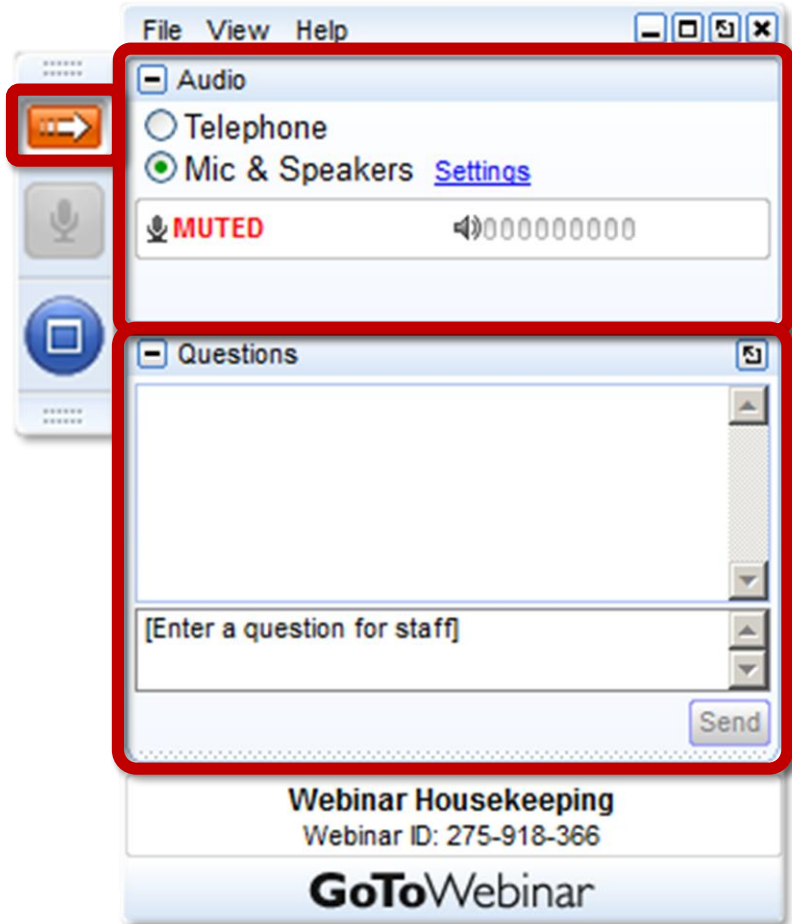


CESA Webinar

# Solar with Justice: Recommendations for Community Organizations

January 16, 2020

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# CleanEnergy States Alliance



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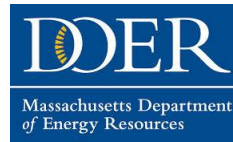
Wisconsin Office of Energy Innovation



Maryland Energy Administration



Department of Commerce Innovation is in our nature.

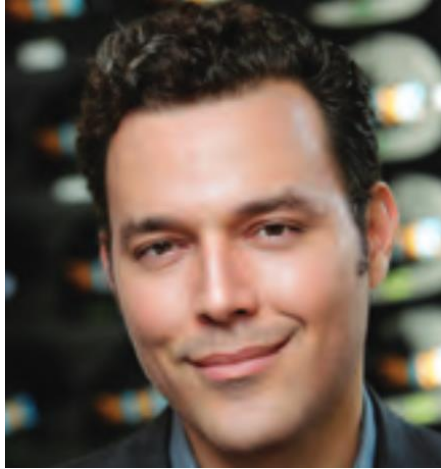


OREGON DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



ACEP Alaska Center for Energy and Power

# Webinar Speakers



**Rudi Navarra**  
Director of  
Investments, The  
Solutions Project



**Chandra Farley**  
Director of the Just  
Energy Program,  
Partnership for  
Southern Equity



**Warren Leon**  
Executive Director,  
Clean Energy States  
Alliance

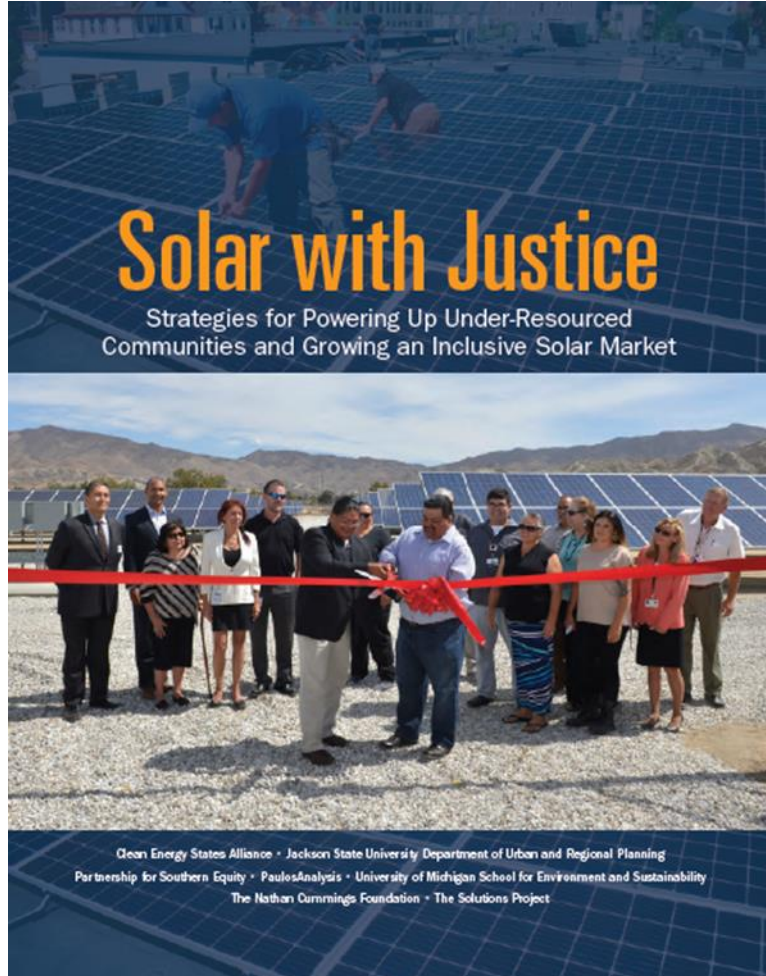


**Nicole Hernandez  
Hammer**  
Project Director,  
Clean Energy States  
Alliance



# Solar with Justice Webinar

January 16, 2019



## Recommendations for Community Organizations

# The Genesis of The Report

- Initial Convening in New York City in 2018
- Organized by The Nathan Cummings Foundation and The Solutions Project



# What Makes the Report Different

1. A diverse team worked together to explore solar in under-resourced communities in a comprehensive manner
2. The report gathered the viewpoints of a large number of experts: 76 interviews with 82 people (plus interviews for case studies)
3. The views of leaders of community organizations were given special attention
4. The report makes clear recommendations



Kick-off workshop in Atlanta, January 2019



# The Project Team

- Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA)
  - Nicole Hernandez Hammer
  - Nate Hausman
  - Warren Leon
  - Rob Sanders
  - Laura Schieb
- Jackson State University Department of Urban and Regional Planning
  - Berneece Herbert
- Partnership for Southern Equity
  - Chandra Farley
- Paulos Analysis
  - Ben Paulos
- University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability
  - Tony Reames
- The Nathan Cummings Foundation
  - Danielle Deane-Ryan
- The Solutions Project
  - Rudi Navarra



PaulosAnalysis



THE **SOLUTIONS** PROJECT



# Our Mission

*The Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) advances policies and institutional actions that promote racial equity and shared prosperity for all in the growth of metropolitan Atlanta and the American South.*



**Just Energy**



**Just Growth**



**Just Opportunity**



**Just Health**



***Communities must envision  
the change they seek.***

**Nathaniel Smith  
Founder & Chief Equity Officer  
Partnership for Southern Equity**

***CIVIC EQUITY  
ECOSYSTEM***

*“strengthening  
community capacity to  
build power.”*



**2019 Just Energy Academy Graduates**  
**[JustEnergyAcademy.org](http://JustEnergyAcademy.org)**



## Guiding Principles of the Just Energy Circle:



**Community engagement is vital for the progression of self-sufficient people and neighborhoods**



**Access to high-quality energy should be fairly priced for all**



**Transparency and accountability is a necessity of energy providers**



**Equity accessibility should be the principal growth model for the American South**



**All people have a part to play in our emerging green sector economy**



**The best field and scientific research should be utilized and leveraged to find the best energy solutions**

# The Report's Structure

## Part One: Background

- Challenges under-resourced communities face and how solar can help
- Obstacles to solar for under-resourced communities
- The importance of community empowerment

## Part Two: Recommendations

- General findings and recommendations
- Chapters for specific groups:
  - State governments
  - Philanthropic foundations
  - Community organizations
  - Other stakeholders (solar industry, municipalities, etc.)
- Changing project financing

# Top Ten General Findings and Recommendations

1. Partnerships involving trusted community organizations are essential
2. It's still the experimental phase for LMI solar
3. Installations for community institutions deserve special consideration
4. Resilience should be a component of LMI solar
5. Financial risk needs to be minimized for LMI households and community organizations
6. Strong consumer protection is crucial
7. Shared solar projects can play a useful role but they are not a panacea
8. Training and workforce development should remain a priority
9. Solar education is important
10. Increasing the availability of financing for solar projects in under-resourced communities is essential





# The Context for Recommendations for Community Organizations

- We do not want to make unrealistic requests of small organizations with limited resources. Most community groups will not have the staff or funding to implement all the recommendations. They are a menu for groups to choose from as their resources and needs allow.



# Eight Recommendations for Community Organizations

1. Insist on the involvement of community organizations
  - The solar development process is moving in a direction that engages community voices, but those voices are still not always included.
  - Community organizations should insist that community representatives and community organizations be included in project planning and implementation.
  - If a solar company begins to market its services within a community without involving community representatives, it should be approached by community leaders and told that it needs to alter its marketing strategy.





# Recommendations for Community Organizations, continued



2. Develop an internal education plan
  - Community organizations can prepare themselves with information on energy issues and solar development
    - What role do you want to play (e.g., project developer, information source, support for another educational organization)?
  - Useful information source: CESA's [Solar Information for Consumers](#)
3. Engage the community in dialogue on solar
  - Discussions can reveal the issues that need to be addressed before solar projects can move forward, and can make sure that residents have the information they need to make sound decisions



# 4. Control the Decisionmaking Process and Make Careful Decisions about Project Ownership



- The community should shape decisions and be able to ensure there are adequate community benefits
- Sometimes community wealth building best achieved by owning the project (e.g., PUSH Buffalo case study)
- Community organizations should do an honest self-assessment. Do they have:
  - The appetite and expertise to be a solar project developer?
  - The resources to withstand unexpected financial losses?



# More on Project Ownership and Empowerment

- A community organization need not give up control if it doesn't own the project. Well-structured contracts can realize economic benefits without ownership risks
  - Community organization can initiate, control, and make the decisions about a solar installation.
  - Third-party entity owns the system and takes responsibility for maintaining it. Also can qualify for federal tax credit.
- A hybrid approach
  - Community organization brings in a partner with solar development experience
  - Partner withdraws after 5-10 years when they receive their tax benefits, leaving the community group with ownership (e.g., UPROSE's Sunset Park Solar case study)
  - Need to make sure that this doesn't delay the community group receiving meaningful financial benefits

# Further Recommendations for Community Organizations

## 5. Push for community benefit agreements

- A written explanation of how the community will benefit, what guarantees are in place to ensure that those benefits materialize, and what happens if the project falls short of achieving its benefit goals.
- Possible benefits:
  - Decision-making roles for community members
  - Bill savings targets
  - Job training requirements
  - Stipulations about hiring within the community
  - Guarantees that electricity costs will not exceed the price of standard power from the local utility
  - Assurances that current tenants will not be displaced or have their rents increased

## 6. Identify key institutions and help them adopt solar



# Final Recommendations for Community Organizations

7. Help the community avoid consumer protection problems
  - Provide local residents with helpful information
    - Is there a state or municipal consumer solar guide?
  - Give special attention to financing
  - Educate solar companies so that they understand the need of the community
  - Deal with bad actors

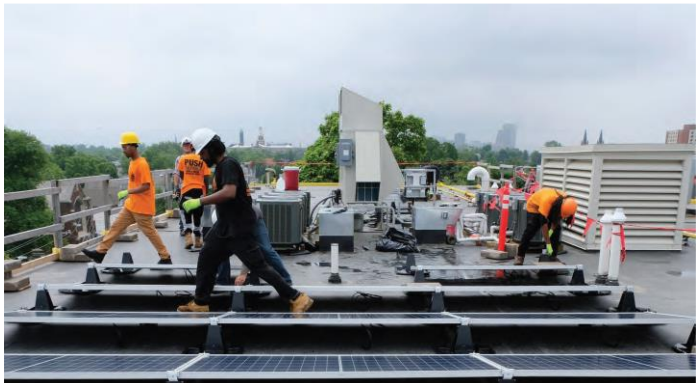
8. Take part in shaping policy
  - This can be difficult when resources are limited
  - Consider joining a state or regional coalition
  - Request a larger state or national organization to keep you informed and say when input could make a difference
  - Even occasional phone calls and letters can make a difference



# More in the Chapter



- Short descriptions of successful initiatives and projects that can be replicated
- Three case studies
  - **PUSH Buffalo** incorporates solar into a mixed-use project with community asset ownership
  - **UPROSE's Sunset Park Solar** creates New York's first cooperatively owned shared solar project
  - **Native Renewables** build energy independence



# We welcome your comments

Warren Leon

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# Thank you for attending our webinar

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# Upcoming Webinars

- **How Solar Knowledge Spreads: Who learns what, from whom, and how?**  
*Wednesday, January 22, 1-2pm ET*
- **Financing Resilient Power in Under-Resourced Communities: A Foundation's Comprehensive Financing Initiative for Solar+Storage Projects**  
*Tuesday, January 28, 2-3pm ET*
- **Solar with Justice: Recommendations for State Governments**  
*Wednesday, January 29, 1-2pm ET*
- **Soleil Lofts: The Largest Solar+Storage Virtual Power Plant in the Country**  
*Wednesday, February 12, 1-2pm ET*

Read more and register at: [www.cesa.org/webinars](http://www.cesa.org/webinars)