

Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform

IGAP Request for Information Snapshot

August 30, 2022

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| <u>Department:</u> Department of Energy (DOE) | <u>Agency:</u> Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) |
| <u>Application Deadline:</u> September 16, 2022 | <u>Docket Number:</u> DE-FOA-0002817 |

Summary

The Department of Energy's Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) has issued a request for information (RFI) to understand how they can develop a secure online platform to identify and make community solar subscriptions with verified savings more accessible for households participating in government-run low-income support programs.

Background

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) is partnering with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop and pilot a digital platform that will identify and make community solar with verified savings more accessible to households participating in government-run low-income support programs.

The [Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform](#) will serve as a digital bridge between LIHEAP recipients who are interested in community solar and vetted community solar providers. This platform will help identify and make community solar with verified savings more assessable to LIHEAP recipients and potentially other low-income households. This Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform is specifically intended to enable low-income households to participate in community solar savings. NCSP will work with 3-5 states to pilot the platform. After the pilot stage, additional interested states will be included to support the development and deployment of the platform.

Who Should Respond

SETO is interested in responses from all stakeholders, including:

- Community-based organizations
- Community solar subscription managers and developers
- State and local governments
- Researchers
- LIHEAP implementation organizations
- Organizations representing and serving environmental justice and fossil fuel-transitioning communities
- Groups that work with individuals and organizations with high energy burdens

Response Guidelines

Responses must be no more than 5 pages in length with 12-point font and 1 inch margins.

Respondents are requested to provide the following information at the start of their response:

- Company/institution name
- Company/institution contact
- Contact's address, phone number, and e-mail address

Respondents may answer as many or as few questions as they wish. Responses should be identified by the specific question or topic.

Key Questions

SETO will use the feedback from this RFI to inform the design of the platform so that it best meets the needs of relevant stakeholders and achieves the greatest impact for low-income community solar access and bill savings.

Category 1: Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform Considerations

1. Which stakeholders should support the development and implementation of the platform?
2. How should LIHEAP administrators, LIHEAP subgrantees, income-qualified households, the federal government, subscription managers, and/or developers have access to and use the platform?
3. Who should own and manage this Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform in the long-term? (DOE will set up this program but does not anticipate it will ultimately own or manage it)
4. How do we ensure all community solar program structures and projects can connect with the LIHEAP recipients through this platform?
5. This platform is designed to connect LIHEAP recipients with qualified local community solar subscriptions. Does your state have policy or regulatory constraints, conditions, or challenges that would prevent the state from helping to populate the platform with LIHEAP recipients who have expressed interest in learning about available community solar subscriptions?

Category 2: LIHEAP Program Considerations

1. This platform is designed to connect LIHEAP recipients with qualified local community solar subscriptions. What is the bare minimum data the platform needs to collect from LIHEAP recipients who express interest in participating in a community solar program so the platform can provide an easy and quality experience for those offering community solar subscriptions as well as potential community solar subscribers?
2. What differences in LIHEAP program implementation across states does the design of the platform need to consider to ensure broad accessibility and implementation?
3. What type of information technology (IT) system do states utilize for LIHEAP and how has information from this system been shared for other data exchanges?
4. What other platforms or models could serve as helpful examples for how to design the Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform?
What concerns do you have with the development of the Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform? Please share any concerns you have that are specific to equity and Justice40 implications.

Category 3: Subscription Considerations

1. What should the vetting process for including a low-income community solar subscription on the platform look like and who should do it?
How do we ensure all subscriptions protect customer privacy and provide adequate monthly savings?
2. What is needed from community solar developers and subscription managers to ensure that LIHEAP recipients who subscribe see a minimum of 20% bill savings? If 20% bill savings are promised and cannot be confirmed or are not met, how should solar developers and/or others be held accountable?
3. For developers: The platform is expected to reduce the costs of low-income subscriber acquisition, a key challenge highlighted by developers and hindering low-income household access to many community solar projects. Would you be willing to pay for access to and/or maintenance of the platform?
4. How should the platform accommodate subscriber turnover (i.e., low-income subscribers moving out of the LIHEAP-eligible income bracket or moving)?

Category 4: Equity and Other Considerations

1. NCSP has a 2025 target of powering the equivalent of 5 million American households with community solar, generating \$1 billion in energy bill savings. This Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform is specifically intended to enable low-income households to participate in, and benefit from, community solar savings. Are there other ways DOE can support greater deployment and availability of low-income community solar that meet the NCSP target and the objectives of the Justice 40 Initiative, either through this platform or other strategies?
2. What additional support should DOE consider beyond the Low-Income Community Solar Subscription Platform that increases low-income community solar development, reduces barriers to access subscriptions, and ensures a minimum of 20% bill savings?
3. What else should we consider?

How to Submit

Send responses to equitablesolar@ee.doe.gov as a Microsoft Word (.docx) attachment. Attachments larger than 25MB should be compressed, or zipped, to ensure message delivery. Only electronic responses will be accepted.

Resources

- [RFI Posting on DOE's EERE Exchange](#)
- [RFI Announcement](#)