



Customer Newsletter
Volume 5/2024

Solar for All Initiatives: Empowering Communities Through Clean Energy

The announcement of \$20 billion in grant disbursements by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set the stage for a reveal of the winners of the eagerly anticipated \$7 billion Solar for All competition. This competitive grant program, a component of the \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund established under the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, aims to extend the benefits of small-scale solar and energy storage systems to low-income households and disadvantaged communities.



A recent analysis by the Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) reveals that the majority of grant applicants - 33 out of 35 - have emphasized community solar programs in their proposals. Community solar initiatives enable residents to access solar energy from shared installations, irrespective of their ability to install panels on their own properties.

Bruce Stewart, CEO of Perch Energy, underscores the multifaceted advantages of community solar, stating, "Along with clean energy, community solar can bring new economic development from jobs created to build solar energy facilities and from the ongoing maintenance needed to keep those facilities running." Stewart emphasizes that community solar not only provides economic opportunities but also fosters local engagement by offering community members the chance to subscribe to these initiatives.

Community solar subscriptions operate through a simple mechanism:

subscribers pay a monthly fee to access electricity generated by shared solar arrays, with utility companies compensating providers for the supplied energy. Stewart notes that subscribers typically enjoy savings ranging from 5% to 20% on their electricity bills, depending on local regulations.

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Despite the declining costs of solar energy, accessibility barriers persist for many Americans, particularly those in lower-income brackets. Stewart points out that lower-to-moderate income households spend a disproportionate amount of their income - 8.6% - on energy costs compared to higher-income counterparts. Community solar presents a viable solution to address this disparity, but raising awareness remains a significant challenge.

To scale up community solar initiatives effectively, regulatory clarity and simplicity are crucial. Stewart highlights the importance of state-level policies in facilitating the expansion of community solar programs, citing examples such as New Jersey's transition to streamlined billing processes, which have eased customer adoption.*

Currently, more than 7.3 gigawatts of community solar capacity is operational in the U.S., with the potential to power over 5.2 million homes. As anticipation mounts for the Solar for All competition results, an increasing number of states are exploring community solar as a means to integrate renewable energy into local grids and stimulate economic growth.

Stewart observes, "We're seeing positive economic development in states with existing community solar programs, and even those on the sidelines are taking notice." With the EPA set to unveil the grant awards later this month, the Solar for All initiative promises to accelerate the transition towards a more equitable and sustainable energy landscape.

* <https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2024/epa-grants-community-solar/799096>

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¹The electric supply price to compare is for residential customers. Electric supply price to compare for other rate classes (in cents per kWh) that are currently applicable include: Watt-Hour Non-Electric Space Heating 6.928 cents/kWh; Demand Non-Electric Space Heating 7.026 cents/kWh; Nonresidential Electric Space Heating 6.250 cents/kWh; Dusk to Dawn Lighting 3.329 cents/kWh; General Lighting 5.832 cents/kWh.

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¹The electric supply price to compare listed above is for residential customers. Other rate class rates as of the month above (in cents per kWh): Small General Service (Secondary) 9.138; Small General Service (Primary) 8.983; Small General Service (High Voltage) 8.890.



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Contact us:

MC Squared Energy Services, LLC.
175 West Jackson Blvd.
Suite 240
Chicago, IL 60604

[Add us to your address book](#)