

Public Utility Commission of Oregon (PUC) approves community solar rules

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The **Public Utility Commission of Oregon (PUC)** has approved community solar rules that will help to enable all citizens in the state to directly participate in, and benefit from, local solar projects.



The new rules will enable state citizens to benefit from state projects without having to install solar panels on their own roofs. The programme will enable initial development of over 150 megawatts (MW) of community solar projects statewide, enough to serve around 22,000 households. Any electric customer can participate – including homeowners, renters, businesses, schools, and local governments; and at least 10 percent of the programme will be reserved for low income households.

Community solar allows multiple energy customers – families, businesses and schools - the ability to share in the benefits of a local solar project and receive credit on their electric bill for their portion of the clean power produced. Community solar can make solar accessible to every citizen with an electric bill. PUC staff have worked with stakeholders over the past year to develop the rules but the PUC still has some work to do before developers can begin

construction projects and signing up customers. This is because the PUC have not finalised the bill credit that customers will receive on their utility bill for participating in the community solar projects.

Instead, the Commission chose to consider the community solar bill credit in the ongoing resource value of solar (RVOS) proceeding, which lacks a definitive timeline, but is expected to carry well into 2018. However, industry representatives know that credit value certainty is critical to jumpstarting project development in Oregon and so they have been urging the PUC to establish an interim bill credit so that initial community solar projects can be built to meet pent-up customer demand.

“We are excited to see community solar move forward in Oregon” said Jeff Cramer, Executive Director of the Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA). “Our member companies are looking forward to investing in clean energy infrastructure for the state and helping meet consumer demand for solar. Following on today’s order, we urge the PUC to finalise key details of the programme as soon as possible to ensure equitable access to solar for all Oregonians, whether through solar panels on their roof or in their community.”

Jeff Bissonnette, Executive Director of Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association (OSEIA), added that stakeholders have put in a lot of work developing the community solar rules and solar developers are ready to start building projects. Most importantly though, customers are ready to sign up.

Community solar is rapidly growing across the US, given that Americans want more solar. The new rules expand the benefits of solar to those who may not have had access before as well as helping the State of Oregon to become a leader in the American solar sector.