

# What Makes the Biggest Difference In Achieving Community Solar Success?

**Community Solar Value Project**  
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Project

[CommunitySolarValueProject.com](http://CommunitySolarValueProject.com)



- The Community Solar Value Project is led by the Bay-Area consulting firm, Extensible Energy, with co-funding from the US DOE SunShot Program. It works with expertise from four firms and an 8-member utility forum.



- CSVP works with utilities, industry innovators, and community partners. The Project provides demonstration and documentation of four ways to make utility-led community solar better, including:

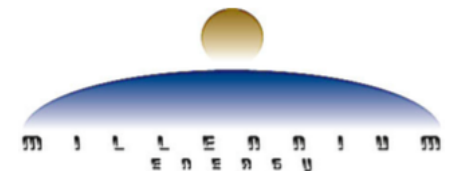


- strategic design
- target marketing
- procurement and pricing
- solar-plus integration



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[www.communitysolarvalueproject.com](http://www.communitysolarvalueproject.com)



# Utility-Led Community Solar

Community solar offers the benefit of solar to those who can't, or prefer not to, install solar panels on their homes or businesses. Some programs base participation on a capacity share (\$/kW) through a purchase or lease; others offer energy (\$/kWh) subscriptions. Program participants receive a credit on their electric bill each month for the energy produced by their share/s.

- ✓ In most states, utilities may offer programs directly; in others they may not.
- ✓ 14 states + Washington, DC have legislation that outlines community solar policy. Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota and New York are fastest-growing; programs offered through California IOUs have stalled.
- ✓ SEPA reports that the market for community solar took off in 2016, topping 300 MW installed, with more than 300 MW in the pipeline. Over 170 utilities reported that they had active community solar programs (late 2016).
- ✓ In Q2 2017, the non-residential solar market, driven largely by broadly-defined community solar projects, grew by almost 30% percent year-on-year.
- ✓ Yet differences in definitions and opinions abound.

# Boundaries for Today's Discussion

- ✓ CSVP Mission: *To help utilities to make community solar better.*
- ✓ Today, we will recognize the importance of policy, but not focus on it.
- ✓ Take the perspective of the utility program designer, who has to create or revive a community solar program.
- ✓ Assume that aspects of the program may or may not be outsourced to third-party providers.
- ✓ Assume that the solar resource should be sited locally, on the distribution grid, with an eye to increasing DER net value.
- ✓ Of all possible metrics for success, today we'll consider reduced net cost; value to the community/utility; customer satisfaction



# Our Panelists



- John Powers, Extensible Energy



- Herman Trabish, Journalist for *Utility Dive*



- Jill Cliburn, Cliburn and Associates

# Question #1

Make it real.

Give two examples of utility-led community solar programs that have demonstrated best practices. Then give a some detail on why?



Stephen Frantz, SMUD

## Question #2

What elements or methods have you found to be consistent across successful community solar programs?

<http://www.utilitydive.com/news/what-makes-a-successful-utility-led-community-solar-program/442663/>

<http://www.utilitydive.com/news/subscriptions-or-sales-which-community-solar-approach-promises-the-best-gr/434051/>

<http://www.communitysolarvalueproject.com/library.html#market>

## Question #3

Have you been surprised by any particular inconsistencies, i.e., strategies that would seem like a good rule of thumb for one utility, which failed to produce results for another?



Eric Van Orden, Excel Energy



# Question #4

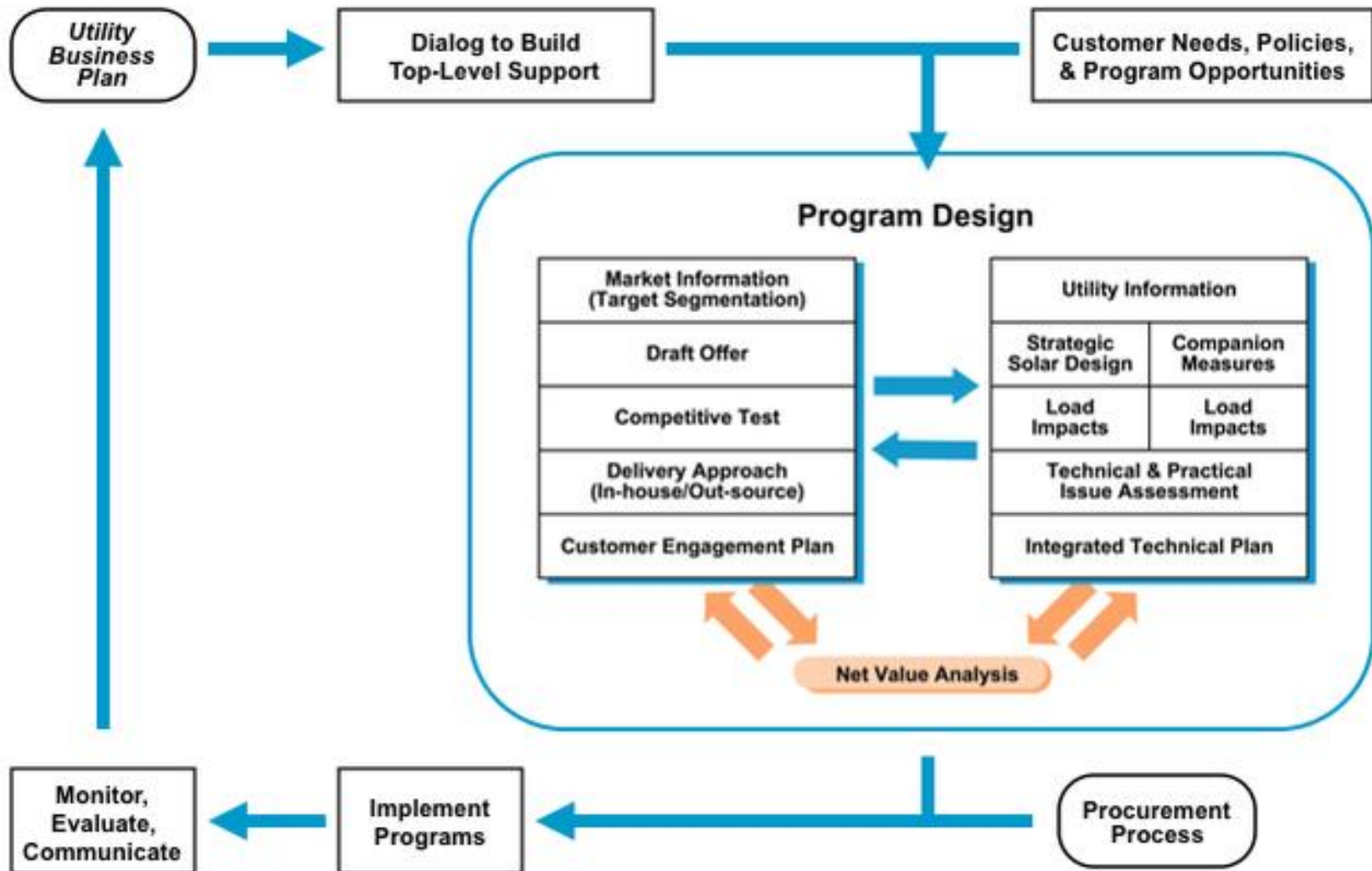
A question for the CSVP?

- *Strategic solar project design*
- *Procurement and Pricing*
- *Target marketing*
- *Solar-plus companion measures*
- *The program-design process itself*

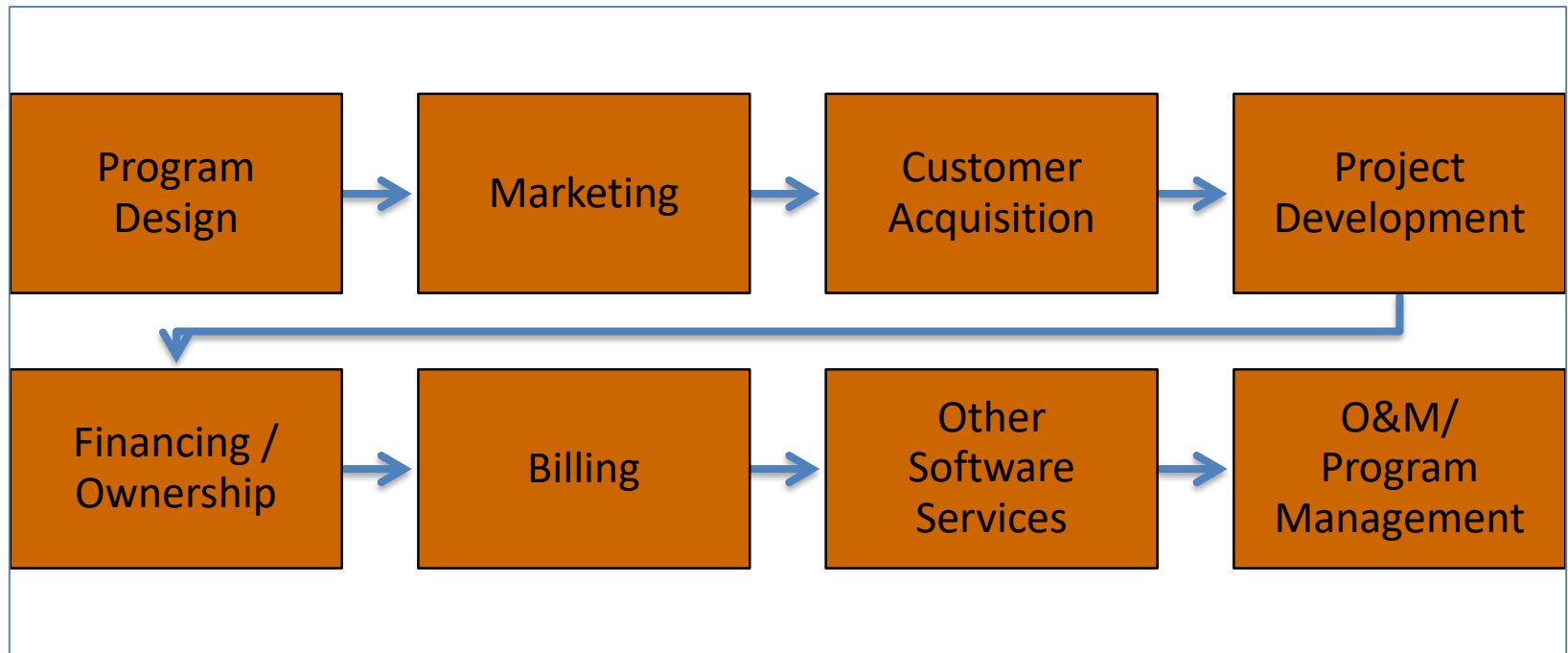


# Question #4 – Cont'd

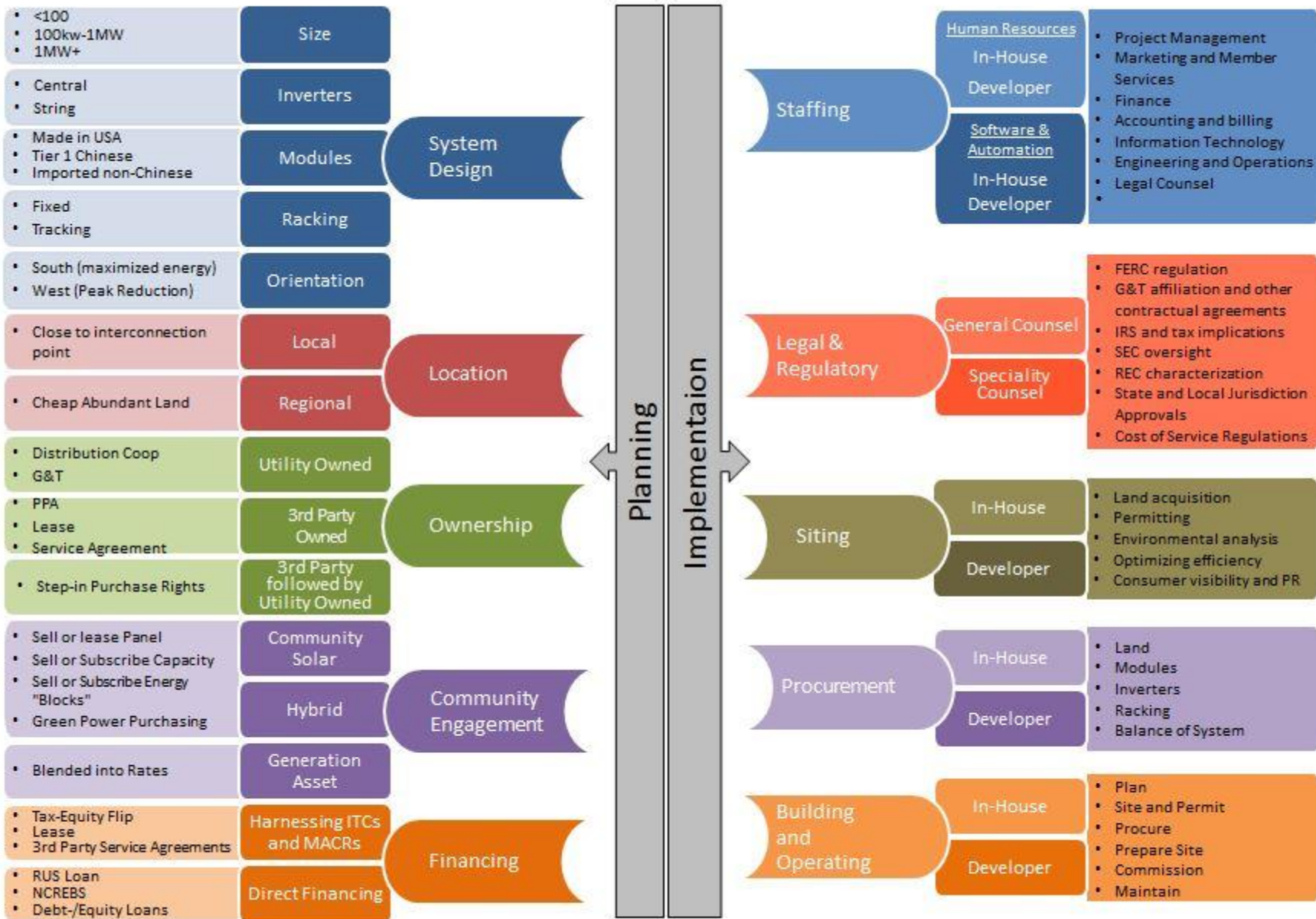
## CSVP Program Planning Process



## Question #4 (Cont'd)



Source: Navigant for CSVP



# Key Considerations: Expertise + Bandwidth

## Program Designer/Manager

- Coordinates cross-departmental team
- Coordinates external stakeholders
- Collects initial research; outlines plan
- Works across departments and leads GAP analytics to finalize the program plan
- Member of procurement team/s
- Leads budget coordination and reporting

## Marketing Manager

- Leads market research & segmentation
- Participates in iterative cross-departmental plan
- Leads development of program offer/s
- Leads development of marketing materials
- Develops plans for customer acquisition and care
- Leads consumer service and sales training

## Resource Manager

- Coordinates with...
- planners
- Provides
- Leads so...
- coordinat...
- Oversees
- Oversees

## Business and

- Advises or
- Resolves c
- Coordinate
- Oversees b

## IT Manager

- customer acquisition tools
- P analysis and other economics
- software to support marketing and
- ing billing system modifications
- budgetary support

## CPA Firm

- ing IRS, SEC, and FERC

- ng state policy, guidelines
- ement plans, contracts
- PA and offer development
- ptability of marketing

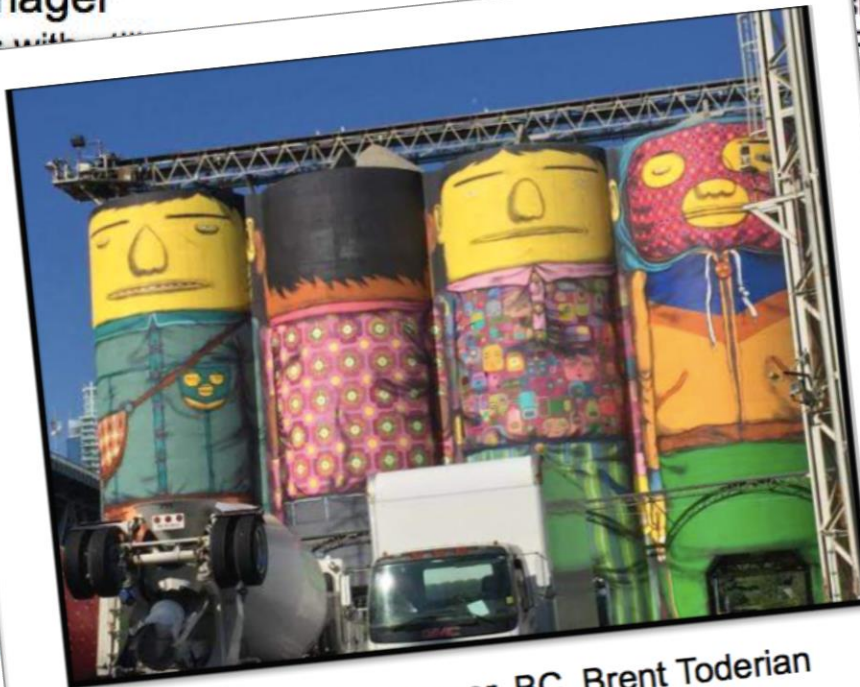


Photo: Silos in Vancouver, BC, Brent Toderian

*Each utility w*

*es and responsibilities*

## Question #5

One demonstration of the *difference that process can make* is the range of community solar program experience in California, among IOUs, munis, community choice options—

What does this teach us about getting to scale—or whether scale is important at all?

<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/articles/2017/10/community-solar-california-s-shared-renewables-at-a-crossroads.html>

## Question #6

Can community solar be a focus for utility innovation?

What—if anything—is the role for *Pilot Programs* in building community solar portfolios?

<http://www.utilitydive.com/news/reporters-notebook-utility-pilot-projects-could-soothe-contentious-regula/504709/>

# Questions?



## Community Solar Value Project

Extensible Energy, LLC, with Cliburn & Associates • Olivine, Inc. • Navigant Consulting

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Photo- C. Cliburn

The Community Solar Value Project (CSVP) represents leading energy thinkers and do-ers, ready to “make community solar better,” from both the sponsoring-utility and customer perspective. This website is your place to follow our progress and to contribute as a CSVP Utility Forum member or stakeholder.

As we develop a decision framework for community-solar program design, we’re focusing on five areas, where opportunities for lower costs and greater value abound: optimal siting and project design, procurement, pricing, target marketing, and matching the solar offer with companion measures that attack solar-integration challenges.

### Events

**What Makes the Biggest Difference in Community Solar Success?** Join us for a discussion of that big question, the focus of our

### Check Lots of Channels

by Jill Cliburn • 8/14/17

We just prepared a dispatch for our e-mail list, which includes folks from utilities and many other stakeholder organizations, who have attended CSVP workshops and webinars. Preparing that newsheet was a nice throwback; some of us even remember when we received such things on paper! But this is now, so we’re sharing our dispatch here, as a blog, as well as on other social networks. Our headline, *Check Lots of Channels*, refers our