



Solar for All

Notice of Public Meeting & Request for Information

What is Solar for All?

On April 22, 2024, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) was selected to receive \$62.45 million in Solar for All funding through the Inflation Reduction Act's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.

DEEP's application, Project SunBridge, focused on multi-family affordable housing properties and included funding for financial and technical assistance to leverage the success of the state's existing programs supporting distributed solar and storage deployment.

Key Dates

Apr 22, 2024	EPA announced award
Jul 29, 2024 at 4pm	Deadline to propose stakeholder presentations*
Aug 12, 2024	Project SunBridge Public Kick-Off Meeting
Aug 27, 2024 at 4pm	Deadline for written public comments*
Late fall of 2024	DEEP receives unencumbered award from EPA and may begin subawards

* Detailed instructions on submitting presentations or comments can be found on pages 4 and 5 in the Notice.

DEEP is now seeking stakeholder input into the development of an equitable and inclusive program design. Everyone is welcome to attend the public Project SunBridge kick-off meeting and provide written comments in response to the questions and prompts in this Request for Information!

Project SunBridge Kick-Off – August 12, 2024 at 10am

DEEP intends to hold its first public Project SunBridge kick-off meeting in a hybrid in-person and remote format. DEEP looks forward to active feedback and discussion throughout the meeting.

Remote: Register [here](#) or scan code

In-person: Hearing Room 2 at
10 Franklin Sq, New Britain, CT

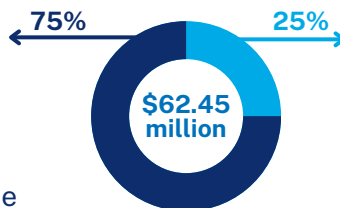
A check-in with the security front desk is required, please have a valid driver's license or state-issued photo identification card available.



Project SunBridge Application Summary

Financial assistance:

- Additional incentives for energy storage
- Loans and leases for solar and/or storage
- An open solicitation through the Green Bank's [Capital Solutions](#) tool



Technical assistance:

- Workforce development
- Tools and other technical support for communities
- Outreach and engagement
- Building assessments and audits for solar



July 22, 2024

Inflation Reduction Act – Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund – Solar for All

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

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I. Background

Providing a more affordable cost of living is key to Connecticut’s economic competitiveness. In Connecticut, average household spending on building energy—including electricity for appliances and lighting, plus energy for space heating and cooling and hot water—was \$4,073 annually between 2018-2022.¹ Energy affordability for residents is benchmarked by the percentage of household income consumed by energy costs, called the “energy burden.” Nationally, an energy burden of 6% or less is considered affordable. In Connecticut, households making 60% of Area Median Income (AMI) and above have an energy burden of 5% or less. But households with 30-60% AMI have an energy burden of 8% — while households below 30% AMI are, on average, spending 18% of their income on energy costs.²

Energy burden has been growing since the pandemic. Volatile fossil fuel prices (influenced by supply chain disruptions, the war in Ukraine, and other events) have pushed up electricity and thermal fuel costs. Climate change has also gradually driven up energy costs: since 1961, in Connecticut warmer temperatures have increased air conditioning needs (measured in “cooling degree days”) by 14%.³

Electricity generally represents about half of a resident’s energy costs. The good news is that distributed solar, energy storage, and associated enabling upgrades to enable distributed solar and storage deployment, like roof repairs, can help to lower electricity bills, especially for households with limited incomes who are carrying the highest energy burden. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), together with other state partners,

¹ U.S. DOE, *Low-income Energy Affordability Data Tool*, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/lead-tool>. This tool is updated every two years and currently uses 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ASC) data from the Census Bureau along with 2022 U.S. Energy Information Administration utility data.

² U.S. DOE, *Low-income Energy Affordability Data Tool*, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/lead-tool>.

³ Connecticut State Council on Environmental Quality, 2023 CEQ Annual Report, Accessed June 20, 2024. <https://portal.ct.gov/ceq/ar-23-gold/2023-ceq-annual-report-ebook/introduction/the-climate-challenge>

has strategically pursued federal funding to help deliver these energy affordability measures for residential customers who will benefit the most from energy savings.

DEEP worked in close collaboration with the [Connecticut Green Bank](#), the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), the [Connecticut Housing Finance Authority](#), the Connecticut Department of Housing, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, and others, to apply for Solar for All funding in October 2023 with an application called “Project SunBridge: Connecting Communities to a Solar Future.”

On April 22, 2024, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that DEEP was selected to receive \$62.45 million in Solar for All funding through the Inflation Reduction Act, of which \$400,000 will be provided by EPA as in-kind services in the form of technical assistance. This funding is required by EPA to be used to increase access to distributed solar and energy storage technologies for “low-income and disadvantaged community” households, as defined by EPA, and requires a minimum household energy savings of 20 percent for all participants.⁴ Solar for All has a five-year performance period during which funds must be used.

DEEP intends to use this award to help Connecticut’s “low income and disadvantaged community” households reduce their energy burden.⁴ DEEP now seeks stakeholder input into the development of an equitable and inclusive program design.

II. Funding Timeline

DEEP anticipates EPA will work with DEEP and other Solar for All awardees across the nation throughout the summer to provide both general guidance and specific feedback on individual applications. EPA issued its Notice of Award obligating funding to DEEP on July 9, 2024. DEEP has 90 days following funding obligation to work with EPA to obtain initial approval for its budget and workplan. DEEP anticipates EPA will provide full approval of updated awardee budgets and project workplans near the end of 2024. DEEP is unable to obligate funds to subgrantees or distribute funding to residents until after full EPA approval of its budget and workplan. DEEP must spend the funding by August 31, 2029.

DEEP must wait for specific feedback on its application and additional guidance from EPA before finalizing its workplan and budget and work towards obligating funds to subgrantees. In

⁴ EPA described customers eligible to benefit from Solar for All funding as “low-income and disadvantaged communities in the Solar for All Notice of Funding Opportunity. This includes (1) communities identified as “disadvantaged” through the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool ([CEJST](#)); (2) using [EJScreen](#), census block groups that are at or above the 90th percentile for any of EJScreen’s supplemental indexes when compared to the nation or state, or geographic areas with Tribal lands as included in EJ Screen; (3) individuals/households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI) and 200% of the federal poverty level or those currently approved for income-based or income-verified federal assistance programs, with an award letter within the last 12 months; or (4) multi-family housing with rents not exceeding 30% of 80% AMI for at least half of residential units and with an active affordability covenant from a federal or state housing assistance program or naturally occurring (unsubsidized) affordable housing with rents not exceeding 30% of 80% AMI for at least half of the residential units.

the meantime, DEEP is seeking feedback and comments on the commitments and program offerings included in its application.

III. Project SunBridge Application

The Project SunBridge application was developed based on the Notice of Funding Opportunity released by EPA to maximize evaluation points for the state in the competitive application process. Consistent with the requirements of the EPA, Project SunBridge's application included funding for both financial assistance and technical assistance, with at least 75% of the funding going toward financial assistance. The application leveraged the success of the state's existing programs supporting distributed solar and storage deployment: the [Residential Renewable Energy Solutions](#) (RRES) and [Energy Storage Solutions](#) (ESS) programs. DEEP anticipates issuing subgrants to the Connecticut Green Bank and the Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority for most of the funding received.

All individuals and households that EPA described as eligible to receive benefits from Solar for All will be eligible to receive financial assistance provided by Project SunBridge. Project SunBridge's application focused on multi-family affordable housing properties and included funding for the following financial assistance, which would be administered by one of the application's coalition partners, the Connecticut Green Bank or Connecticut Housing Finance Authority:

- Additional incentives in the Energy Storage Solutions program,
- Loans and leases for solar and/or storage for multi-family affordable housing (includes limited support for enabling upgrades like roof repairs),
- Loans for solar and/or storage in single-family homes (1-4 units) (includes limited support for enabling upgrades like roof repairs),
- An open solicitation through the Green Bank's [Capital Solutions](#) tool for developers to seek out lower cost funds to deploy solar and/or storage.

Technical assistance included in the application, to be performed by an undetermined subgrantee(s), covered the following topics:

- Workforce development programs and trainings,
- Tools and other technical support for local communities deploying solar and storage,
- Support customer outreach, engagement, and community-based organizations,
- Building assessments and audits for solar installation.

DEEP has left these topics purposely broad in anticipation of community engagement and looks forward to working with stakeholders to tailor these offerings to their needs. DEEP anticipates releasing one or more requests for proposals (RFPs) after receiving final approval of its workplan and budget from EPA, expected in Fall 2024, to find one or more subgrantees to implement the technical assistance items listed above. DEEP may release one or more requests for information in advance to inform the development of subsequent RFPs.

IV. Project SunBridge Public Meeting

DEEP will host public meetings throughout the program planning and program implementation periods of Project SunBridge's five-year timeline to request strategic guidance on program development and conduct outreach to participating communities to bring meaningful perspectives into the decision-making process of the program planning.

Under EPA's terms, Solar for All awardees may utilize up to one year for program planning. During this program planning period, DEEP will conduct public advisory meetings to seek stakeholder feedback on specific topics and questions related to program implementation.

DEEP intends to hold its first public Project SunBridge kick-off meeting, in a hybrid in-person and remote format, on **August 12, 2024 at 10:00 AM ET**.

Remote participants: Register for the August 12th meeting [HERE](#).

In-person attendees: The meeting will be held at **10 Franklin Square, New Britain, CT 06051, in Hearing Room 2**. A check-in with the security front desk is required, please have a valid driver's license or state-issued photo identification card available.

DEEP intends to discuss the following topics during the meeting. DEEP will endeavor to release a more detailed agenda in advance of the meeting.

1. Overview of Solar for All, Application Contents, and Information from EPA
2. Opportunity for Public Comment
3. Overview of Current Program Offerings
4. DEEP Facilitated Discussion: Financial Assistance
5. DEEP Facilitated Discussion: Technical Assistance
6. Opportunity for Public Comment

DEEP looks forward to active feedback and discussion from stakeholders through public comment and/or open discussions at multiple points throughout the meeting. DEEP intends to provide opportunities for public comment throughout the August 12th kick-off meeting. DEEP also welcomes stakeholder presentations on potential uses of financial assistance and/or technical assistance funding outside of those public comment opportunities. Stakeholders who wish to present should notify DEEP by no later than **July 29, 2024 at 4:00 PM ET**, by emailing DEEP.EnergyBureau@ct.gov with the subject line "Project SunBridge Kick-off Presentation Proposal." Please include a description of your proposed presentation in your email. Stakeholder presentations should not exceed 10 minutes. Depending upon the amount of interest expressed, DEEP may need to adjust the agenda or move some requests to present to the public comment portion of the agenda, and will notify interested stakeholders accordingly.

In addition, DEEP will conduct future public meetings focused on specific topics related to deployment of funding in furtherance of Solar for All goals, including but not limited to: (1) workforce development and other needs of the distributed solar and storage contractor

community; (2) needs of multi-family housing property owners; (3) needs of municipalities; and (4) needs of “low income and disadvantaged community” customers.⁴

DEEP recognizes the need to hear from communities and stakeholders about the barriers to distributed energy resources deployment and will work to address those in a way that is consistent with the EPA’s terms and conditions for the Solar for All funding.

V. Opportunity for Written Comments

By way of this Notice, DEEP requests written comments including, but not limited to, responses to the questions and prompts in section VI.

Written comments may be filed electronically on DEEP’s website or submitted to DEEP.EnergyBureau@ct.gov with the subject line “Project SunBridge Written Comments” no later than **August 27, 2024 at 4:00 PM ET**.

All materials submitted by stakeholders in this proceeding will be **posted publicly** on [DEEP’s Energy Filings page](#) under the proceeding title “Inflation Reduction Act – Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund – Solar for All.” Any questions can be directed to DEEP.EnergyBureau@ct.gov.

VI. Questions and Prompts for Stakeholders and Community Members

1. DEEP intends to conduct community and stakeholder engagement throughout the program planning and program implementation periods of Project SunBridge’s five-year timeline. How can DEEP make its community and stakeholder engagement process accessible so that members of the public and those who represent “low-income and disadvantaged communities” are able to participate?⁴
 - a. What is your preferred method of engagement (written comments, meetings, other methods)? If meetings, would you prefer to have the meeting in-person or virtually? If in-person, where would you be most comfortable speaking to DEEP staff (public library, religious institution, school, etc.)?
 - b. Are you more likely to attend a meeting in the morning, afternoon, or evening?
 - c. Are there any other programs, offerings, or issues that you would be interested in discussing with DEEP, in addition to Project SunBridge?
 - d. Are there particular stakeholders or members of the public who you feel should be encouraged to participate in this proceeding?
 - e. Please identify any community partners that may be able to assist with conducting outreach and education about Project SunBridge offerings to eligible customers.
2. DEEP intends to leverage the current programs supporting distributed solar and storage, the RRES and ESS programs, to fund additional financial tools to enable participation in those incentive programs. What barriers currently exist to prevent “low income and disadvantaged community” customer participation in these existing programs?⁴
 - a. What barriers currently prevent “low income and disadvantaged community” customers in single family residences (1-4 units) from participating in those existing programs?⁴

- b. What barriers currently prevent “low income and disadvantaged community”⁴ customers (both owners and tenants) in multi-family residences from participating in those existing programs?
 - c. Do the proposed financial and/or technical assistance measures (listed in section III) adequately address these barriers? If not, what financial and/or technical assistance measures would be most helpful to you?
3. DEEP intends to focus on expanding access to solar and storage for multi-family affordable housing through Project SunBridge. What are some of the barriers to installing solar and storage on multi-family affordable housing that DEEP should be aware of?
 - a. Do DEEP’s proposed financial and/or technical assistance measures (listed in section III) adequately address these barriers? If not, what financial and/or technical assistance measures would be most helpful to you?
4. Limited Solar for All funds can be used for “enabling upgrades,” which are investments in energy and building infrastructure that are necessary to deploy and/or maximize the benefits of residential rooftop and residential-serving community solar projects, including electrical system upgrades (like electric panel upgrades needed to connect solar panels), structural building repairs (like roof repairs, to ensure a roof is in good condition to host solar panels), and energy efficiency.
 - a. What are the most widespread “enabling upgrades” that are needed in Connecticut for “low income and disadvantaged community”⁴ households to deploy distributed solar and/or storage?
 - b. What necessary “enabling upgrades” are particularly prevalent in multi-family affordable housing in Connecticut?
 - c. Should properties that need enabling upgrades be prioritized by Project SunBridge?
5. Customers eligible for funding through Project SunBridge may also be eligible for other home energy programs and incentives, including but not limited to energy efficiency measures and incentives for building electrification measures (e.g. heat pumps) and electric vehicles.
 - a. What kind of tools, information, or incentives do contractors need to refer customers to other programs they are eligible for?
 - b. How can DEEP and other stakeholders streamline or combine programs and incentives to offer maximum benefits to eligible customers?
6. What other programs or resources should DEEP be aware of regarding the four areas of technical assistance? What barriers and challenges exist in these four areas of technical assistance?
 - a. Workforce development programs and trainings,
 - b. Tools and other technical support for local communities deploying solar and storage,
 - c. Support for customer outreach, engagement, and community-based organizations,
 - d. Building assessments and audits for solar installation.

DEEP is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer that is committed to complying with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please contact us at (860) 418- 5910 or deep.accommodations@ct.gov if you: have a disability and need a communication aid or service; have limited proficiency in English and may need information in another language; or if you wish to file an ADA or Title VI discrimination

complaint. Any person needing a hearing accommodation may call the State of Connecticut relay number — 711. Requests for accommodations must be made at least two weeks prior to any agency hearing, program, or event.