

## Solarize Mass Webinar Q&A

Q1: Will a copy of the webinar be made available to the public after the meeting?

- A. Yes, the slide presentation and recording are posted at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/energy-utilities-clean-tech/green-communities/webinars.html>.

Q2: Is this program only open to Green Communities?

- A. No. Both Green Communities and non Green Communities serviced by an investor-owned utility (NSTAR, National Grid, WMECO, Unitil) or municipal utility that pays into the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust can apply. Municipalities that have previously participated in the Solarize Massachusetts Program are not eligible to apply.

Q3: How were sites screened for feasibility, and what happened if a site was not feasible?

- A. Installers had various methods for evaluating site feasibility, including both desktop analyses using aerial imagery and in person site assessments. If a site was deemed not feasible, the installer might recommend energy efficiency measures or offer services around other renewable energy technologies.

Q4: What was the ratio of lease to direct purchase systems as part of this program?

- A. The overall ratio of Lease or PPA projects relative to Purchased projects varied by community. See the [2012 Solarize Mass Program Update](#) at [www.solarizemass.com](http://www.solarizemass.com).

Q5: What proportion of the installations under Solarize Mass have been roof-mounted and ground-mounted systems?

- A. MassCEC has not currently processed these data. MassCEC is aware that there have been both ground-mounted and roof-mounted systems installed under the program.

Q6: What types of projects are eligible to participate in this program?

- A. Eligible solar PV projects must be 15 kilowatts (kW) or less in capacity, and can be located at residential, commercial, or other private sites. All Solarize Mass projects must meet the same requirements outlined in the Commonwealth Solar II Rebate Program Manual and Minimum Technical Requirements, including but not limited to minimum production requirements and minimum equipment requirements. The current Commonwealth Solar II Program Manual can be found at [http://masscec.com/masscec/file/REG/CommSolar/CSII\\_Program%20Manual\\_V13\\_Final.p](http://masscec.com/masscec/file/REG/CommSolar/CSII_Program%20Manual_V13_Final.pdf)  
[df](http://masscec.com/masscec/file/REG/CommSolar/CSII_Program%20Manual_V13_Final.pdf).

MassCEC will contract with the selected installer on behalf of the community. If the community is interested in implementing solar PV projects on public buildings, this constitutes a separate, project-specific contracting process between the municipality and an installer, and the municipality will have to adhere to public procurement requirements. If a

solar PV project does not qualify for a rebate under Solarize Mass, the contracted capacity can still count toward the cumulative contracted capacity for the community, per approval by MassCEC and the selected Installer

Q7: Has a participating community used a community-wide evaluation of feasibility?

- A. There were several instances during the program where either the community volunteer group or the selected installer did an online analysis of part or all of the community to determine neighborhoods with greater feasibility for solar PV projects. These areas were then targeted using methods such as door hangers or flyers.

Q8: Which communities and installers participated in the 2012 Solarize Mass program?

- A. See the [2012 Solarize Mass Program Update](#) at [www.solarizemass.com](http://www.solarizemass.com)

Q9: We've been told that the SREC Market is struggling, resulting in less interest from installers. Can you explain the SREC market condition?

- A. As a market regulator DOER refrains from making any pricing predictions or market forecasts. We also have no way of monitoring SREC transactions, so any pricing information we may have is either incomplete or anecdotal. All that being said, the SREC market is currently oversupplied and is expected to remain so through at least the end of 2013. The market is ultimately a commodity market where price is dictated by supply and demand, so prices will likely remain low until the market is no longer oversupplied. However, DOER has designed the program to react appropriately to supply/demand imbalances, so an oversupplied market will result in the demand growing much faster in an attempt to return the market to balance. Given this feature of the market and the fact that only 400 megawatts (MW) of projects will ultimately qualify for the program, the good news is that it is all but certain that the market will eventually become balanced and shall likely remain so for a long period of time.

Q10: Do homeowners who want to purchase their systems outright take advantage of the Investment Tax Credit (ITC)?

- A. Please review information on solar PV incentives available at [www.masscec.com/aboutsolar](http://www.masscec.com/aboutsolar). For specific tax related questions, please contact a tax advisor.

Q11: What is the typical cost reduction for solar PV projects from a Solarize Mass installer relative to typical market conditions?

- A. The average cost reduction for customers that contracted under Solarize Mass was about 14 percent less than the average installed cost for projects in Massachusetts at the beginning of the program. See the [2012 Solarize Mass Program Update](#) at [www.solarizemass.com](http://www.solarizemass.com).

Q12: Do people who contract early in the program pay higher rates than those who contract at the end?

- A. As more people in a community (or group of communities) contract for solar PV projects, higher pricing tiers are reached. Reaching higher tiers means that the dollar per watt

purchase price will decrease for customers that purchased systems, and that customers that signed a Lease/power purchase agreement (PPA) contract will receive a greater financial incentive. The final tier pricing was established based on cumulative contracted capacity at the end of the sign-up period (September 30, 2013). As a result, a customer who contracts at the beginning of the program will end up receiving the benefit of the same tier pricing as a customer that signs up toward the end of the program.

Q13: Will the GC regional coordinators play a role in the program?

- A. Cities and towns should always feel free to contact their Green Communities coordinators for pointers on all municipal energy matters. For the Solarize Mass program, regional coordinators can point municipalities in the right direction in terms of resources and staff at MassCEC who can assist. However, since Solarize Mass is administered at the state level by MassCEC and deployed at the municipal level by local solar coaches and volunteers, it is these individuals who will play the strongest role.

Q14: What is the role of the solar coach?

- A. The primary role of the solar coach is to manage the outreach and education efforts of community volunteers, and to answer basic questions about solar PV, including incentives. For further details about Community Solar Coach requirements review *Community Solar Coach Program Duties and Commitments Form* [Attachment D – Community Solar Coach Program Duties and Commitments form](#). The Community Solar Coach for selected Communities will be required to sign this document in order to participate. Please note that an individual who works for a solar PV installer may be part of a community volunteer team, but will not be allowed to take on the role of Community Solar Coach.

Q15: Is the Solar Coach a compensated position and who/what would designate (hire) the solar coach?

- A. Each community (even if participating as a group) will receive standardized marketing materials, as well as a \$2,500 marketing grant to utilize for community-specific marketing needs (as approved by MassCEC). Of the \$2,500 marketing grant, up to \$500 may be used by the municipality as a stipend for the Community Solar Coach. If the community wishes to pay the Community Solar Coach a stipend, it is the responsibility of the community to determine the feasibility and administration of remitting such payment.

Q16: Does the Community Solar Coach need to be an individual either employed by the community or a resident of the community? Could the Community Solar Coach be a shared position by multiple individuals? If communities are applying as a group, does each community need to designate a Community Solar Coach?

- A. The Community Solar Coach does not need to be employed by the community, but must be a resident of the community. The Community Solar Coach must also be a single designated individual who is the main point of contact within the community for daily operations between MassCEC, the installer and the community. Although the designated Community Solar Coach should be one individual, MassCEC will allow both the Community Solar Coach and one (1) other individual within the town to take part in the Community Solar Coach training. This allows for one additional individual to participate in MassCEC solar electricity

education and learn basic information on the technology and some of the most frequently asked questions that will likely be asked during the program. This will enable some cross-training within the community and assist in local education. The Solarize Mass community volunteer team can be comprised of multiple individuals though.

If communities are applying as a group, each community will be responsible for designating a Community Solar Coach to participate in the program.

Q17: Who would make a good Solar Coach and how are they designated?

- A. Community Solar Coaches in the 2012 Solarize Mass Program had a diverse range of backgrounds. It is expected that the Community Solar Coach should have an interest in the program and be able to dedicate the time to the position. A representative of the municipality will formally designate the Community Solar Coach in the application for the community.

Q18: Can three towns be in different counties?

- A. Yes, as long as they meet all of the other requirements outlined in the 2013 Solarize Massachusetts: Round 1 Community RFP.

Q19: If communities are applying as a group, do they each need to be located contiguously with all other partner communities?

If applying as a group, each community must be located contiguously (i.e. share a border) with at least one of the partner communities. See section 2.A. 2013 Solarize Massachusetts: Round 1 Community RFP for more information.

Q20: Would an existing municipal solar project benefit an application?

- A. If applicable, a community should demonstrate in its proposal that it has experience with solar PV (either through a municipal project or other solar PV related activities). Review section 2.A. of the 2013 Solarize Massachusetts: Round 1 Community RFP for more information.

Q21: Is the September deadline for when all customers have to sign-up for tier pricing? Is there a possibility for extending the September 30, 2013 deadline?

- A. Yes, September 30, 2013 is the deadline for customers to sign-up for round 1. MassCEC does not anticipate extending the program deadline at this time.

Q22: Why is there such a short time (one week) from the date the selected communities will be announced to the date that the RFP for installers is due?

- A. Based on feedback from both the communities and the installers that participated in the 2012 Solarize Mass program, it was recommended that the timeline for the selection process be condensed as much as possible. This enables the community and selected installer to be up and running sooner.

Q23: Why does the signup period run over the summer?

- A. For communities participating in Round 1 of the 2013 Solarize Mass program, the sign-up period starts as soon as an installer is selected and runs until September 30, 2013. If the summer sign-up period does not work well for a community, it is welcome to apply to Round 2 of the program, which is currently scheduled to launch in early September, 2013.

Q24: If installers are signing up homeowners from April to September for a PPA, what if the rates change between April and September?

- A. MassCEC will work with the installer and the community to resolve an issue if it arises during the program.

Q25: Who is responsible within a town for making it happen, the town or the people?

- A. As with any clean energy initiative, the chances for success increase when there is a local "champion" for the project. This could be either an individual or the combined efforts of a group of energy volunteers. It is also essential, however, for municipal officials to be fully on board and enthusiastic about helping the program succeed. So, ultimately, the most successful Solarize programs are those with the strong backing of both local volunteers/champions and the municipality itself.

Q26: Have there been instances where people were unhappy with contractor and town was in the hot seat?

- A. There are no instances we would describe as putting a Solarize in "the hot seat." However, we would offer this information regarding selected installers in general. Although MassCEC, DOER, and the community are procuring an installer through a competitive selection process, residents and business owners are not obligated to work with the chosen installer for that community. Residents and business owners are welcome to work with a different installer. However, it should be noted that customers who don't use the chosen installer would not receive the benefit of tiered pricing through the Solarize Mass program. In addition, since customers contract directly with an installer, MassCEC recommends that customers bring any issues with contracted for work directly to their installer.

Q27: When will a town know if they are selected?

- A. MassCEC plans to announce selected communities on or around March 14, 2013.

Q28: Would it be possible to review proposals that were submitted by successful applicants last year?

- A. Yes. The marketing and outreach sections of the proposals from the communities selected to participate in the 2012 Solarize Massachusetts Program are posted on the Community RFP Solicitation page at <http://www.masscec.com/index.cfm/cdid/14501/pid/11161>.

Q29: Can a community with an Energy committee partner with another community that doesn't have an Energy committee in place?

- A. Each community, whether applying individually or in a group, must have an energy or sustainability committee that has been meeting regularly for at least one year prior to the release of the 2013 Solarize Massachusetts: Round 1 Community RFP in order to participate.

Q30: Does Solarize Mass offer a rebate in addition to the MassCEC Commonwealth Solar rebates?

- A. The program offers a rebate equivalent to the Commonwealth Solar II Rebate Program at the time of rebate application. Eligible solar PV projects must be 15 kW or less in capacity, and can be located at residential, commercial, or other private sites. All Solarize Mass projects must meet the same requirements outlined in the Commonwealth Solar II Rebate Program Manual and Minimum Technical Requirements, including but not limited to minimum production requirements and minimum equipment requirements. The current Commonwealth Solar II Program Manual can be found at [http://masscec.com/masscec/file/REG/CommSolar/CSII\\_Program%20Manual\\_V13\\_Final.pdf](http://masscec.com/masscec/file/REG/CommSolar/CSII_Program%20Manual_V13_Final.pdf).

Q31: When do you anticipate the second round of Solarize Mass for 2013 will take place? How many communities will be selected?

- A. MassCEC and DOER plan to conduct two rounds of the Solarize Mass program in 2013. Round 2 of the 2013 Solarize Mass Program is anticipated to begin in early September, 2013, but may be subject to change. During each round of the program, MassCEC and DOER will plan to select a minimum of eight (8) communities (or groups of communities) to participate in the program. A community is not eligible to apply if it has already participated in a Solarize Massachusetts program.

Q32: What about towns with municipal light departments?

- A. The municipality must be serviced by an investor-owned utility (NSTAR, National Grid, WMECO, Unitil) or municipal utility that pays into the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust, and not have previously participated in the Solarize Massachusetts Program.

Q33: What does a Municipal Light Plant need to know about joining the Renewable Energy Trust Fund?

- A. If a Municipal Light Plant would like to learn more about participating in the Renewable Energy Trust Fund, see <http://www.masscec.com/index.cfm?ccid=11387&pid=11163> for more information.

Q34: If a community does not participate in Solarize Mass, are there still incentives available for solar PV projects within the community?

- A. If a community does not participate in Solarize Mass, customers are still eligible to install solar PV projects and are eligible to receive any other available incentives. The two main benefits of participating in Solarize Mass are tier pricing offered by the selected installer and the education campaign driven by the community. Visit [www.masscec.com/aboutsolar](http://www.masscec.com/aboutsolar) for more information on additional incentives available for solar PV projects in Massachusetts.

Q35: How is an installer selected to participate in Solarize Mass? Who can apply?

- A. MassCEC and DOER released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for installers to apply to participate in Round 1 of the 2013 Solarize Mass Program. See

<http://www.solarizemass.com/index.cfm/page/Solarize-Mass-RFP-to-Installers/cdid/14614/pid/11161> for more information on the RFP and requirements to apply.

Q36: Can a community apply to Round 1 of the Solarize Mass Program as well as MassCEC's Community Energy Strategies Pilot Program?

A. Yes. Communities are welcome to apply to both programs.

Q37: Will a Community Solar Project be allowed under Solarize Mass?

A. The Solarize Massachusetts program only supports feasible solar PV projects located at an individual's home or business (though the projects do not need to be building-mounted). MassCEC strongly encourages individuals without feasible sites to pursue all energy efficiency options for their home or business, as well as consider other clean energy options. For instance, residents in the town of Harvard who were unable to participate in the Solarize Massachusetts program because they did not have feasible sites are in the process of developing a community solar garden, which allows customers to own a portion of an off-site PV array. It may be challenging to organize this type of solar PV project with the selected installer and under the timeline of Solarize Mass, but interested project proponents are welcome to apply for rebates under the Commonwealth Solar II Rebate Program. Please contact MassCEC before pursuing a community solar project.

Q38: Why was the price in Melrose so high considering the high number of systems installed?

A. The community pricing shared during the Solarize Mass webinar was for customers who purchased systems. It did not include the Lease/PPA price that was offered in the community. In Melrose, 100 percent of projects contracted were PPAs. See the 2012 Solarize Mass Program Update for more information.

Q39: Any operation/maintenance problems showing up with installed systems?

A. MassCEC does not currently have any data on this. If customers have problems with their projects, they should contact their installer directly, since their contract will have warranty and workmanship terms.

Q40: It was mentioned that there was a code or barcode on the door attachments handed out to residents in Arlington. What was the purpose of the code, since it was mentioned that it was not used to track the responses of the residents where these were left?

A. This is referred to as a QR Code. In Arlington, if someone scanned the QR Code with his/her smart phone or other device, it would link to the Solarize Arlington website. This was a marketing mechanism to drive people to the community website.

**Note: This document is for information purposes only and is not meant to be used as a replacement for the official Solarize Mass rules or guidelines.**