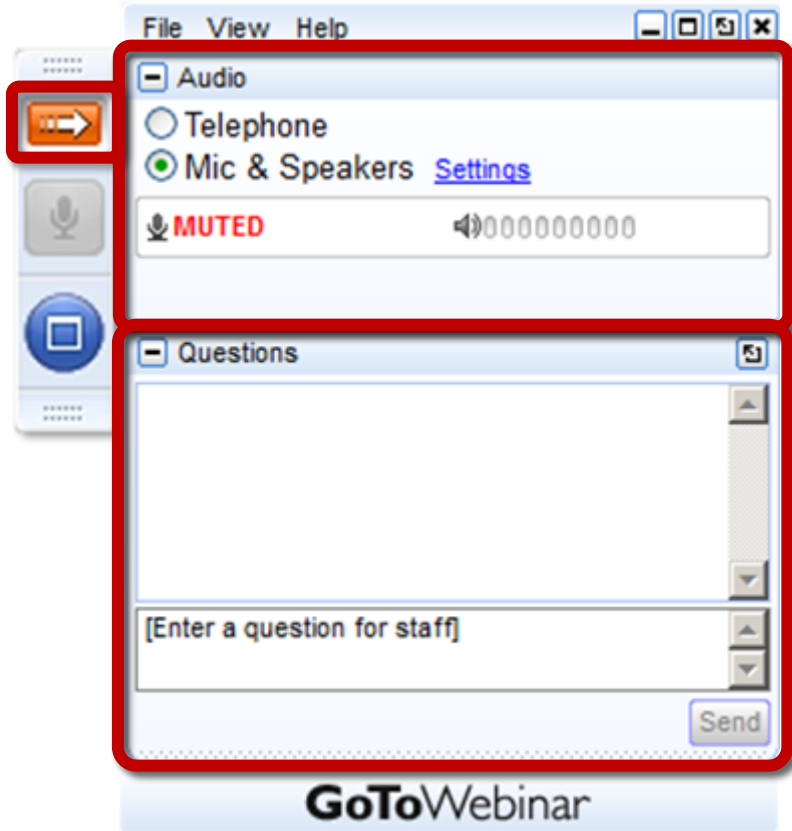


# Collaborating with Community- Based Organizations: An Energy Justice Primer for States

March 23, 2021

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# CleanEnergy States Alliance



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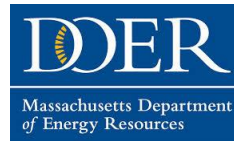
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Innovation is in our nature.



# State Energy Strategies



- Funded by the U.S. Department of Energy through the Solar Energy Technologies Office.
- The Clean Energy States Alliance is working with CT, DC, MN, NM, OR and RI to make solar more accessible to low- and moderate-income residents.



- Research support provided by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.



# Webinar Speakers



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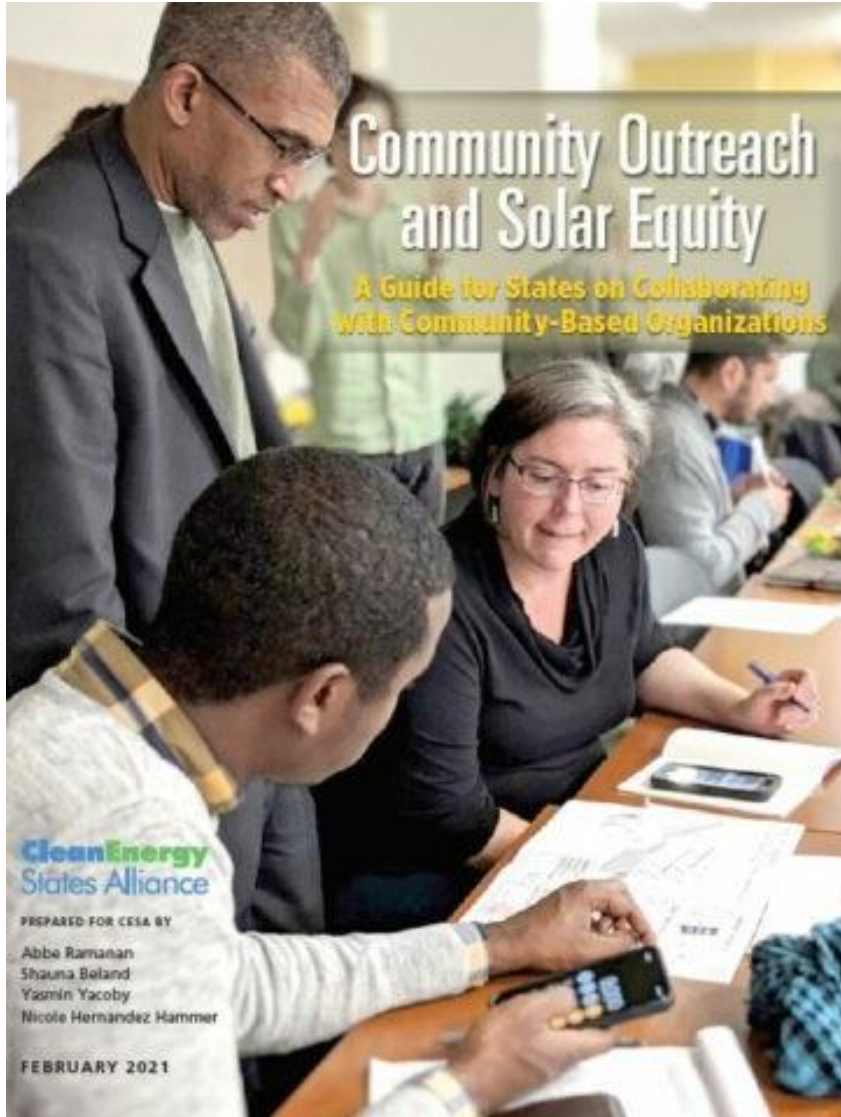


**Shauna Beland**  
Administrator of  
Renewable Energy  
Programs, Rhode Island  
Office of Energy  
Resources



**Nate Hausman**  
Project Director, Clean  
Energy States Alliance  
(moderator)





# Why Collaboration with CBOs is Important

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- This webinar and the accompanying report were produced based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) under the Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) Award Number DE-EE-0007667.
- Solar development is most effective, and equitable, when trusted community organizations are involved
- While many CBOs are limited in size and capacity, CBO staff possess deep experiential and local knowledge – state policies can often go amiss when this type of knowledge is excluded from decision-making
- Engaging with CBOs can also ensure historically marginalized voices are heard
- This builds on decades of work undertaken by the environmental justice community

# Environmental Justice

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- While not all CBOs focus on environmental justice, understanding the history and principles of environmental justice are an important step state agencies should undertake prior to engagement
- **Environmental justice** means that all people are entitled to equal environmental protection, regardless of race, color, or national origin. It is the right to live, work and play in a clean environment.
- **The Environmental Justice Principles** are a set of 17 principles derived from the first People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. These principles include the importance of ecological unity, the ethical use of land, an emphasis on self-determination, and equality in partnerships.
- **The Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing** are a set of democratic organizing principles established by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice. These principles help drive equitable relationships and participatory decision making for many in the environmental justice community.
- **Just Transition:** The Just Transition Framework lays out a tangible strategy combines the principles of environmental justice with economic justice to move away from an extractive economic model to a regenerative one.

## *The Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing*

1. Be Inclusive
2. Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing
3. Let People Speak for Themselves
4. Work Together in Solidarity and Mutuality
5. Build Just Relationships Among Ourselves
6. Commitment to Self-Transformation



## Prep Work for State Agencies

- State agencies should recognize the complex, and often fraught, relationship many under-resourced communities have with state entities prior to seeking engagement with CBOs in those communities
- Learning about environmental justice principles is not enough. State agencies should strive to create an anti-racist workplace.

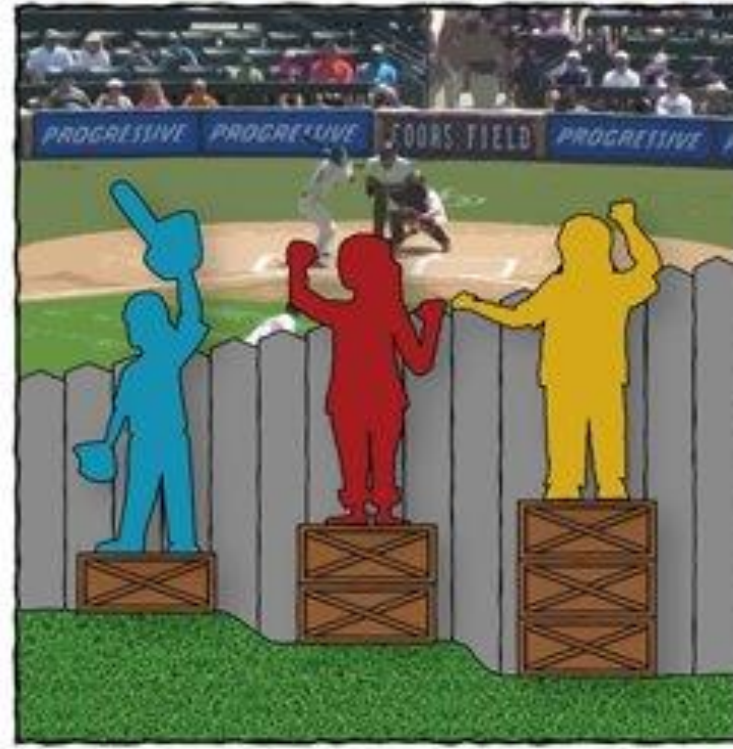


# Equity vs. Equality

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**EQUALITY**



**EQUITY**

# OER Case Study: Creating an Anti-Racist Workplace

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- OER recognized the importance of setting aside staff time and resources to anti-racist education, and ensuring this burden was not unfairly placed on staff of color
- The Energy Justice Program Manager position was created to focus on the equitability, accessibility, and inclusivity of OER's programs and simultaneously build a shared understanding in the office that energy injustice exists and is tied to systemic racism
- The manager gave presentations at staff meetings and led discussions on systemic racism both past and present
- These brief meetings were supplemented by anti-racism trainings and additional de-briefs for staff outside of work hours
- Thus far, OER has done about a year of justice literacy and centering equity work, and is still very much at the beginning of an on-going process of education

# Engaging and Partnering with CBOs

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- After assessing the current nature of its partnerships with CBOs, an agency can create an outreach plan. Outreach should aim to reach a wide range of CBOs, many of whom might not have existing experience with solar.
- It is **critical** that outreach not take place after a program or policy has already been designed. Agencies should build in time to hear input from CBOs about their priorities and needs and incorporate those into a final program design. Participatory policymaking is key to trust.
- Consider establishing a working group of CBOs and community leaders to present ideas and brainstorm.
- Publish materials in advance of meetings so attendees will have an opportunity to read it in advance. Many CBOs have limited staff and resources. Providing a stipend for their time or to cover travel expenses can make or break engagement



Photo credit: ioby.org

# OER Case Study: Community Solar



- In 2017, the Office of Energy Resources (OER) created a plan to increase solar adoption and participation of low- and moderate-income customers in solar programs. The strategies included Ask, Learn, Educate, Connect and Meet
- The focus of the Listen and Learn steps was to meet with community groups to provide education about community solar, how the current community solar programs work, and ask what else needed to be considered
- In response to this problem, OER created a participant-limited pilot program that worked closely with customers receiving income eligible benefits who enrolled in community solar program. This pilot program will walk select customers through the community solar programs and identify and troubleshoot barriers to participation encountered by eligible customers

# Educate and Connect

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“I wasn’t even aware about the choice of getting clean energy without having to install solar panels on my roof”

- **Elsie**, Community Solar Subscriber since 2020.

"During these hard times, and especially in the wintertime, it’s important to save money on my utility bill. It’s great that I can be a part of this process and I am happy that I have a choice of getting clean energy without installing an expensive solar system."

- **Maria**, Community Solar Subscriber since 2020,

RHODE ISLAND  
COMMUNITY  
**SOLAR**  
MARKETPLACE



A wide-angle photograph of a solar farm. The foreground and middle ground are filled with rows of solar panels mounted on metal racks, extending towards the horizon. The panels are tilted at an angle. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered, wispy white clouds. The overall scene is bright and clear.

Questions?

# Contacts & Additional Resources

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## CESA

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## Further Reading:

- *Solar with Justice: Strategies for Powering Up Under-Resourced Communities and Growing an Inclusive Solar Market*
- *From Power to Empowerment: Plugging Low Income Communities into the Clean Energy Economy*
- *Energy Democracy: Honoring the Past and Investing in a New Energy Democracy*

## Anti-Racist Organizations

- Climate Justice Alliance
- Initiative for Energy Justice
- Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
- The Othering and Belonging Institute



# Community Outreach and Solar Equity: A Guide for States on Collaborating with Community-Based Organizations

Available at:

<https://www.cesa.org/resource-library/resource/community-outreach-solar-equity/>



# Thank you for attending our webinar

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Tuesday, April 6, 3-4:15pm ET

## **Maryland Energy Storage Pilot Program: Exploring Business Models and Revenue Streams in PJM**

Wednesday, April 14, 1-2pm ET

## **Replacing Peaker Power Plants with Clean Energy: A Frontline Vision for New York City**

Wednesday, April 21, 2-3pm ET

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