Washington State 2025
SOLAR SUMMIT
Advancing Solar in a Time of Uncertainty
October 24, 2025 | South Seattle Community College

Session 3

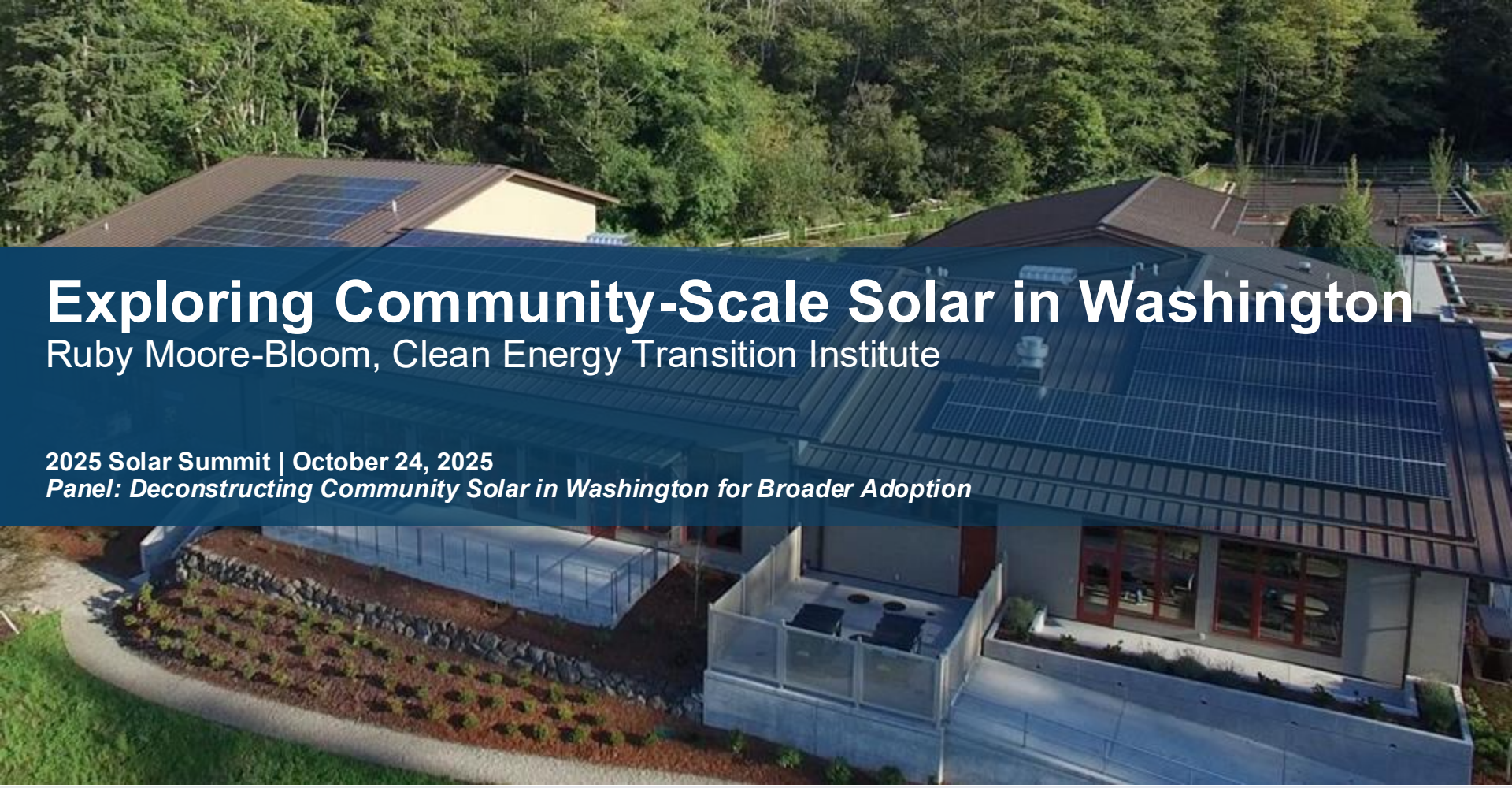
Deconstructing Community Solar in Washington for Broader Adoption

Moderator: Nora Hawkins, Solar Washington

Featuring: Jessica Carmona, BEF;

Chelsea Edgecombe, WSU Energy Program;

Ruby Moore-Bloom, Clean Energy Transition Institute



Exploring Community-Scale Solar in Washington

Ruby Moore-Bloom, Clean Energy Transition Institute

2025 Solar Summit | October 24, 2025

Panel: Deconstructing Community Solar in Washington for Broader Adoption

What is the Clean Energy Transition Institute?

- **What We Are:** Independent, nonpartisan Northwest research and analysis nonprofit organization
- **Our Mission:** Accelerate an equitable clean energy transition in the Northwest
- **Our Role**: Frame, translate, demystify decarbonization and the clean energy transition in the Northwest
  - Unbiased analysis to encourage fact-based conversations

What comes to mind when you hear community-scale solar?

Defining Community-Scale Solar

No standard definition! From interviews and literature review:

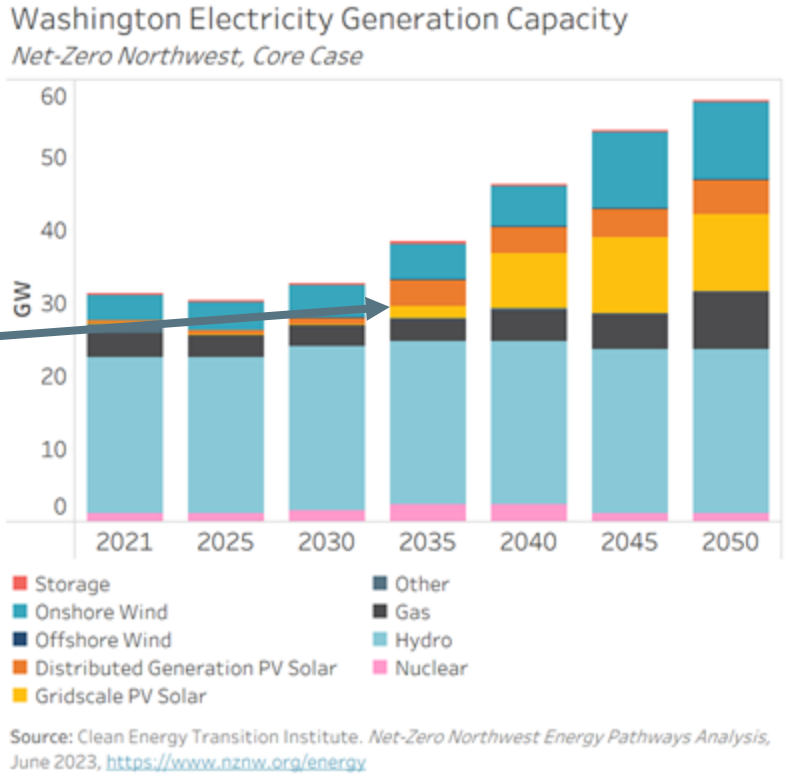
- Purpose is to **benefit/serve local community members**
  - Connected to the **distribution grid** to enable these benefits
- Aims to provide **equitable access** to solar energy, especially for those unable to install their own systems
- Can be **behind or in front of the meter**, located on **rooftops** or the **ground**, and is often **subscription-based** to allow shared access to benefits
- Project size is shaped by policy thresholds, economic feasibility, incentive programs, and hosting capacity
  - For this project, generally defined as 12kW – 1 MW
- Various **ownership models** (building owner, 3rd party, utility)
  - Virtual net metering and shared ownership models are desired but not widely available in Washington

Project Introduction

- Collaboration between CETI and University of Washington researchers exploring community-scale solar in Washington
- Goal was to create interactive visualizations combining data layers related to the potential benefits associated with community-scale solar
- Methodology
  - Five staff interviews
  - Focused literature review
  - Development of data visualizations and accompanying narrative text

Solar can Play Critical Role in Washington's Clean Energy Future

- Significant projected growth in clean electricity demand
- Previous CETI study finds role for both utility-scale and distributed solar



Source: Clean Energy Transition Institute. *Net-Zero Northwest Energy Pathways Analysis*, June 2023, https://www.nznw.org/energy

Emerging Themes

Wide Range of Benefits

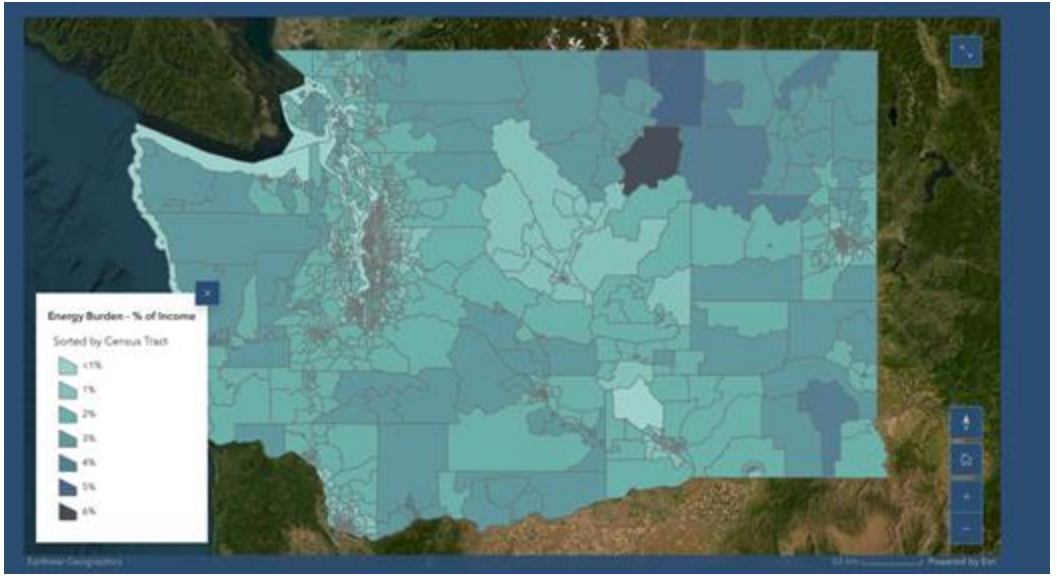
- Economic
  - Lower energy bills, with savings re-invested in communities
  - Creation of local construction and maintenance jobs
  - Lease revenue for landowners
- Energy resilience and reliability
  - When paired with storage, community-scale solar can enable critical services during outages
  - Can support grid reliability and transmission deferral
- Expanded access to solar
  - Renters
  - Low-income households
  - Houses with rooftops not suitable for solar
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Health and safety
  - Refrigeration
  - Medical devices
  - Improved air quality

Role of Distributed Community-Scale Solar in Washington's Clean Energy Future

- Seen as key part of a resilient, equitable energy transition
- Enables community participation in clean energy goals
- Current policy may be barrier; likely upcoming conversations about how to value solar
- Specific considerations for rural communities
  - Underserved communities are often at the ends of distribution lines and experience more frequent outages

Economic Benefits

- More than 270,000 low-income households in Washington are energy burdened[1]
  - Spend more than 6% of their household income on home energy bills annually
- Community solar can lead to household savings on electricity bills
  - “subscribers to corporate owned community solar services can expect to save between 10%-15% on their household electricity bills…[and up to] about 20% for households with low incomes” [2]



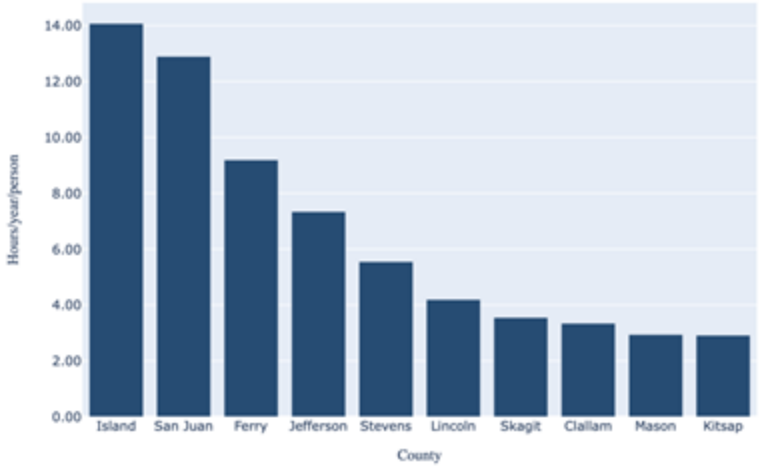
Map showing energy burden (% of annual income spent on energy bills) by census tract in Washington. Source: DOE LEAD Tool, https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/lead-tool

1. Washington State Department of Commerce, “Low-Income Energy Assistance 2025 Legislative Report,” May 2025. https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/hbj9xsebcrmb6ckucg3xe55rnq4anwjo
2. University of Washington Urban Infrastructure Lab, “Economic Impact Analysis of Community Solar Programs for the State of Washington,” January 2025. https://uil.be.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/58/2025/01/Economic-Impact-Analysis-of-Community-Solar-Programs-for-the-State-of-Washington.pdf

Energy Resilience

- Resilience = ability to withstand and recover from disruptions
  - Must be defined at a local level
  - Distinct from reliability, which refers to consistent and predictable power
- Microgrids and resilience hubs are key strategies
  - Microgrid = self-sufficient energy system that can operate in grid-connected or off-grid modes
  - Solar plus storage microgrids can enable critical services during outages

Ten Washington Counties with Largest per Capita Outages from 2019-2023



Source: EAGLE-I dataset

Key Challenges and Factors to Maximize Benefits

- Challenges
  - Policy barriers
  - Upfront cost and financing complexity
  - Permitting and interconnection hurdles
  - Siting constraints and community opposition
  - Perception that Washington does not have great solar resources
- Maximize benefits by:
  - Engaging the local community
  - Building to allow for future upgrades
  - Prioritizing the built environment
  - Designing resilience hubs where people already congregate naturally
  - Accessing 3rd party financing, applying for grants

Learn More

Get notified when the project is published:

- Sign up for CETI's newsletter
  www.cleanenergytransition.org/sign-up

- Or send me an email
  ruby@cleanenergytransition.org

Thank you very much

Ruby Moore-Bloom
ruby@cleanenergytransition.org

Example Projects in Washington

- **Merritt Manor Apartments** (2022)
  - *Solar installation on low-income housing development in Olympia that provides energy savings to tenants*
  - 126 kW capacity
- **Vashon United Methodist Church** (2024)
  - *Solar and battery storage installed on a Vashon Island church to provide backup power generation and emergency shelter with savings used to reinvest in its mission*
  - 30 kW capacity and 81 kWh battery storage
- **Canterbury Manor** (2025)
  - *Solar installation on an independent senior community in Bremerton, with savings benefiting residents and supporting the organization's mission*
  - 144 kW capacity

Partnering for Community Impact

BEF Community Solar

BEF
Sunward Program
Renewables

Agenda

1. Introduction: BEF
2. Oregon Community Solar Program
3. Goodling Community Solar
4. Medford Irrigation District
5. WA Community Solar: Cowlitz PUD
6. BEF Services

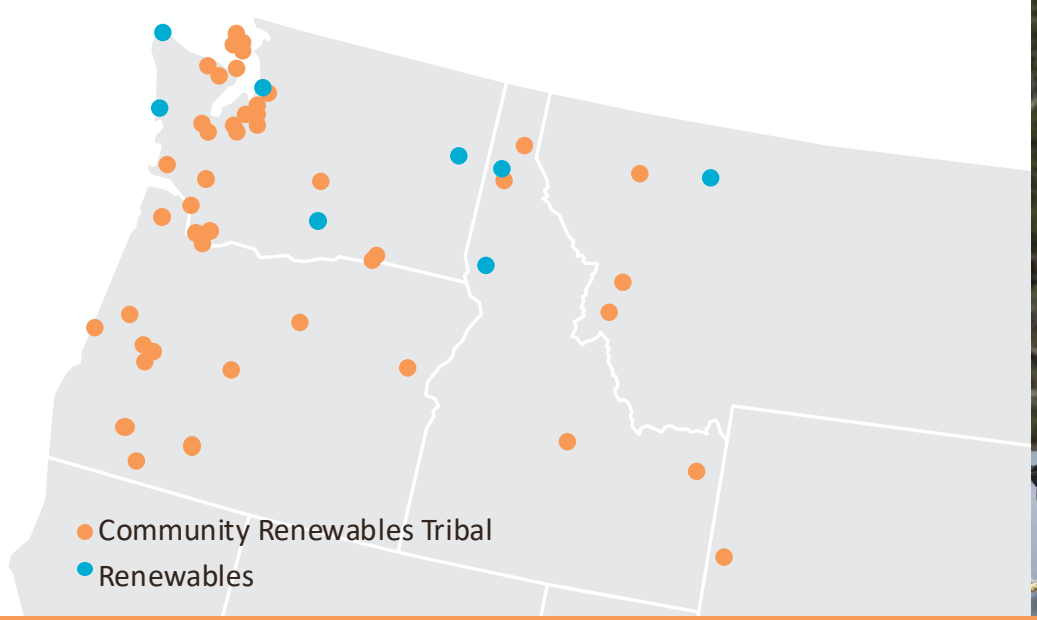
Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF)

Established in 1998 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

We are dedicated to providing the economic and environmental benefits of solar and renewable energy to low-income communities, tribal communities, and communities of color.

We build partnerships that develop renewable energy projects and deliver wealth-building and cost savings to communities.

bef renewables program



Impact to Date

as of October 2025

Supported over

40

community-scale solar projects

Developed over

+18,000kW

of solar for low-income and tribal communities

Generating over

$22M

in lifetime savings for over **4,000** low-income households

Secured over

$200M

in funding

Oregon Community Solar Program (ORCSP)

History, Policy and Highlights

The program was established by the Oregon Legislature in 2016, spearheaded by the Oregon Public Utility Commission rules through UM 1930.

Energy Solutions

EnergyTrust of Oregon

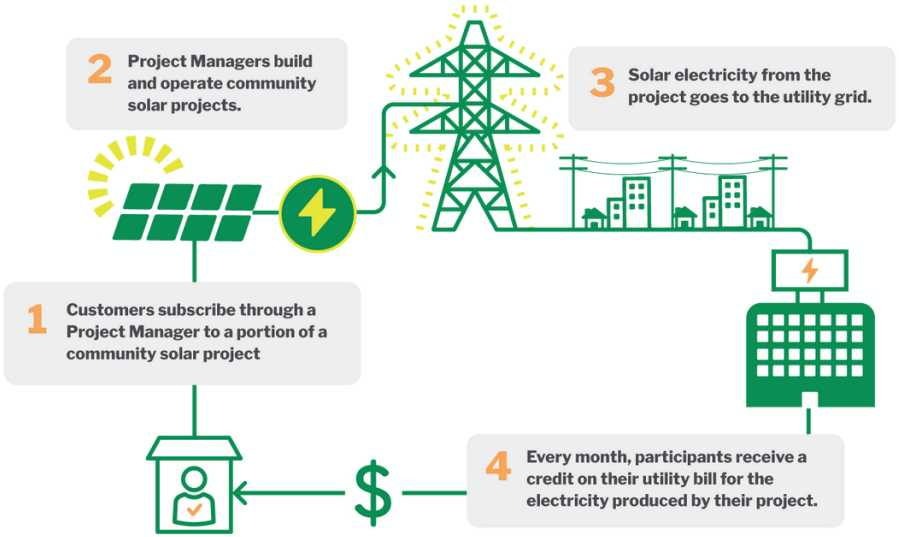
COMMUNITY ENERGY PROJECT

bcf

OREGON COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAM
Registered Project Manager

- **Initial Program Capacity:**
  - 160 MW
    - 40 MW for Carve-out projects
    - 120 MW for General Market projects
- >= 10% of all projects must be for low-income owners/subscribers
- **Carve-out project eligibility:**
  - Project Manager Capabilities
  - 50% Low-Income*
- 9/25: 50 MW Carve-out expasion

Oregon Community Solar Program (ORCSP)



Set Bill Credit Rates [$/kWh]

Utility	Residential	Non-Residential
Pacific Power	0.1057	0.0952
Portland General Electric	0.1216	0.1094

2% annual escalator

Subscription Fees: The subscription fee is a charge by the Project Manager that reflects monthly cost to subscribe to the project = **Revenue Generator.**

Case Study: PDX Community Solar

PORTLAND CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITY BENEFITS FUND

VERDE

OREGON COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAM
Registered Project Manager

Port of Portland

Case Study: Medford Irrigation District

This unique project is one of Oregon's first **floating solar** installations, featuring 1,776 solar panels **(800 kW AC)** on a reservoir in the Medford Irrigation District.

By covering about **1.8 acres of water**, the project will:

- Generate local, renewable energy for the community,
- Improve water quality by shading the reservoir and reducing algae growth,
- Reduce water loss from evaporation,
- 60 residential subscriptions.

Medford Irrigation District

Registered Project Manager

Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) appropriation

OR Challenges

1. Program Capacity.
2. Interconnection.
3. Long-term commitment (20 years of management)
4. Economic: cost of energy, bill credit rates are lower than in other parts of the Country.
5. Funding: Portland Clean Energy Fund.
6. Site feasibility: site host risk assessment and land-use limitations.
7. Co-development of projects with communities: community trust, lack of capacity in Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Photo: PDX Community Solar

Washington CS: Cowlitz PUD

- 72 kW
- Production meter per building
- Net-metering with a production meter per building
- CPUD: distribute net-metered credits to LI tenants' utility accounts = bill savings
- LCCAP reporting

Lower Columbia CAP

renewables program

Energy Program

Washington State University

BEF Services

Partnering for Community Impact

Pre - Development

- Feasibility Studies
- Site analysis
- Financial Modeling
- Bill Credit & Community Benefits Model Design

Project Funding

- Grant writing support
- Grant management

Project Development

- RFP Development
- Contractor selection
- Project management
- Owner's Rep

Capacity Building

- Workforce Development Facilitation
- Energy Education

Let’s talk!

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WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Energy Program

Community Solar Expansion Program

October 2025

Chelsea Edgecombe
Program Coordinator
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About CSEP

The Washington State Community Solar Expansion Program is an incentive program that aims to expand access to the benefits of renewable energy for Washington's low-income community members

Beneficiaries	Funding Leveraged	Projects Underway
300,000 +	$20.9 M+	80+

Our website has been updated! Please visit for more program information

https://www.energy.wsu.edu/RenewableEnergy/CommunitySolarProgram.aspx

About CSEP

10.41+MWdc capacity & **1379 kWhdc** storage capacity in certified and pre-certified projects

Breakdown by administrator type

Nonprofits: $16.8 million | 8.55+ MWdc | 1072 kWhdc

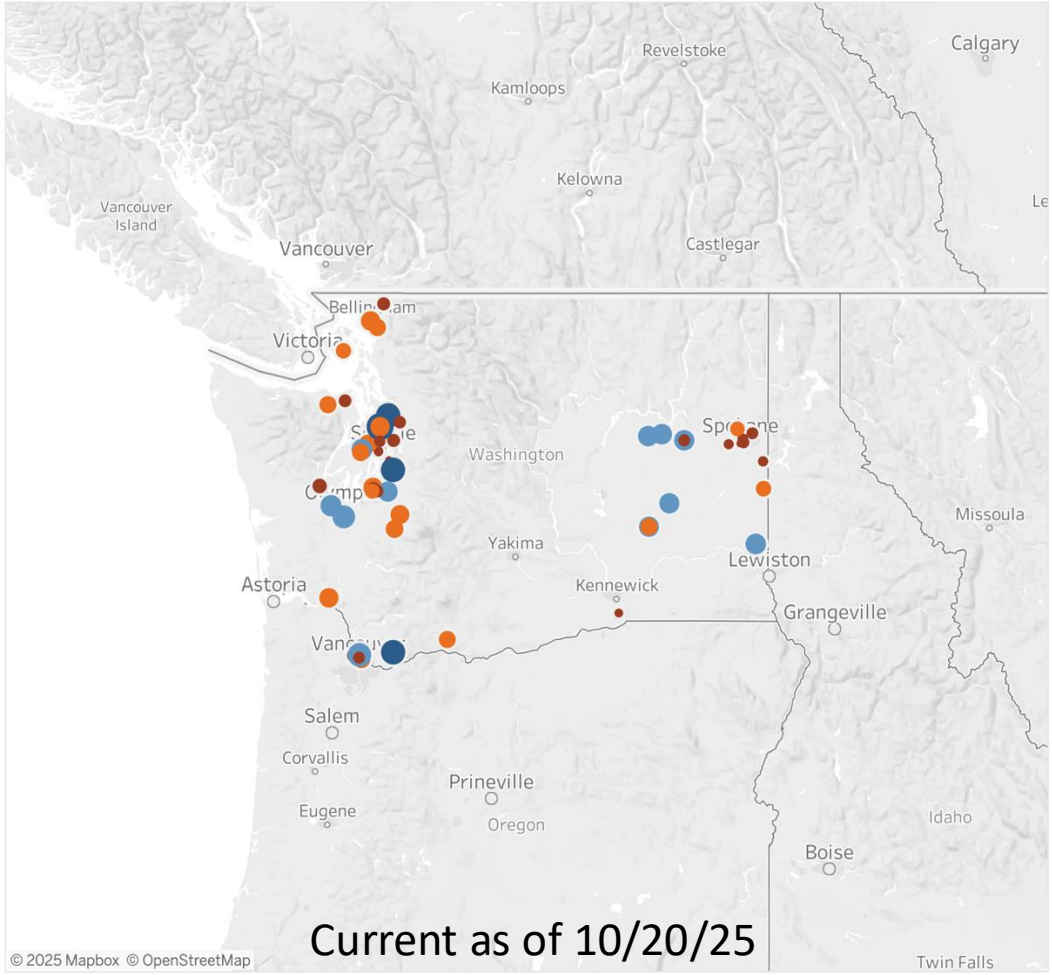
Local Housing Authorities: $1.5 million | 609 kWdc

Utilities: $2.6 million | 1.14 MWdc | 307 kWhdc

Current as of 10/20/2025

Community Solar Expansion Program

Pre-certified and Certified Projects



Current as of 10/20/25

Capacity (kWdc)

13 — 245

Status

- [x] (All)
- [x] Pre-certified
- [x] Certified

City

- [x] (All)
- [x] Airway Heights
- [x] Bainbridge
- [x] Bellingham
- [x] Bremerton
- [x] Creston

Project Name

- [x] (All)
- [x] 9736 Greenwood
- [x] Administration Building ...
- [x] Bellingham Community S...
- [x] Bellingham Community S...
- [x] Bellingham Community S...
- [x] Boys & Girls Club of What...
- [x] Bremerton Foodline
- [x] Bubble on Gum #1
- [x] Canterbury Manor Solar I...
- [x] Clallam PUD Admin Site S...
- [x] Clallam PUD Sub Shop So...
- [x] Community Roots - O Str...
- [x] Community Roots Solar P...
- [x] Community Solar East
- [x] Cougar Creek Apartments
- [x] Creston Middle School
- [x] Davenport Bus Garage
- [x] Davenport High School

Capacity (kWdc)

13.0 — 245.0

Current Funding Obligations

As of October 2025, a significant number of precertification applications have been submitted and are in review. Forecasted obligated funding levels based on these submissions have reached $25 million for the FY25-FY27 Biennium (July 1st 2025 – June 30th 2027).

Potential projects may continue to submit for precertification and can receive approval, but may not be able to submit for certification and receive the one-time incentive payment until the next Biennium (July 1st 2027 – June 30th 2029).

Effective October 16, 2025, any new approved precertifications will be placed on a waitlist in order of approval. If changes occur to currently submitted projects and funding becomes available, projects on the waitlist may submit for certification.

What does this mean for your project? Do not wait until the start of next biennium to apply!!

Program Overview

- Washington legislature passed 2SHB 1814 in 2022
- Total Funding: $100 million, $25 million per biennium
- Projects developed and administered by Project Administrator
- Incentives
  - Must provide continuing benefits to low-income subscribers or service provider
  - Proportional funding
  - Provided after project completion
  - Admin Cost
- Program Timeline
  - 2 years for project completion
  - Project initial submissions till June 30th, 2033
  - Project final submissions till June 30th, 2035

Eligibility

- Site Serving Utility
  - Voluntary Participation
  - Annual Limitation
- Administrator: Utility, Nonprofit, Tribal Housing Authority, or Local Housing Authority
- Project size: 12 kWdc to 199kWdc
- Projects must directly benefit low-income community members

Application Process Overview

1

INITIAL INQUIRY

The Administrator submits a brief description of their organization, the potential project, and how benefits from the proposed solar system will be passed on to low-income participants.

2

PRECERTIFICATION

The Administrator's application to show that the project is ready and feasible for construction. An approved precertification reserves incentives for the project for 2 years.

3

CERTIFICATION

The Administrator's application to show the project was completed as stated and all required agreements have been signed. Approved projects then receive the incentive from the utility serving the site.

4

ANNUAL UPDATE

The Administrator provides annual updates for 10 years on basic performance metrics.

Administrative Funding Change

Major administrative budget shortfall in FY26. Implementing a $5,000 application fee to continue to run the program effectively.

- Fee to be paid at time of precertification and is required for project funds to be obligated.
- Document fee as part of your project installation costs
- Fee is reimbursed as part of project incentive payment

Case Study: Ohop Mutal Light Company

Project Snapshot

- **Administrator type**: Utility
- **Location**: Eatonville, WA
- **Capacity**: 106 kWdc + 307.2 kWh
- **Project Status**: BESS certified in June 2025, solar PV in precertification.
- **Benefits proposal**: 100% of kWh value and 75% of peak demand savings directed to Energy Equity Fund (weatherization and energy efficiency projects for low-income homes). Cost savings valued at full retail rate.

Implemented in 2 phases

Photo of Ohop Mutual's 307.2 kWh BESS installation. Courtesy of Ohop Mutual

Case Study: Harrington School District

Project Snapshot

- **Administrator type**: Nonprofit
- **Location**: Harrington, WA
- **Capacity**: 130 kWdc
- **Project Status**: Certified in September 2025
- **Benefits proposal**: Direct energy cost savings to summer STEM courses for low-income students. Secondary usages: after-school life courses, misc. services

Photo of Harrington SD's 130 kWdc solar array. Photo courtesy of ZEN NW.

Case Study: Snohomish PUD

Project Snapshot

- **Administrator type**: Utility
- **Location**: Everett, WA
- **Capacity**: 199 kWdc portion of a 401 kWdc array
- **Project Status**: Certified on March 7th, 2025
- **Benefits proposal**: Direct solar generation benefits to CEF (Community Energy Relief)

Photo of the South Everett Solar Project's logo, courtesty of Snohomish PUD

Case Study: Vancouver Housing Authority Laurel Manor

Project Snapshot

- **Administrator type**: Local Housing Authority
- **Location**: Vancouver, WA
- **Capacity**: 132 kWdc
- **Project Status**: Certified in October 2024
- **Benefits proposal**: Reduce operating costs for the 82-unit low-income senior housing development.

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Energy Program

Thank You

For additional information, see our website at
www.energy.wsu.edu

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