Community Solar: Frequently Asked Questions
August 2022

What is community solar?
“Community solar” refers to an arrangement in which a utility customer buys a “share” of a solar power project located within the customer’s local utility service territory. The owner of the solar power project is called a “subscriber organization.” The customer, called a “subscriber,” then receives a bill credit that reduces the customer’s electric utility bill. Each kilowatt-hour of energy output purchased through a “subscription” with a community solar subscriber organization results in one less kilowatt-hour of electricity charged to the customer by the customer’s electricity supplier. Community solar projects usually have many subscribers.

Who can subscribe to community solar in Maryland?
Any utility customer of BGE, Delmarva Power, Pepco, or Potomac Edison with an electric meter account can subscribe to community solar. Subscribers must be physically located in the same utility territory as the solar project to which they are subscribing.

How does it affect my electric bill?
Each billing period, a participating community solar project notifies a subscribing customer’s local utility how many kWh credits to apply to the customer’s electric utility bill. The utility applies these credits as either a dollar or kWh credit to reduce the kWh charges on the customer’s bill.

If I join, how am I billed for my subscription?
You will be billed a subscription fee directly from the community solar project. The bill you receive will be separate from the one you receive from your electric utility indicating the credits applied to your electric bill. The details regarding how you pay for your subscription fees will be described in the subscription contract you sign with the community solar project.
What is the difference between rooftop solar and community solar?
Community solar allows utility customers who rent their homes or otherwise are unable to purchase or lease rooftop solar panels to power their households with solar energy through a subscription arrangement with a community solar project. For this reason, community solar is more readily available to low- and moderate-income households. A utility customer may have rooftop solar and also subscribe to community solar. The credits for community solar impact the subscriber’s bill in the same way that electricity produced by rooftop solar impacts the homeowner’s bill.

What is the difference between signing up with community solar and signing up with a retail supplier of electricity?
Subscribing to a community solar project is not like signing up to receive electric supply from a retail supplier. Customers may subscribe both to a community solar project and sign up with a retail energy supplier at the same time. A retail supplier sells energy supply to customers that may be produced from any source, including fossil fuels. The retail supplier’s charge appears on the utility bill and is paid along with the utility’s charges. A community solar project produces power using solar energy, and the solar output appears as a credit on the customer’s utility bill based on the subscription contract. If a community solar subscriber also has a retail supplier, the retail supplier will credit the subscriber’s bill by the amount of the subscriber’s community solar credits.

How many community solar projects are there in Maryland?
As of July 1, 2022, 43 community solar projects operate across Maryland. Those projects are currently located in the service territories of BGE (27 projects), Delmarva Power (three projects), Pepco (nine projects), and Potomac Edison (four projects). More projects will come online in the coming years.

What’s the current status of Maryland’s community solar program?
Maryland’s Community Solar Program is currently a “pilot” program established to evaluate how the program works and might be improved. It is scheduled to run through the end of 2024. Projects that come online during the pilot phase of the program may continue to operate and serve subscribers until 2049, unless the customer’s subscription contract ends on an earlier date. The General Assembly may decide to extend the program beyond 2024.
How can I be sure the community solar project is legitimate?
Community solar projects are subject to consumer protection laws that prohibit misleading marketing practices, but you should still read the terms of your subscription contract and the required contract disclosure form closely. A legitimate community solar project is required to provide a subscriber organization number in any marketing materials or contracts it uses to sell subscriptions to residential customers. That number, along with the project’s name and physical address, will appear on the list of participating community solar projects maintained by each of the four utilities (see below).

How can I tell when a project will come online?
The lists of participating community solar projects maintained by each of the four utilities will indicate the date on which the project is expected to begin operation. That date is subject to change, however, and many community solar projects have experienced delays of months or years before they began operating. You may need to contact a community solar project directly to obtain an updated expected date of operation.

What happens if I move?
Residential customers cannot be charged any fees or penalties to transfer a community solar subscription or end a community solar subscription contract in the event the customer moves. A utility customer’s community solar subscription will follow the customer if the customer moves within the same utility service territory. If you move to a residence served by another utility, your subscription will end. You may then subscribe to another community solar project located within that new utility service territory.

What other questions should I ask before signing up?
Community solar projects are required to provide residential customers with detailed terms and conditions as well as a summary of key subscription contract provisions. Customers should specifically understand how long the subscription contract will last and the price of the subscription fees they will be charged. In addition, customers should ask whether they will be charged any fees for ending a subscription before the expiration of the subscription contract.
Where can I find community solar projects I might be interested in?

A list of participating community solar providers can be found by clicking on the names of the participating utilities located on the Maryland Public Service Commission’s (PSC) website at: https://www.psc.state.md.us/electricity/community-solar-pilot-program/. The lists themselves are hosted on the website of each of the four participating utilities, and can be found directly using these links:

BGE:

Delmarva Power:

Pepco:

Potomac Edison:
https://www.firstenergycorp.com/feconnect/maryland/community-solar-md.html