



**COLORADO**  
Energy Office



ENERGY OUTREACH  
*Colorado*



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Office of Gov. John Hickenlooper

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### Colorado Energy Office, Energy Outreach Colorado and GRID Alternatives Colorado Collaborate to Create Milestone Low-Income Solar Access

*PUC approval of Xcel Energy comprehensive utility settlement to resolve state energy policy issues and increase low-income access to solar power*

**DENVER – November 17, 2016** – The [Colorado Energy Office](#) (CEO), [Energy Outreach Colorado](#) (EOC), and [GRID Alternatives Colorado](#) today recognize the adoption of strong consumer protections and program offerings to bring equity and access of renewable energy to low-income customers served by [Xcel Energy](#).

Last week, the [Colorado Public Utilities Commission](#) (PUC) [approved the Xcel Energy utility settlement](#), which establishes the most comprehensive low-income solar access in the country. The milestone agreement creates a market environment in which utilities address customers most in need without deviating from renewable energy goals; developers realize business goals while serving a new customer segment; and low-income customers receive a reduction in energy expenditures which can be utilized for other basic necessities.

“The Xcel Energy settlement is a momentous step forward for our state’s low-income energy consumers, and we’re proud to have been a part of it,” said Skip Arnold, Executive Director of Energy Outreach Colorado. “Many diverse organizations and parties came together to seek a common solution for delivering affordable energy for Coloradans, particularly those most vulnerable.”

As the state’s leading advocate for Colorado’s low-income energy consumers, EOC ensured low-income customers would not be adversely affected by time-of-use rates that adjust electricity rates based on low- and high-demand periods. These efforts include hold harmless clauses for low-income households and the removal of grid charges which have a disproportionately negative impact on low-income customers. The inclusion of these concessions paved the way for the adoption of new and innovative avenues for low-income customers to access renewable energy.

Under the settlement, Xcel Energy will add up to 342 megawatts (MW) of new solar generation capacity including more than 300MW of community solar projects and up to 225MW of new rooftop solar, all between 2017 and 2019. The settlement resolves long standing equity and access issues for low-income customers who have contributed to solar energy rebate pools but have not had navigable pathways to participate in these programs. This success has been largely built on innovative policy models developed uniquely in Colorado.

“CEO’s work in policy development and low-income solar demonstration projects were a precursor to the settlement,” said Jeff Ackermann, Director of the Colorado Energy Office. “These policy developments and the resulting program offerings exponentially increase the availability of affordable low-income solar in Colorado, from under 2MW to more than 20MW, and this can be a model for other utilities nationally.”

CEO is recognized as a national leader in developing holistic approaches to reduce household energy burden. These approaches ensure low-income customers, through the adoption of energy efficiency measures and connection to solar, see reductions in energy expenditures for both home heating and electric use.

The Xcel Energy settlement also creates a favorable market in which low-income solar offerings can thrive by providing developers access to new customers and assisting the utility in meeting its goals. The settlement offers solar developers access to incentives and performance structures as in the mass market. It also provides options to overcome traditional barriers to low-income customer engagement such as access to capital, lender related risk, and new market exploration. Additionally, the settlement creates structures to encourage workforce development and job training.

“We see this as a national model showing how utilities and solar developers can work together to expand energy access and, most importantly, guarantee solar benefits reach our low-income communities,” said Chuck Watkins, Executive Director of GRID Alternatives Colorado. “The settlement’s programs will reduce energy cost burdens for ratepayers most vulnerable to energy price shocks and drive economic growth through job training opportunities in the solar energy industry.”

GRID Alternatives Colorado is the leading installer of low-income rooftop and community solar in the state. GRID Alternatives Colorado worked for more than two years to build a coalition of stakeholder supporters to promote the low-income solar programs adopted in this settlement agreement. Nationally, GRID Alternatives is a leading voice in equitable access to solar energy and a leading partner in the White House’s Clean Energy Savings for All Americans initiative.

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### **About Energy Outreach Colorado**

Energy Outreach Colorado is the only non-profit in the state that raises funds to help low-income Coloradans afford home energy and remain warm and safe in their homes. Established in 1989, Energy Outreach works with partner assistance organizations, vendors and subcontractors across the state to provide energy bill payment assistance, emergency home furnace repair, weatherization services, energy efficiency grants for affordable housing and nonprofit facilities, energy education, and advocacy on behalf of low-income energy consumers. See [www.energyoutreach.org](http://www.energyoutreach.org) for more details.

### **About GRID Alternatives Colorado**

GRID Alternatives is America’s largest nonprofit solar installer bringing clean energy technology and job training to low-income families and underserved communities. GRID has installed over 7,500 solar electric systems with a combined installed capacity of 26 megawatts, saving families and housing providers nearly \$210 million in lifetime electricity costs, preventing over 580,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions, and providing more than 28,000 people with solar job training. GRID Alternatives Colorado installs rooftop, community, and multifamily solar electric systems for income qualified households and affordable housing providers throughout the state, providing families with needed savings and training Colorado workers for jobs in the growing solar industry. For more information, visit [www.gridalternatives.org](http://www.gridalternatives.org).

### **About Colorado Energy Office**

The Colorado Energy Office works to improve the effective use of all of Colorado's energy resources and the efficient consumption of energy in all economic sectors by providing technical guidance, financial support, policy advocacy and public communications. Go to [www.colorado.gov/energyoffice](http://www.colorado.gov/energyoffice) to learn more.