COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SOLAR ACCESS

Quick Read for CCSA's Policy Guidebook:
Expanding Solar Access through Informed Policy Decisions
June 2024

CCSA has released a new comprehensive guide for designing and implementing effective community solar programs. The **Policy Guidebook** aims to equip stakeholders with the tools and knowledge necessary to develop successful community solar programs that meet state goals, ensure projects can be built, and facilitate an efficient and transparent process for providers and subscribers. In addition to helpful background information, this guidebook has three important sections devoted to policy design, aimed at helping decision makers understand the importance of getting the critical components right, while allowing them the flexibility to build a program that addresses the goals of their state The document also includes a summary takeaway of the guidebook's policy recommendations.

Program Design: Building a Program That Will Accomplish a State's Goals

This section provides best practices for designing community solar programs that align with state-specific goals and priorities. The section discusses the importance of defining clear objectives, such as increasing renewable energy capacity, enhancing grid resilience, and promoting energy equity.

Key Program Design Elements

Participation Options: CCSA recommends a broad consideration of eligibility criteria for subscribers, ensuring customers of all rate classes can participate. It is also important to consider the options for what types of entities can participate as community solar providers in order to ensure subscribers achieve savings from the program.

Tailoring the Program for your State: Policymakers have a number of opportunities to tailor their program to meet their state's goals; these include considerations around project and program size, targeted low-income participation, preferential siting, and grid reliability, among others.

Core Policy Foundation: Ensuring Projects Can Be Built

This section outlines the essential market mechanisms that facilitate the development and construction of community solar projects. Includes recommendations for designing an appropriate credit rate, ensuring that credit rate can be applied on customer electricity bills and providing for effective oversight and administration.

Key Policy Elements

Designing the Credit Rate: Designing an effective credit rate that compensates subscribers for the full value that their subscribed generation provides to the grid can be difficult but a thoughtful process ensures viability of project development. Without an effective credit rate, projects cannot be financed and built to deliver benefits to the state and its residents.

Utility Billing Requirement: Bill credits are the fundamental financing mechanism to ensuring a successful community solar program so it is critical to ensure utilities have the right direction and requirements to apply bill credits to subscribers' electricity bills.

Program Administration: Clear rules of the road are essential to an efficient market so establishing the responsible entity for the application process, general program rules and market oversight will ensure programmatic clarity.

Supporting Elements: Ensuring the Process Is Efficient and Transparent for Both Providers and Subscribers

This section addresses the regulatory considerations necessary to support an efficient and transparent community solar market. It includes guidance on interconnection standards, grid integration, and consumer protection regulations.

Key Supporting Elements

Interconnection Standards: Interconnection is critical to supporting a well-functioning market – establishing streamlined interconnection processes reduces delays and costs, ensuring projects can connect to the grid efficiently.

Consumer Rights and Market Transparency: Implementing robust consumer protection measures, such as clear contractual terms and effective dispute resolution mechanisms builds trust and confidence in community solar programs. It is also important to provide a mechanism for transparency in market operations, including the registration of subscriber organizations and regular reporting requirements.

Ongoing Review and Evaluation: Technical Working Groups can be beneficial in working through any implementation challenges along the way. Providing for a program evaluation process also allows the state to assess the effectiveness of the program and assess the need for updates overtime.

For questions related to how community solar can work in your state, please contact CCSA at:
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