



COLORADO
Energy Office



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Office of Gov. John Hickenlooper

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Gov. Hickenlooper Joins Colorado Energy Office and GRID Alternatives to Launch Fort Collins Utilities Community Solar Project

Fifth Colorado community solar demonstration project to provide long-term benefits to low-income households in Fort Collins

DENVER – Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2016 – On Friday, Oct. 21, Gov. John Hickenlooper will join the Colorado Energy Office (CEO), GRID Alternatives (GRID) and Fort Collins Utilities to recognize the development of a community solar array that will lower the electric bills of qualified low-income residents in the municipal utility's service territory. The project is the fifth of its kind in a statewide initiative designed to demonstrate how the community solar model can be optimized to reduce energy costs for utilities' highest need customers—those who spend more than 4 percent of income on utility bills.

"CEO's community solar demonstration projects with GRID and our utility partners are about championing the delivery of clean-generated electricity to help reduce energy burden," said Colorado Energy Office Director Jeff Ackermann. "As a result of bringing more clean energy onto the system, income-stressed households and utilities work together to diversify electric generation."

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 energy cooperative and municipal 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.

"Our rural electric and municipal utility partners are leaders in ensuring low-income rate-payers have access to solar energy," said GRID Alternatives Executive Director Chuck Watkins. "Reduced energy costs for these families means more money in their pockets for other expenses like food and medical bills, and these projects also have an integrated job training component that is helping people access jobs in the growing solar economy."

Fort Collins Utilities Executive Director Kevin Gertig said they are interested in expanding renewable energy access with this impactful and innovative model. "Fort Collins Utilities has a long-running history of local support for renewable energy technology – like the Wind Pioneers Program that helped make community wind shares a reality in 1998, strong expansion of rooftop solar, community shared solar programs, and large commercial and institutional solar projects," said Gertig. "Our current project, a shared solar array to provide both job training opportunities and long-term benefits to low-income households, is a perfect example of a project that will deliver environmental, economic and social equity benefits to Fort Collins."

On Friday, Oct. 21, in Fort Collins, Gov. Hickenlooper will join CEO, GRID and Fort Collins Utilities to celebrate the launch of this important community solar project. GRID's programmatic barn-raising model will engage members of the community to install the 64-kilowatt solar array. Volunteers, benefitting subscribers and job trainees will come together for GRID's Community Solarthon to install 240 solar panels that will meet approximately 50 percent of the energy needs for up to 20 qualified families.

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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 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 and philanthropic supporters. For more information, visit gridalternatives.org.

About Fort Collins Utilities

Fort Collins Utilities provides safe, reliable electric, water, wastewater and storm water services to more than 70,500 homes and businesses over 55-square miles. Fort Collins Utilities utilizes proactive energy and water policies, defining short- and long-term goals and strategies with a focus on sustainability leadership. As Fort Collins grows, the department continues to plan for the future and manage infrastructure assets, while providing the safe, reliable service established as a tradition early in the city's history. See fcgov.com/utilities for more details.