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## **CESA Guide Outlines Strategies to Bring the Benefits of Solar to Low-Income Households**

*The Clean Energy States Alliance publishes recommendations for government agencies and policymakers for designing low-income solar programs.*

Montpelier, VT — The Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) has taken an in-depth look at successful and promising policies and programs that can be used to bring the benefits of solar to low-income consumers. [Bringing the Benefits of Solar Energy to Low-Income Consumers](#), a guide authored by Bentham Paulos of PaulosAnalysis, outlines the obstacles that low-income households face in accessing solar power and provides a detailed overview of strategies that policymakers and government agencies can use to encourage low-income solar adoption.

Despite the increasing affordability of solar and solar-friendly policies, some low-income households still face substantial obstacles to going solar: being renters and not homeowners, having low or no credit, or having little savings. Many policies that promote solar power were not designed to overcome barriers that low-income customers face, while policies that help the poor were not designed to access solar power, since solar has only recently become an affordable and cost-effective option.

The declining cost of solar has led to an explosion of innovation among policies, programs, and business models to benefit low-income customers. The CESA guide describes many financing ideas to help make solar more affordable for low-income households, including on-bill repayment, property-assessed clean energy (PACE), and pay as you save (PAYS) programs. It covers direct incentives such as renewable energy certificates (RECs) and solar RECs, compensation mechanisms (such as net metering and virtual net metering), and new business models such as crowdfunding.

“This guide offers the most comprehensive examination to date of crafting solar programs and policies to benefit low-income customers,” said CESA Project Director Nate Hausman.

“Distributed solar can be a powerful tool to help reduce low-income customers’ energy burdens and contribute to healthier and more secure communities.”

The guide has six key recommendations for government agencies and policymakers to consider when approaching low-income solar:

1. **Leverage state energy policy to support low-income deployment.** Many states already have policies to encourage renewable energy that can be modified to support low-income access to solar.
2. **Adapt housing and anti-poverty programs to include low-income solar.** There is a vast array of federal and state programs intended to reduce poverty and promote economic development that can harness solar to help fulfill their aims.
3. **Set up a financial vehicle.** Various financial strategies can enable access to solar.
4. **Promote volunteerism.** Volunteer labor can drive down the cost of installations while providing job training and community service opportunities.
5. **Partner with trusted low-income allies.** Stakeholder engagement and coalition building can help ensure greater buy in and enrollment during program development and implementation.
6. **Ensure programs provide tangible benefits to low-income consumers.** Low-income solar programs should complement existing programs and provide real financial benefits for the low-income customers they serve.

“Nobody needs to save on their electric bills more than low-income households, but this population also has the hardest time accessing solar,” said the author, Bentham Paulos. “This guide offers a suite of policy options to help bring the benefits of solar power to those who need it most.”

CESA, a national, nonprofit coalition of public agencies and organizations working together to advance clean energy, published the guide as part of its Sustainable Solar Education Project, which provides information and educational resources to help states and municipalities ensure that distributed solar electricity remains consumer friendly and benefits low- and moderate-income households. This project is funded through the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative’s Solar Training and Education for Professionals program.

The report, “Bringing the Benefits of Solar Energy to Low-Income Consumers,” is available online at: [www.cesa.org/resource-library/resource/bringing-the-benefits-of-solar-energy-to-low-income-consumers](http://www.cesa.org/resource-library/resource/bringing-the-benefits-of-solar-energy-to-low-income-consumers).

The Clean Energy States Alliance is hosting a free webinar about the new guide with author Bentham Paulos on Thursday, May 18 from 1-2 pm ET. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A with the audience. Read more and register for the webinar at:

[www.cesa.org/webinars/bringing-the-benefits-of-solar-to-low-income-customers](http://www.cesa.org/webinars/bringing-the-benefits-of-solar-to-low-income-customers)

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**About the Clean Energy States Alliance:** The Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) is a national nonprofit coalition of public agencies and organizations working together to advance clean energy. CESA members—mostly state agencies—include many of the most innovative,

successful, and influential public funders of clean energy initiatives in the country. CESA works with state leaders, federal agencies, industry representatives, and other stakeholders to develop and promote clean energy technologies and markets. CESA facilitates information sharing, provides technical assistance, coordinates multi-state collaborative projects, and communicates the positions and achievements of its members. For more information, visit [www.cesa.org](http://www.cesa.org).

**About the SunShot Initiative:** The U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative is a national effort to drive down the cost of solar electricity and support solar adoption. SunShot aims to make solar energy a low cost electricity source for all Americans through research and development efforts in collaboration with public and private partners. Learn more at [energy.gov/sunshot](http://energy.gov/sunshot).