Community Solar for Michigan

VOTE SOLAR

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Vote Solar is…

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- Independent, non-profit solar advocacy organization;
- Our mission is to make the benefits of solar more accessible to more people across the country;
- State policy focus;
- Actively working in 25 states.

What is Community Solar?

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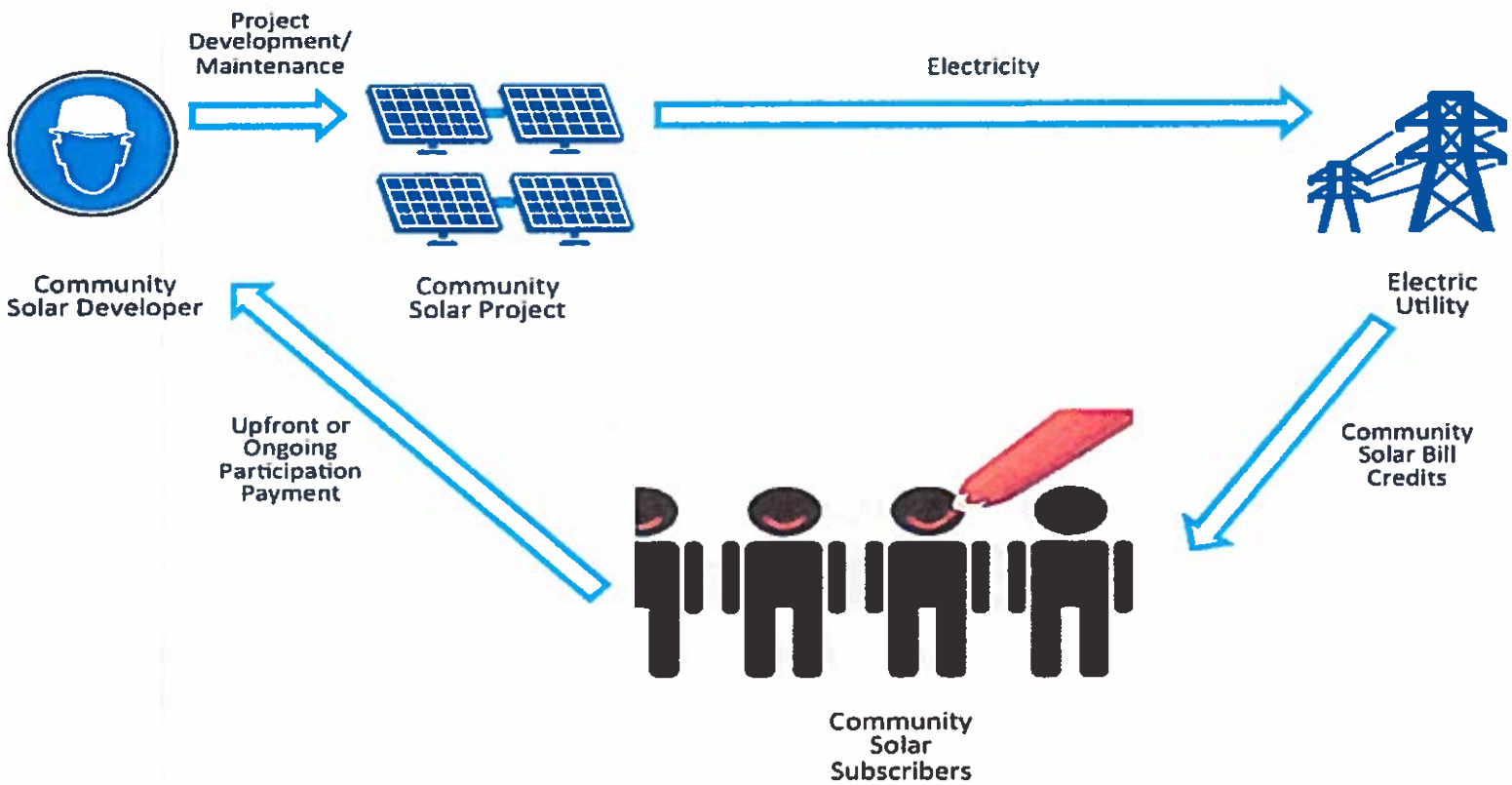
» Community solar refers to shared solar facilities serving individual community members, who receive credits on their electricity bills for their portion of the power produced;

How does community solar work?



Why is Community Solar Important?

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- It gives more customers and communities a choice to invest in renewable energy and to benefit from that investment;
- Benefits mirror those of going solar on your rooftop:
  - Lower bills and hedge against fuel price increases;
  - Help to spur local economic development and job creation;
  - Reduce the need for utility investment in generation, transmission and distribution system.

Need for Community Solar

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Growing track record of success

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- 16 states and DC have enacted enabling legislation;
- Many more utilities and coops piloting programs across the country;
- Strong consumer demand;
- Works in a variety of kinds of communities with subscribers ranging from large commercial to churches and schools, to individual households.

Pueblo County School District 70

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- Lowest Funded School District in CO
- Offset 100% of electricity needs through community solar
- 1.1 MW from 11,456 solar panels from two community solar arrays
- District recognizes $35,000 in utility cost savings in first year
- $2,025,139 over the life of program

Bongard's Premium Cheese

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- 6.8 MW community solar project in Minnesota;
- 680 residential subscribers;
- Began operations in 2017;
  - "Bongards will fix its energy costs at today's levels, protecting the cooperative from volatile fossil fuel prices"
  - "Community Solar was designed to broaden citizen and community access to locally generated solar energy"
  - Locally sited project on land owned by Bongards Creameries

Guiding Principles

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1. Expand renewable energy access to a broader group of energy consumers
2. Produce tangible economic benefits on customers' utility bills
3. Remain flexible enough to account for energy consumers' preferences
4. Be additive to and supportive of existing renewable energy programs, and not undermine them

IREC, *Model Rules for Shared Renewable Energy Programs* (2013), www.irecusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/IREC-Model-Rules-for-Shared-Renewable-Energy-Programs-2013.pdf

HB 5861 – Key Elements

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- Size limit up to 5 MW – fairly typical and set to ensure that customers can benefit from some economies of scale.
- Connected at the distribution level;
- At least 10 subscribers;
- At least 40% of subscribers are 25 kW or less;
- Commission to develop policies to ensure that all customer types have opportunities – including low income and agricultural customers;
- Flexible subscription size and transferability of subscriptions;
- Customer credited for value of the power attributable to subscription;
- Bill credits allow utility to include reasonable charge for administration, interconnection and distribution.

Contact information, Resources

VOTE SOLAR

- Becky@VoteSolar.org
- http://www.sharedrenewables.org/coop-energy-resources/