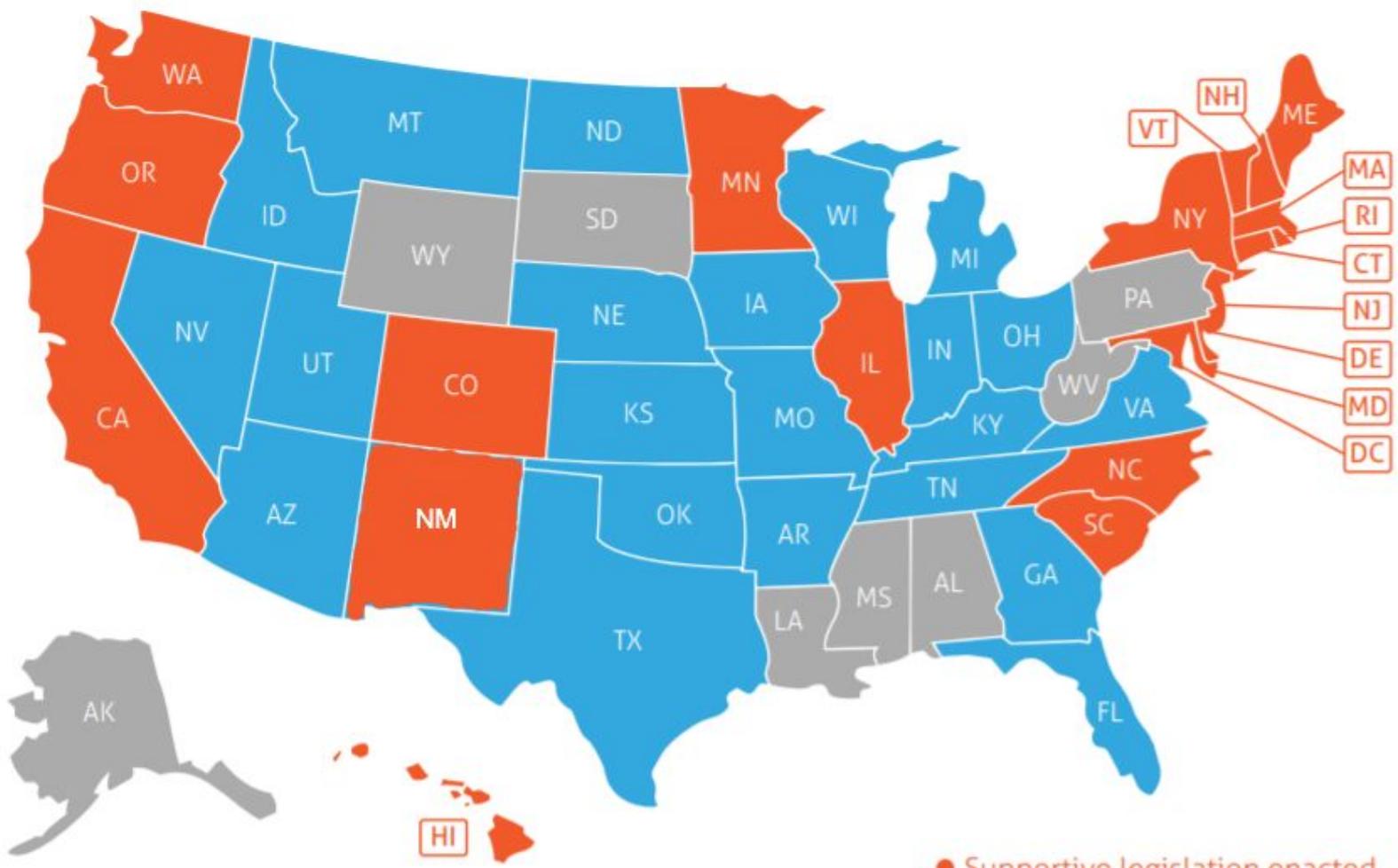


What is Community Solar and Why is it important?



COMMUNITY SOLAR (CS) projects enable individuals, businesses, or orgs to purchase or lease a “share” in a nearby solar installation and receive credit on their bill each month for the energy produced by their share.

- This credit system is similar to the rooftop solar net-metering programs around the country.**
- Before you can receive this credit, your utility must participate in a CS program. Currently, 20 states have some form of community-shared solar policy in place.**
- Many rural electric cooperatives and municipal utilities around the country have started offering CS.**



- Supportive legislation enacted
- At least one independent project online

Why Community Solar matters

- ❑ More than 2m in the U.S. have installed solar arrays on their home or business, but millions more cannot because their buildings are not suitable for rooftop solar, they cannot afford the upfront costs, or they live and work in rental properties.
- ❑ Nearly half of all U.S. households and businesses are unable to host solar systems.
- ❑ For these people, community solar is a practical and affordable way to access the benefits of distributed solar.
- ❑ Importantly, community solar programs/projects are also crucial for broadening solar access to lower income households.

“Community” vs. Community

- Depending on the state, utility, or ownership-model, the design and type of CS programs differ widely.
- In many places, only utilities or large commercial developers can build solar projects.
- Unfortunately, many utilities are misrepresenting these large-scale solar projects as “community” projects.
- Because these projects do not deliver the substantial tangible benefits of private and many municipal or electric cooperative projects, large-scale utility solar projects do not meet SUN’s definition of true community solar.



SUN Community Solar Principles

- ▶ Meaningful, verifiable, predictable electricity savings
- ▶ Be able to own part of a project.
- ▶ Ability to transfer or sell your share.
- ▶ Transparent, customer-friendly process, easy to subscribe, unsubscribe, and transfer share.
- ▶ Inform subscribers of any on-going charges for maintenance or other costs



Community Solar Principles

LOCAL BENEFITS

- ▶ Clear connection to a specific solar project or an identifiable group of projects in nearby locations.
- ▶ CS projects should be sited responsibly to minimize development impacts and support community goals (see SUN's siting principles).
- ▶ Promote local job creation and strengthen the electric grid.

Expanding Solar Access

- Ensure and incentivize low-and middle-income participation, preferably with short contract term lengths and minimal or no cancellation fees.
- At least 10 states have included low-income provisions in their community solar programs.
- Allow residents of multi-unit buildings to subscribe.



Competitive market development

- ❑ CS projects should benefit from a fair competitive process to lower prices and encourage innovation.
- ❑ Private third-parties (individuals, non-profits, small businesses) should be able to develop CS projects.
- ❑ Utilities should NOT be able to monopolize CS programs!



Evaluating Utility “Community” Solar

- ❑ Are the costs, energy savings, pricing, subscription process clear?
- ❑ What are the up-front and on-going costs?
- ❑ Is there a “premium” charged to run the program above the standard cost of electricity?
- ❑ What is the term of the subscription?
- ❑ Is the subscription portable and transferable?

Evaluating Utility “Community” Solar

- ❑ Is the CS program available to everyone in the utility area?
- ❑ Does the program ensure LMI residents participation with meaningful savings? And how?
- ❑ Is there a competitive procurement process for developing and building the CS project?
- ❑ Is your subscription tied to a specific solar array, or a generic solar resource? In other words, where is your solar?



State Community Solar Programs

- **COLORADO** became the 1st state to pass CS legislation.
 - 10 kW to 20 MW in size located in or near the same community as the customers being served.
 - The owner of the system can be either the utility or a 3rd party that contracts with the utility for crediting.
 - Subscribers receive full retail credit for their portion of the power produced, minus a charge to cover the utility's costs of delivering the electricity to the customer. Bill credit can be carried forward if it exceeds the customer's electricity use in any given billing period.

State Community Solar Programs

- **NEW JERSEY'S** program (2019) sets aside 40% of the overall program's capacity to serve LMI customers.
 - The initial program is three-years (2019-2022), with targets for 75 MW for the first year and at least 75 MW each for the second and third years. The program could roughly cover the electric usage of 45,000 residences.



Private CS Projects

- John Mariani developed a 10-kW array on the roof of his apartment building in Baltimore. The project powers his home down the street, his sister's home, and the rental building meter.
- Alan Spector and his neighbors in Lafayette Township, NJ convinced their electricity cooperative to permit them to build and operate a 50-kW array (Sussex Solar Garden) with 18 member/owners who have invested in the system.
- Boardman Hill Solar Farm in Vermont is a 150-kW array owned directly by participants who financed the array's construction and operation and share in the electricity benefits.



Rural Electric Cooperatives

- **Vernon Electric Cooperative (WI)** provides monthly bill credits for the power produced, with an upfront cost of \$600 per panel and a projected first year payback of 5.8%, and these savings will increase as energy prices rise.

- **Florida Keys Electric Cooperative's Simple Solar Program** offers participating customers a monthly bill credit equal to their retail rate for each kilowatt-hour generated from their CS subscription for 25 years, based on the actual production of the leased panels.



Municipal-owned

Orlando Utilities Commission's program allows participants to lock in a rate of 13 cents/kWh for 25 years for electricity generated by their CS share. They offer subscriptions of 1 kW up to 15 kW, with a one-time deposit of \$50 that is credited back to the participant with accrued interest after two years.



LEARN MORE ABOUT COMMUNITY SOLAR

Solar United Neighbors:

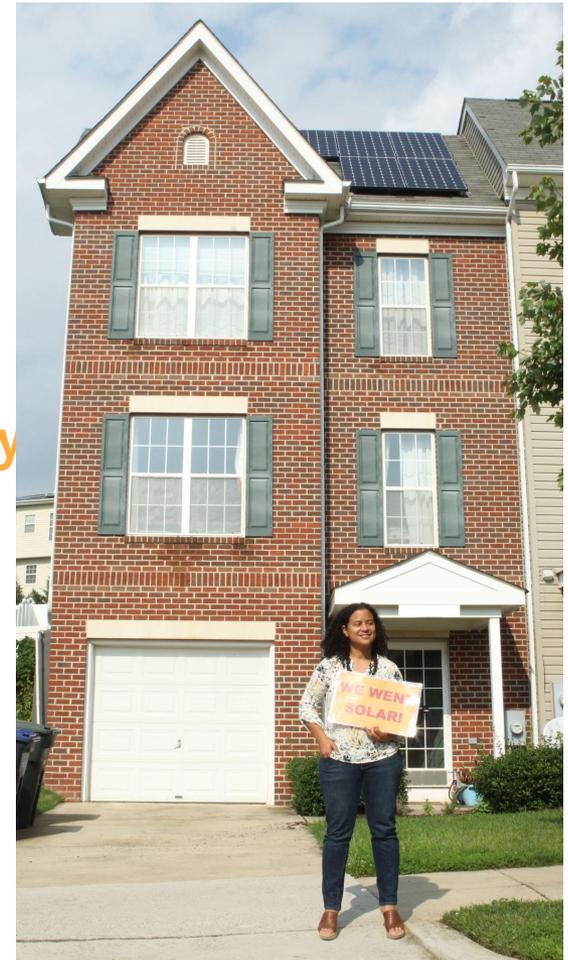
- ▶ [Community Solar: Learn the Issues](#)
- ▶ [Guide to Community Solar](#)
- ▶ [Community Solar Siting Guidelines](#)
- ▶ [Finding a community solar project near you](#)
- ▶ [Community Solar in Maryland](#)

Institute for Self-Reliance:

- ▶ [Community Solar Program Tracker](#)

Vote Solar:

- ▶ [Low Income Solar Policy Guide](#)
- ▶ [Shared Renewables](#)



 **SOLAR UNITED
NEIGHBORS**

Thank you!



Questions?