

New Jersey Community Solar Energy Pilot Program Program Year 2 Application Form

Section A: Application Form Requirements, Instructions, Terms and Conditions

The following Application Form is intended only for entities submitting a community solar project for consideration by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (“Board” or “BPU”). Projects selected by the Board will be approved for participation in the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program, pursuant to the rules at N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.

This Application Form is valid only for the following Program Year and Application Period:

Program Year 2, Application Period 1

Application Period Opens: Staff will inform stakeholders once the online application portal is open. The online application portal will open no later than December 31, 2020.

Application Period Closes: Friday, February 5, 2021 at 5:00 P.M. EST

I. Minimum Qualification Requirements

The Community Solar Energy Pilot Program is open to projects that meet the following minimum requirements, and the full requirements defined in N.J.A.C. 14:8-9 (available for reference at the following link: [http://njcleanenergy.com/files/file/R_2019%20d_021%20\(51%20N_J_R_%20232\(a\)\).pdf](http://njcleanenergy.com/files/file/R_2019%20d_021%20(51%20N_J_R_%20232(a)).pdf)).

1. The proposed community solar project must be located in the electric service territory of an Electric Distribution Company (“EDC”) in the State of New Jersey.
2. Existing solar projects may not apply to requalify as a community solar project. An existing solar project, as defined in N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.2, means a solar project having begun operation and/or been approved by the Board for connection to the distribution system prior to February 19, 2019. Projects having received a subsection (t) conditional certification from the Board prior to February 19, 2019 should refer to section B. XIII. Special Authorizations and Exemptions for additional information.
3. The Board will not consider Applications for EDCs to develop, own, or operate community solar project(s).
4. The Board will not consider Applications for projects sited on preserved farmland, as defined in N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.2.
5. The Board will not consider Applications for projects exceeding the capacity limit for individual community solar projects, set at 5 MWdc as defined in N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.4(g).

II. Instructions for Completing the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program Application Form

1. Applications **must** be submitted via a dedicated online application process. Staff will provide further details on how to submit an Application online upon the opening of the online application process. The online application process will reflect the exact questions and requirements laid out



in this Application Form. This PDF Application Form is being provided to allow Applicants to develop their Applications; **do not** submit an Application using this PDF Application Form. Any Application submitted using this PDF Application Form rather than the dedicated online application process will not be considered.

2. Each solar project applying to participate in the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program requires the submission of an individual Application Form. **Do not apply for more than one (1) project per Application Form.** There is no limit to the number of Application Forms that can be submitted by any one Applicant (see the definition of an “Applicant” in section A. III. Terms and Conditions).
3. **Do not submit the same project (same Applicant name and project site) multiple times or with various sizes.**
4. All questions are required to be answered, unless explicitly marked as optional. All attachments are required, unless explicitly marked as optional. All attachments must be submitted with the Application Form via the online application process, therefore forming a complete application package.
5. Do not in any way amend, edit, or otherwise change the questions or format of this application form.
6. Original signatures on all forms and certifications of this Application Form are required. The certifications contained in section C must be notarized and may not be modified. More information on how to submit electronic certifications will be provided upon the release of the online application process.
7. Attachments must be submitted as part of the Application Form via the online application process. The Board will not accept documentation sent directly to the Board.

III. Terms and Conditions

General Terms and Conditions

1. The “Applicant” is defined as the entity that submits the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program Application Form (for example, an Applicant may be a project developer, project owner, project operator, property owner, contractor, installer, or agent thereof).
Prior to completing the Application Form, the Applicant must carefully review the rules at N.J.A.C. 14:8-9, and any other rules, regulations, and codes applicable to the design, construction, and operation of a community solar project in New Jersey. All Applications must be in compliance with all local, state and federal rules, regulations and laws. Furthermore, submission of an Application Form does not obviate the need for compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations at any time during the design, construction, operation, and decommissioning of a community solar project including, but not limited to, regulations by commissions such as the New Jersey Highlands Council and the New Jersey Pinelands Commission.
2. By submitting an Application, the Applicant acknowledges notice on behalf of all project participants that the information included in the Application is subject to disclosure under the Open Public Records Act, N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. Aggregated information may be used by the



Board and/or other state, federal, county, regional or local agencies in reports and evaluations, and the geographic location may be used to update Geographic Information System (“GIS”) mapping. Applicants must identify sensitive and trade secret information that they wish to keep confidential by submitting them in accordance with the confidentiality procedures set forth in N.J.A.C. 14:1-12.3 (see “Submission of Confidential Information). Furthermore, the Applicant understands that the list of approved community solar projects will be published on the Board of Public Utilities website.

3. Amendments or supplements to the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program Application Form will be made available via the New Jersey Clean Energy Program (“NJCEP”) website at www.njcleanenergy.com. This Application Form may be modified for future Application Periods at any time without prior notification.

Evaluation of Applications and Approval of Projects

4. Only Applications that are administratively complete by the close of the Application Period will be considered for participation in the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program during that Program Year. An application will be deemed administratively complete if: 1) All questions are completed, except those explicitly marked as optional, 2) All required attachments are included (see Appendix B for a checklist of required attachments), and 3) All required signatures are included. Applicants will be notified if an Application is deemed administratively incomplete. An incomplete Application may be amended and resubmitted during the next Pilot Program Application Period without advantage or disadvantage, so long as it conforms to the requirements of that Application Period. In the event that any required information or attachment is missing, the Application will be deemed incomplete and will not be scored.
5. Only Applications that are submitted via the online application process will be considered for participation in Program Year 2 (“PY2”) of the Pilot Program.
6. Any Application that contains factually incorrect information will be eliminated from consideration.
7. The Applicant may be required to supplement the information provided in the Application Form upon request from the Board or Board Staff.
8. Following the close of the Application Period, each Application will be reviewed and evaluated by a dedicated Evaluation Committee.
9. In reviewing each application, Board Staff may consult with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (“NJDEP”), the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, or other state agencies and consultants as are relevant to the Application. Any information marked and submitted as confidential will be treated as such by the receiving agency, and used for the sole purpose of evaluation.
10. **Board Staff may reject Applications that are incomplete at the close of the Application Period, that are not in compliance with the rules and regulations established in N.J.A.C. 14:8-9, or that do not meet a minimum standard for selection, as set forth in this Application Form.**
11. The criteria for evaluation of Applications are presented in Appendix C (Evaluation Criteria). Projects must score a minimum 50 points total in order to be considered for participation in the



Community Solar Energy Pilot Program. Projects that score above 50 points will be presented to the Board for approval for participation in the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program in order, starting with the highest-scoring project and proceeding to the lowest-scoring project, and until the allocated program capacity allocated for that Program Year to each EDC service territory. The last project to be selected by the Board will be granted conditional approval for its full capacity (i.e. no project capacity will be cut off).

The allocated program capacity for Program Year 2 is **150 MWdc**. At least 40% of program capacity (i.e. at least 60 MW) will be allocated to Low and Moderate Income (“LMI”) projects. The Board may, at its discretion, award up to 10% over or under this 150 MWdc capacity limit.

The EDC service territory breakdown of capacity for PY2 is as follows:

EDC	% of retail sales	PY2 Allocated Capacity
Atlantic City Electric (“ACE”)	12.35%	18.525
Jersey Central Power & Light (“JCP&L”)	28.86%	43.29
Public Service Electric & Gas (“PSE&G”)	56.87%	85.305
Rockland Electric Company (“RECO”)	1.92%	2.88
Total	100%	150

- The Board may elect not to select projects in an EDC service territory if the number of Applications submitted is insufficient to provide adequate competition. In that event, the Board may allow the unused capacity to be reallocated to another EDC territory.

Milestones and Follow-Up for Approved Projects

- Should the proposed community solar project be approved by the Board for participation in the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program, such approval will be contingent on the project being constructed and operated as proposed in its Application. Applicants may not change the location or characteristics of selected projects.

Furthermore, pursuant to the rules at N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.3(c), approved projects are expected to begin construction within 6 months of their approval by the Board, and are expected to become fully operational within 12 months of their approval by the Board. Extensions may be granted by Board Staff at its discretion, based on its assessment of the specific circumstances of each project approved.

Please note: the Board proposed an amendment to the Pilot Program rules, which, if approved, would eliminate the deadline to begin construction, establish a requirement that approved projects provide quarterly progress updates, and extend the deadline to become fully operational from 12 to 18 months. Additionally, Staff would be able to grant one, six-month extension; further extensions would need to be requested from the Board via a petition. If approved, these rule amendments will apply to all community solar projects granted conditional approval to participate in the Pilot Program. This note is for informational purposes only. Applicants must be



prepared to construct their projects in accordance with the existing timelines in the current rules at N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.3(c).

In order to monitor compliance, approved projects will be required to submit updates to the Board:

- a. Prior to the beginning of construction, the Applicant must provide evidence that commitments in the following categories have been met: project location, community and environmental justice engagement, other benefits.
- b. Prior to applying for permission to operate (“PTO”), the Applicant must provide evidence that commitments in the following categories have been met: siting (other than location), all permits received.
- c. Prior to applying to the EDC for allocation of bill credits, the Applicant must provide evidence that commitments in the following categories have been met: product offering, subscriber type, geographic limit within EDC service territory.

If the approved project fails to be completed as proposed in the Application, and the Applicant fails to remedy the failure or provide an equivalent modification within a reasonable timeframe, the project may be penalized up to and including a withdrawal of the permission to operate in the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program.

Incentive Eligibility

14. In order to limit regulatory uncertainty for projects applying to PY2 of the Pilot Program, the Board has determined that Applications selected as part of PY2 be eligible to register for the current Transition Incentive (“TI”) program, even if said Applications are selected after the establishment of the Successor Program, subject to projects maintaining compliance with the rules and regulations of the TI Program.

Special Considerations for Project Siting

15. Unlike Program Year 1, Applicants with ground mounted projects are not required to meet with NJDEP’s Office of Permitting and Project Navigation (“OPPN”, formerly the Office of Permit Coordination and Environmental Review, or PCER) prior to submitting an Application to the Board. Applicants may request a meeting with the OPPN to identify permits and other potential issues, but doing so is not a prerequisite in the PY2 Application process.
Exception: Applications for floating solar projects are required to meet with OPPN prior to submitting an Application. Applicants are responsible for requesting the meeting sufficiently in advance of the Application deadline to ensure that the meeting is able to occur.
16. Applicants are required to submit a complete OPPN Permit Readiness Checklist as an attachment to their Application. Applicants are not required to submit the OPPN Permit Readiness Checklist to OPPN prior to submitting an Application, except in the case of floating solar projects. The Evaluation Committee will submit the Checklists of shortlisted Applications directly to NJDEP prior



- to presenting the list of project scores to the Board. The Permit Readiness Checklist is available at the following link: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/pcer/introcklist.htm>.
17. Special attention should be paid when siting a project on a landfill, a brownfield, or an area of historic fill. For reference, NJDEP's *Guidance for Installation of Solar Renewable Energy Systems on Landfills in New Jersey* can be found at the following link: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/swp/solarguidance.pdf>.
 18. The Applicant should review the environmental compliance history at the proposed site and the various operations that were conducted there. Satisfaction of all outstanding NJDEP regulatory compliance obligations, if applicable, will be required prior to applying for permission to operate. The Applicant should identify any outstanding compliance and enforcement issues associated with the property on which the proposed project is to be sited and resolve them accordingly before submitting an Application, if applicable.
 19. If the proposed project is sited on Green Acres preserved open space, as defined in N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.2, or on land owned by NJDEP, the Applicant must receive special approval for the project from NJDEP prior to submitting the Application to the Board, and attach proof of approval to their application package (see section B. VII. Community Solar Facility Siting).

Special Considerations for Government Entity Applicants

20. Specific exemptions are identified throughout the Application Form which apply only if: 1) the Applicant is a government entity (municipal, county, or state), AND 2) the community solar developer will be selected by the Applicant via a Request for Proposals ("RFP"), Request for Quotations ("RFQ"), or other bidding process. If this is the case, the Applicant must include a letter describing the proposed bidding process, and the Applicant should complete all sections of the Application Form based on the project as it will be designed in the bidding process. The Applicant must further commit to issuing said RFP, RFQ, or other bidding process within 90 days of the proposed project being approved by the Board for participation in the Community Solar Energy Pilot Program (see section B. XIII. Special Authorizations and Exemptions).
21. Alternatively, Government Entity Applicants may elect to submit an Application after issuing an RFP, RFQ, or other bidding process.
22. The Application Form has been designed to ensure that Government Entity Applicants provide the information necessary to equitably score the project against all other Applicants, and to provide contain reasonable assurances that the project will be developed. All Applicants are required to identify a project site.
23. Additionally, the Board proposed an amendment to the Pilot Program rules, which, if approved, would allow municipally-owned community solar projects to submit an application for a project that requests an exemption from the provisions at N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.10(b)(1) mandating subscriber enrollment via affirmative consent (i.e. an opt-out community solar project). Projects applying in PY2 may indicate in section B. XIII. Special Authorizations and Exemptions that they plan to utilize opt-out subscriber enrollment if the proposed rule amendment is approved by the Board. If the Application is selected but the proposed rule amendment is not approved by the Board, the



project will be required to proceed using affirmative consent (i.e. “opt-in”) subscriber enrollment rules, as currently provided for in the Pilot Program rules at N.J.A.C. 14:8-9.10(b)(1).

Submitting an Application

24. Applications must adhere to all of the following instructions for submission. Applications must be received no later than 5:00 P.M. on the date of the close of the Application Period in order to be considered.
25. Applications **must** be submitted via the dedicated online application process. Staff will provide further details on how to submit an Application online upon the opening of the online application process. The online application process will reflect the exact questions and requirements laid out in this Application Form. This PDF Application Form is being provided to allow Applicants to develop their Applications; **do not** submit an Application using this PDF Application Form.

Submission of Confidential Information

26. All Applications received will be posted to the New Jersey Clean Energy Program website, and will be available through NJBPU’s Public Document Search. The information contained in and submitted with the Application is subject to disclosure under the Open Public Records Act, N.J.S.A. 47-1A-1 et seq.
27. Claimed sensitive and trade secret information that Applicants wish to keep confidential must be submitted in accordance with the confidentiality procedures set forth in N.J.A.C. 14:1-12.3.

Questions and Further Information

28. Please address all questions pertaining to the Application Form to communitysolar@njcleanenergy.com.
29. Additional guidance and Frequently Asked Questions will be available on the NJCEP website at: <http://njcleanenergy.com/renewable-energy/programs/community-solar>.