



Community Solar Value Project

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New Website Offers Guidance on Community Solar and Other Distributed Energy Options

Dateline: November 28, 2017. The [Community Solar Value Project](#) (CSVP), an effort co-funded by the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative, has launched a new **Solutions Toolbox** for utilities and their partners, who are developing community solar and shared-solar programs. The Project team engaged the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) and more than a dozen other utilities nationwide, in identifying best practices and innovations that add value, while speeding the path to market for community solar programs.

Community solar generally refers to shared solar development, in which customers participate by subscribing to solar project output or through the purchase or lease of solar panels. In some states, policy dictates that this is for the most part a non-utility offer, but in most states, utilities play a leadership role in acquiring the solar resource and offering it as a customer program. According to the Smart Electric Power Alliance (SEPA), some 170 utilities nationwide currently offer or are planning to offer community solar. SEPA has estimated that community solar capacity topped 300 MW by year-end 2016, with continued growth accelerating due to the convenience and improved economy of scale of this solar option. The CSVP is focused on helping utilities to develop programs that meet the needs of both the utility and the customer. This includes programs that are developed entirely by the utility, and also programs where the utility works with non-utility service providers.

“The CSVP puts emphasis on getting projects and programs going faster and better,” explains Jill Cliburn, CSVP Principal Investigator. “Whether the utility wants to complete the effort in-house or to out-source key elements, it still takes internal collaboration and skillsets that are relatively new to utility planners,” Cliburn says. For example, the CSVP has found that most utilities are used to thinking about the hardware first and the market research later; the CSVP program-design process helps support give and take between the utility and customer sides from the very start. Other areas where CSVP has focused include helping utilities to price programs competitively, while meeting internal utility requirements. Also, CSVP offers practical advice on how and why to design energy-storage or demand-response programs that help to manage the variable-generation of a growing solar-generation portfolio. “This is an emerging interest among utilities, but it is fast-emerging,” Cliburn says.

Still, utilities are challenged by different problems, which are unique to their policy environments, organizational structures and customer demands. For that reason, the CSVP **Solutions Toolbox** takes a flexible approach, letting users choose among five challenge areas, in addition to the overall program-design process. The moniker for the **Toolbox** site is, “Solutions Beyond the Box,” and it is a nice coincidence that the topics covered on the site may be represented on the six sides of a box. These include

- The overall, cross-departmental program design process
- Strategic solar project design
- Project financing and procurement
- Target marketing for customer acquisition
- Integration with solar-plus measures, such as energy storage and demand-response
- An analytic approach, streamlined to get from project economics to program pricing

(More)

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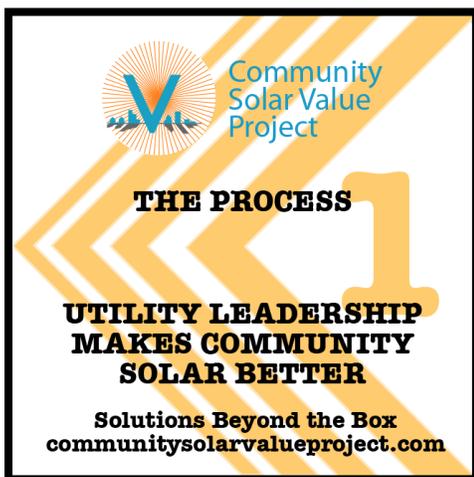
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The direct web address for the **Solutions Toolbox** is <http://www.communitysolarvalueproject.com/solutions>. The pages that comprise the **Toolbox** offer some 30 individual downloadable reports, presentations, and webinar recordings. The CSVP website that hosts the **Solutions Toolbox** includes additional information, case studies and a complete archive of webinars, spanning the three-year project. Since culmination of DOE co-funding, CSVP has initiated low-cost training and service packages, for one-on-one and small-group support.

CSVP is led by the San Francisco-area energy consulting and analytics firm Extensible Energy, LLC (John Powers, Project Officer), with support from Cliburn and Associates. Additional support has been provided by Navigant Consulting, Olivine, Inc. and Millennium Energy. Utility participants include the Sacramento (California) Municipal Utility District (SMUD), Public Service of New Mexico, and other utilities nationwide. U.S. Department of Energy support was provided under the Solar Market Pathways program of the SunShot Initiative. **CSVP welcomes inquiries for interviews or more information.**



Above: The Community Solar Value Project facilitates a workshop at the Sacramento (CA) Municipal Utility District, where utility managers from different departments worked together to give the program a sound footing.