



COLORADO
Energy Office



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Office of Gov. John Hickenlooper

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Colorado Energy Office and GRID Alternatives Announce Five Rural Low-Income Community Solar Demonstration Projects

DENVER – Jan. 27, 2016 – The Colorado Energy Office and GRID Alternatives announce five community solar projects designed to demonstrate the viability of community solar models that serve low-income households. Delta Montrose Electric Association, Gunnison County Electric Association, Holy Cross Energy, San Miguel Power Association and Yampa Valley Electric Association have volunteered to build low-income projects totaling 579 kW. Each project is designed to optimize the community solar model to reduce energy costs for the utilities' highest need customers – those who spend more than 4 percent of income on utility bills - in Colorado's rural communities.

"Colorado has always been a leader in renewable energy, and now we take another innovative step forward as we create community solar models that are more affordable and available to Colorado rural electric cooperatives and the low-income communities they serve," said Colorado Energy Office Director, Jeff Ackermann.

GRID Alternatives (GRID) received a \$1.2 million Colorado Energy Office (CEO) grant in August 2015 to implement low-income community solar, and has played an instrumental role securing agreements from each utility partner. GRID leveraged the CEO investment to attract additional resources from partnering utilities, private funds and in-kind equipment donations.

"We have seen a tremendous groundswell of hard-working families wanting solar and the benefits it brings," said Chuck Watkins, executive director of GRID Colorado. "These community solar projects not only provide solar access - they have a community impact. GRID brings savings to families that need it most, job training in a fast growing industry and clean, renewable energy that benefits everyone."

Each utility is piloting a slight variation on the low-income community solar model to address the unique needs of rural utility service areas and their customers. The projects selected are both affordable and scalable for utility partners, and offer great potential to expand across the state.

"Working to provide access to locally generated and renewable energy for all of our members, regardless of their income, is part of what we consider the cooperative difference. The affordable community solar array provides the opportunity for all of our members to participate," said Delta Montrose Electric Association CEO, Jasen Bronec.

CEO and GRID Alternatives expect to secure additional partnerships with utilities through 2017 to install 1 MW of combined solar energy for a minimum of 300 low income subscribers.

For more information, visit www.Colorado.gov/energy or www.gridalternatives.org.

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