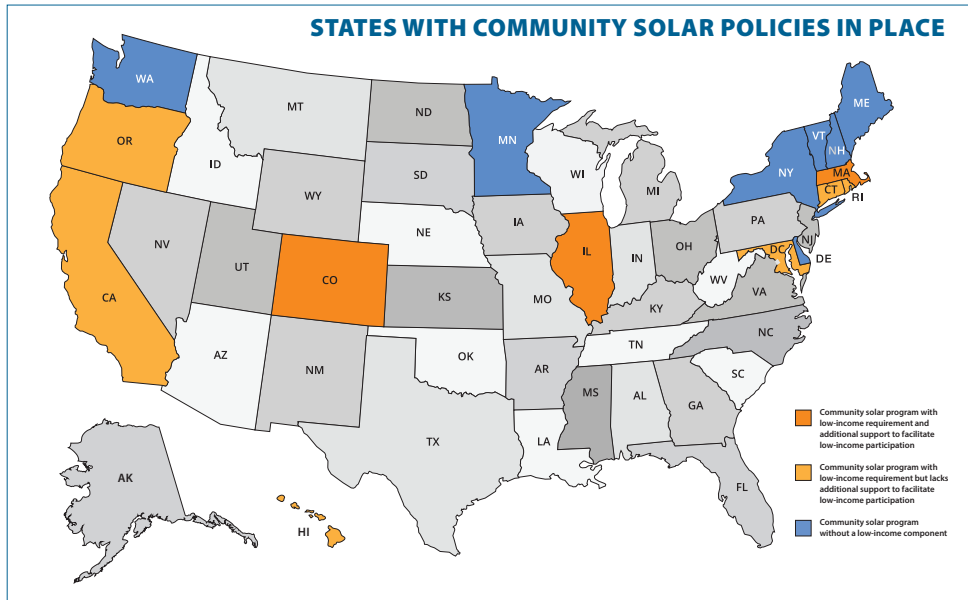


# LOW-INCOME SOLAR POLICY GUIDE

## Increasing Low-Income Access to Community Solar



	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<b>FINANCIAL</b>	<p><b>For low-income customers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to pay subscription costs</li> <li>Low or no credit</li> <li>Potential impact on energy assistance</li> </ul> <p><b>For solar providers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher costs</li> <li>Difficulty obtaining financing</li> <li>Ability to provide tangible economic benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Sustained funding</b> = support for equitable access</li> <li><b>Targeted incentives</b> to facilitate low-income customer participation and to ensure tangible economic benefits</li> <li><b>Credit support</b> such as loan loss reserves or credit score buy-downs</li> <li><b>Green Banks</b> to provide low-interest loans, credit support, etc.</li> <li><b>Incentives or policy direction</b> to secure anchor tenants, institutional backup subscribers, and a continuous waitlist of low-income subscribers</li> <li><b>On-bill financing</b> of any low-income subscriber costs</li> </ul>
<b>PROGRAM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carve-out by itself results in a de facto cap on low-income participation</li> <li>Lack of incentives to overcome financial barriers</li> <li>Lack of assistance with customer education &amp; outreach</li> <li>Lack of designated backup subscriber</li> <li>Voluminous paperwork requirements</li> <li>Subscription management requirements</li> <li>Lack of access to customer information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ensure community solar bill credits are set at full retail</b>, and that billing is simple and transparent</li> <li><b>Establish a program-wide low-income participation requirement</b>, and not a per-project requirement</li> <li><b>Streamlined paperwork</b> related to low-income customer enrollment, and reporting on low-income participation</li> <li><b>Ensure integration with energy assistance, energy efficiency, and job training programs</b></li> <li><b>Program design should be simple and avoid complexities</b> such as multiple program categories</li> <li><b>Ensure an open and competitive marketplace</b></li> </ul>
<b>OUTREACH, EDUCATION AND MARKETING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time and effort to build trust in low-income communities</li> <li>High mobility of low-income residents</li> <li>Cultural and language barriers</li> <li>Time delay between customer acquisition and delivery of benefits</li> <li>Lack of trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Funding or other assistance</b> to facilitate outreach, engagement with trusted community-based organizations, &amp; greater general awareness &amp; education</li> <li><b>Education for social services providers</b>, and direction for social services providers to enroll eligible clients in community solar</li> <li><b>Robust consumer protections</b></li> <li><b>Ensure affordable housing providers can participate</b>, as long as they demonstrate tangible benefits for residents</li> <li><b>Facilitate co-branding</b> with trusted organizations and institutions</li> </ul>

## LOW INCOME COMMUNITY SOLAR BEST PRACTICES

### Illinois Solar for All Program



- Created by SB 2814 of 2016
- Contains essential elements of a good low-income community solar program
- Accessibility and Affordability:**
- Offers meaningful financial incentives
- Requires low-income community participation

#### Community Engagement:

- Requires community solar developers to engage in partnership with community-based organizations
- Funds community-based organizations to perform grassroots education

#### Sustainability and Flexibility:

- Includes sustained funding
- Opportunities for program review and adjustment

#### Compatibility and Integration:

- Includes job training
- Integrates solar with energy efficiency

### Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association PV for All Program



- Contains essential elements of a good cooperative-led low-income community solar program

#### Accessibility and Affordability:

- Grant from the Colorado Energy Office

- reduced project cost
- Financing from DOE-supported National Rural Electric Cooperative SUNDA Project
- Achieved economies of scale with a 2 MW project
- 700 kW allocated to low-to-moderate income customers
- 500 kW allocated to nonprofits and affordable housing
- Offered 30% upfront discount and a 4-year contract term to guarantee savings and provide customer flexibility
- On-bill repayment
- Strategic siting on landfill to minimize siting and grid integration costs

#### Community Engagement:

- Includes job training opportunities

#### Compatibility and Integration:

- Integrates solar with energy efficiency offerings

## STATEWIDE BEST PRACTICES FOR LOW INCOME COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAMS

- The promise of community solar means participating LI customers experience tangible utility bill benefits.  
**Programs should provide immediate savings with no upfront or ongoing costs.**
- Complicated methodologies and processes will decrease interest and participation among customers and solar providers.  
**Programs should be simple and paperwork should be minimal.**
- LI carve-out on a per project basis equates to an artificial low-income participation cap  
**Establish a program-wide participation requirement instead.**
- Clarity and certainty with regard to the customer's community solar subscriber credit are required.  
**A clear economic proposition must be presented to subscribers to facilitate initial sign up.**
- Successful LI customer participation requires additional incentives, support, and targeted outreach/education  
**Funding for customer education and outreach should be incorporated into low-income community solar policy and program design.**
- Successful program design will include integration of community solar with energy assistance, energy efficiency, job training, and other related programs  
**Community solar programs should be complementary to reduce overall energy burden.**
- Solar developer participation requires targeted measures to reduce perceived investor and lender risk  
**"Backup subscribers," "anchor subscribers," a continuous waitlist of subscribers, incentives, and financing support must be incorporated into program design.**
- An open and competitive marketplace enables diverse offerings.  
**Innovation and competition can facilitate new offerings that expand access to affordable community solar solutions.**

Melanie Santiago-Mosier - Program Director, Low-Income Solar Access, Vote Solar

Marta Tomic - Program Director, Community Solar, Vote Solar

Tom Figel - Policy and Regulatory Manager, GRID Alternatives



VOTE SOLAR



GRID  
ALTERNATIVES

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