

A Guide for CBOs on Engaging with Community Solar Developers

What to ask when your organization gets approached by a developer

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Community-based organizations (CBO) are crucial in ensuring that communities facing barriers to clean energy options, economic and environmental injustice, and high energy burdens can enroll in community solar programs. This document helps community-based organizations navigate the community solar space and empowers them to ask relevant questions during the contracting process with solar developers. This guide, however, is a high-level resource and should not replace legal support in drafting contracts.

Community Solar Contract with Developers

In navigating the first interaction with community solar developers, CBOs should be sure to ask at least two overarching questions: What is the developer asking of the CBO? What financial support would the CBO be getting in the partnership?

1. What is the developer asking of your organization?

- Define clearly what the developer is expecting from your organization.
 - What technical and capacity support will your organization need?
 - Community Solar Basics Training
 - Program Education Training
 - Developer training on your organization and community members
- What are the subscriber outreach goals?
 - Who qualifies for the community solar program and who doesn't, why?
 - What are the unique criteria for subscribers?
 - What are the subscription goals and timelines?
 - How will community members benefit from subscribing?
 - What are the subscription terms and agreements?
 - Are there any outreach partner organizations that your organization will need to work with?
 - What is the long-term plan for subscriber management: who will renew the subscriberships? What information do subscribers need about the long-term plan?
 - Who is responsible for subscriber management and subscriber care?
- Resources
 - Who will be responsible for subscriber application development?
 - How will subscriber bills change?
 - Does it meet current billing structures?

2. What is the financial support for the CBO partnership?

- Is the budget tied to the number of subscribers? In other markets, CBOs have been paid from 50 - 150 dollars per subscription lead.

- Is there funding for technical and capacity building for your organization? Ask for compensation for training hours for your staff to get up to speed on community solar at the beginning of the project, as well as several months later once common questions and themes have likely surfaced.
- Is there funding for outreach materials?
- What are the key performance indicators associated with the project?
- Are there discretionary funds?
- Are there funds allocated to language translation of materials?
- Are there contract agreements that allow for project scope adjustments or mid-contract review?
- What contract terms and agreements?

3. Things to consider when being approached by developers for letters of support

Developers will likely reach out to CBOs to request a letter of support for preparation of their project bids. This is an opportunity for CBOs to request commitments to develop projects that match CBO values. For example, CBOs might ask that developers:

- Commit to maximizing points for serving low-income households in their bid submissions.
 - Committing to having AT LEAST 40% of their low-income carve-out reserved for low-income households, rather than low-income serving organizations.)
- Commit to maximizing points for low-income discounts on their bid submissions.
 - This means committing to an additional discount equivalent to AT LEAST 30% of the bill credit going to low-income households for AT LEAST 5 years).
- Commit to finding partners who can bring opportunities for energy efficiency improvements to their low-income subscribers, which lowers the energy needed and related costs.
- Commit to...
 - Whatever you feel could benefit the families you work with

These questions will allow your organization to lay a good foundation for a meaningful partnership with community solar developers. It is important to remember that this document should not replace legal counsel when drafting a contract with a developer.