



COLORADO
Energy Office



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Office of Gov. John Hickenlooper

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Colorado Energy Office, GRID Alternatives Announce Yampa Valley Electric Association Community Solar Project

Project to provide relief for energy burdened families in Moffat and Routt counties

DENVER – 9/13/2016 – The Colorado Energy Office (CEO), GRID Alternatives (GRID) and Yampa Valley Electric Association (YVEA) announce the development of a community solar array that will lower the electric bills of qualified low-income residents in its Colorado service territory. The project is part of a statewide initiative designed to demonstrate how the low-income community solar model can be optimized to reduce energy costs for utilities' highest need customers—those who spend a significant portion of their income, 4 percent or more, on utility bills.

"Yampa Valley comprises a dynamic mix of Colorado's backbone industries, and sometimes those in need can be hidden behind such rich diversity," said Colorado Energy Office Director Jeffrey Ackermann. "We thank Yampa Valley Electric Association and GRID Alternatives for the thoughtful and forward-looking approach to low-income energy services demonstrated in this project."

GRID received a \$1.2 million CEO grant in August 2015 to partner with utilities to implement low-income community solar. Earlier this year, CEO and GRID announced project partners, each of which 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.

For YVEA project, GRID offered practical hands-on job training and experience through its Women in Solar Initiative. On Saturday, September 10, GRID brought 50 women to YVEA's community solar site to participate in community solar barn-raising, networking and professional development. Women from Routt and Moffat counties, throughout Colorado and across the U.S. converged to help families in need, bring more women into the solar industry and support their professional growth.

"As GRID is wrapping up with Yampa Valley Electric Association, our fourth demonstration project to date, our reach impacts are increasing. Fifty volunteers came out last weekend to help ready this project—all women interested in hands-on experience and expanding women's opportunities in the solar industry. We have also become a partner with Solar Energy International in its Solar Ready Colorado initiative to train the solar workforce of tomorrow," said GRID Executive Director Chuck Watkins.

Yampa Valley Electric Association Chief Executive Officer Diane Johnson said YVEA is interested in expanding renewable energy access with this impactful and innovative model. "YVEA is proud to help develop a renewable energy project that touches so many people. This project is a perfect pilot for

YVEA-owned solar generation—allowing a portion of our membership that often can't access renewable energy to benefit at an affordable cost, helping students and trainees who are building careers in the industry, and bridging what is sometimes a divide between solar advocates and utilities. We believe that many 'right' answers exist for the future of energy, and we expect to embrace varied and innovative fuel choices."

On Friday, September 16 in Steamboat Springs, GRID's programmatic barn-raising model will engage members of the community to come together to install the 145 kilowatt solar array. Participants will include YVEA member subscribers who are income qualified, employees and other local volunteers to install more than 500 solar panels that will help save up to 35-45 qualified families approximately \$500 per year.

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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 to learn more.

About GRID Alternatives

GRID Alternatives is America's largest nonprofit solar installer bringing clean energy technology and job training to low-income families and underserved communities through a network of community partners, volunteers, and philanthropic supporters. For more information, visit www.gridalternatives.org.

About Yampa Valley Electric Association

Founded in 1940, the Yampa Valley Electric Association is a consumer-owned electric cooperative that serves more than 26,300 customers over 2,840 miles of line. The cooperative's 7,000 square mile service territory includes the communities of Baggs and Savery, Wyoming; Craig, Hayden, Steamboat Springs, and Yampa, Colorado; and surrounds, but does not include, the town of Oak Creek, Colorado. See www.yvea.com/ for more details.