Community Solar Clearinghouse Solution Program (CS² Program)

The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus is partnering with The Power Bureau to bring the benefits of Community Solar to Caucus member municipalities through the CS² Program. The program provides the technical and management expertise to allow Caucus members to implement an innovative and collaborative procurement program designed to secure long term cost savings from Community Solar.

How does the CS² Program work?
The CS² Program provides a simplified procurement process that efficiently manages the complexities of the community solar development process. Ultimately, the CS² Program will provide municipalities with a portion of the output of one or more Community Solar assets (also called a “Subscription”). A Subscription credits a ComEd account with a portion of the output from a Community Solar asset resulting in a lower monthly ComEd bill.

The CS² Program will operate through the following steps:

- **Step 1: Municipal Expression of Interest.** MMC members provide their ComEd utility billing information for analysis by completing this form. **Targeted Completion: November 12th**

- **Step 2: ComEd Account Analysis.** The Power Bureau identifies which ComEd utility accounts achieve cost savings with Community Solar subscriptions. **Targeted Completion: end-November**

- **Step 3: Community Solar Procurement.** Municipalities with accounts that can achieve cost savings with Community Solar subscriptions will be pooled, and a competitive solicitation will set pricing for Community Solar Subscriptions. **Targeted Completion: end-December**

- **Step 4: Enrollment in the CS² Program.** Once the bidding process is complete and pricing is known, municipalities are invited to formally join the CS² Program by entering into an agreement with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and paying a one-time enrollment fee (see next section for details). **Targeted Completion: early-January 2019**

- **Step 5: Illinois Power Agency Lottery.** Some (but not all) of the Community Solar Projects selected through the CS² Program will be awarded funding through a lottery process controlled by the Illinois Power Agency. CS² Program Projects that receive funding through the lottery will be assigned to municipal accounts enrolled in the CS² Program. **Targeted Completion: mid-January 2019**

- **Step 6: Subscription Agreements.** Municipalities will enter into subscription agreements with qualified Community Solar Developers for a period of up to 20 years. **Targeted Completion: Spring 2019**

- **Step 7: Deliveries Commence.** Community Solar developments are energized and begin providing solar energy. **Targeted Completion: Fall-Winter 2019**

- **Step 8: Ongoing Credits and Billing Management.** The CS² Program will manage ongoing billing activities for participating municipalities over the term of their subscription agreements with the Community Solar Developers. Ongoing operating costs of the CS² Program will be paid for by the Community Solar project Developers. **Targeted Completion: Fall-winter 2019**
What is required to participate in the CS² Program?

Municipalities choosing to participate in the CS² Program will be obligated to the following:

- Enter into an enrollment agreement with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus once account analysis is complete and cost savings are known;
- Pay a one-time account enrollment fee to cover program start-up costs. Because the CS² Program allows communities to address sustainability goals of the Greenest Region Compact (GRC), enrollment fees are discounted for communities that have adopted the GRC.

The one-time enrollment fee for municipalities with 10 or fewer eligible small accounts is:
  - GRC Communities - $200;
  - Communities that have not adopted the GRC or are not dues contributing members of the Mayors Caucus - $400.

The one-time enrollment fee for municipalities with more than 10 eligible small accounts is:
  - GRC Communities - $500;
  - Communities that have not adopted the GRC or are not dues contributing members of the Mayors Caucus - $700.

- Once the bidding process is complete and Community Solar projects are selected for development, municipalities will enter into subscription agreements directly with developers.

Join the 100+ GRC Communities in adopting the GRC consensus sustainability goals by municipal resolution. Find more information about the GRC here.

Will a community solar subscription benefit my community?

Yes. First, we project that certain ComEd accounts can achieve a guaranteed savings of 10%-20% off the regular ComEd rate. ComEd accounts in the Small Commercial rate class (i.e., Village hall, other smaller municipal buildings) and General Lighting rate class are the best candidates to save money through the CS² Program. Once you complete the Expression of Interest form, The Power Bureau will conduct an analysis of your accounts and recommend best actions to save you money and meet your objectives.

Importantly, facilities receiving no-cost electricity under franchise agreements may still benefit from a CS² Program community solar subscription. Bill credits earned from community solar energy outputs may be transferred to other municipal accounts for payment obligation. Facilities served by an alternate retail electric supplier may benefit by returning to the default ComEd rate, at a later date.

Second, the CS² Program allows communities to progress on the Greenest Region Compact goal, “Advance renewable energy” on a no-risk, pay-as-you-go basis. The CS² Program provides benefits associated with locally-produced solar energy without capital investments or commitments of roof-space or land.

How does Community Solar benefit Illinois?

- Better Infrastructure. Community solar supports electric system upgrades that enhance grid reliability;
- New Jobs. The first phase of community solar projects in the ComEd region is projected to support over 2,250 new skilled labor and technology jobs; and,
- More Clean and Local Energy Options. Expanding solar PV generation with community solar will move Illinois towards a sustainable energy future.
How is the solar market growing under the Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA)?

The Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA) became law in December 2016. Among its many provisions, FEJA restructured the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard to incentivize more solar photovoltaic (PV) projects including small rooftop, large utility-scale solar PV projects. FEJA also allows for the development of Community solar resources.

Community solar resources:

- Are solar developments less than 2 MW in size, usually occupying about 15-20 acres of land;
- Have a direct connection to the local utility system; and,
- Can assign electricity generation to consumer accounts served by the local utility;

Community Solar allows consumers to purchase a share of the electricity generated by an authorized solar PV resource through a ‘Subscription’. A subscriber’s account is then credited with their share of generation by the community solar resource - resulting in lower charges on the energy supply portion of their utility bill.

How does the CS² Program fit into the Community Solar market in Illinois?

Community solar is supported, in part, by the sale of solar renewable energy credits (SRECs) to the utility as required by the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard. Because of excitement generated by FEJA, community solar development proposals exceed available renewable energy credits by about 10:1. Solar development proposals will be selected by the Illinois Power Agency by lottery in January of 2019. However, fully-subscribed projects earn the highest rates for their SRECs. By aggregating municipal demand and securing municipal community solar subscriptions, the CS² Program brings value to the burgeoning community solar market and delivers benefits to the region and participating municipalities.

Community Solar projects are mostly proposed for rural lands outside of the metropolitan region. CS² Program participants will be guaranteed access to community solar through the purchasing pool.

What are the first steps to participating in the CS² Program?

Complete this CS² Program Expression of Interest form and upload a copy of your ComEd master bill for accounts to be considered for the CS2 Program purchasing pool no later than November 12th.

Two webinars are offered to learn more about the CS² Program:

- Wednesday, October 31, 11:00 AM – noon - Join this webinar
- Tuesday, November 6, 11:00 AM – noon – Join this webinar

For more information contact Edith Makra, Director of Environmental Initiative, 312-201-4506, emakra@mayorscaucus.org or contact Mark Pruitt, Principal, the Power Bureau, markpruitt@gmail.com