

## Nova Scotia Community Solar Program: Frequently Asked Questions

This document summarizes the questions we have received, and the updates we have released, about the Community Solar Program for eligible project owners from November 2022 to present.

As the program is in development, the following document is meant as a guideline to proposed program design and is subject to change when the program opens.

### Section 1: Community Solar Program Overview

#### What is the Community Solar Program?

The Community Solar Program is a new program in Nova Scotia to encourage the use of renewable energy.

Under this program, eligible project owners can apply to the program to build, own, and operate a community solar garden with a project capacity between 0.5MW AC and 10MW AC.

Eligible project owners include municipalities, towns, townships, villages, not-for-profits, First Nations, for-profit businesses, co-operatives, colleges and universities, or a partnership between any of the eligible entities.

If you are interested in establishing a community solar garden, and meet the program criteria, you can apply to the program. If your application is approved, you will enter into a power purchase agreement (PPA) with Nova Scotia Power Inc. (NSPI). The Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables will determine the Energy Rate at which NSPI must purchase the electricity from the project. Details about how to apply and the approval criteria are in Section 2.

#### How does the Community Solar Program fit in with the existing solar programs?

The following solar programs already exist in Nova Scotia:

##### Net-metering Program

The Net-metering Program allows customers to generate solar energy for their own use, up to their annual consumption, by installing rooftop and/or ground mount solar installations.

The generation limits are as follows:

**Residential customers:** up to 27kW

**Small commercial customers:** 27kW to 200kW

**Large commercial customers (with demand charge on utility bill):** 200kW to 1000kW

Find more information at:

[Self-Generating Option | Nova Scotia Power \(nspower.ca\)](https://nspower.ca)

[Commercial Net Metering | Nova Scotia Power \(nspower.ca\)](https://nspower.ca)

##### Green Choice Program

This program allows large energy users to connect directly to renewable energy suppliers. The program is in development, more information can be found at <https://novascotiagcp.com>

## Section 2: Community Solar Program Application Process

### **When will the program open for applications from eligible project owners?**

The program is intended to open for applications before the end of 2023; however, that date is tentative, and the program may open in the new year.

### **Will the program open and begin accepting applications the same day?**

It is anticipated that the program will be announced and begin accepting applications the same day.

### **Will it be a competitive application process with a set deadline, or a rolling intake until the program capacity has been reached?**

The program is anticipated to have a rolling intake. We will continue to accept applications until we have reached the program capacity.

### **How will projects be evaluated?**

Your application will be evaluated based on:

- how prepared you are to implement your community solar project
- the long-term economic viability of your project
- how your project will benefit your community

Your project must also fit within the available program capacity (see Section 3).

### **How many projects will be approved?**

The number depends on a variety of factors such as program capacity, the number of eligible applications received and individual project size.

### **Can I apply as a project owner for multiple community solar gardens?**

Yes. We will consider all applications on a case-by-case basis. However, this does not mean that one project owner will be awarded approval for multiple 10MW AC solar gardens.

## Section 3: Technical requirements

### **What is the proposed capacity of the Community Solar Program?**

The anticipated program capacity for all community solar gardens combined is 100 MW AC.

### **What is the minimum and maximum capacity for individual projects?**

The proposed capacity of the project must be between 0.5MW AC and 10MW AC.

Project size for each site will depend on multiple factors, including the hosting capacity, which will be determined by NSPI during the [Generation Interconnection Procedures | Nova Scotia Power \(nspower.ca\)](#). More information will be provided when the program opens.

### **Can projects be co-located on the same project site?**

Yes, smaller projects could be co-located on the same project site. Details such as these will be

considered on a case-by-case basis during the program application process. However, the intention of the program is not to have multiple 10MW AC projects owned by the same project owner on the same site.

If two community groups want to co-locate on the same site, we suggest they consider forming a partnership for a larger project.

## Section 4: Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) and Energy Rate

### **What will be the Energy Rate awarded to successful project applicants?**

You will be asked to propose an Energy Rate at which NSPI will purchase the electricity from your project in the financial section of your application.

If your application is successful, the Minister will determine the rate at which NSPI must purchase the electricity from your project on a set of criteria that include the following:

- your proposed Energy Rate in your program application
- the long-term economic viability of your project
- the benefits your project will bring to your community
- the impact (if any) your project has on rate payers

### **Will there be one Energy Rate awarded to all projects, or will the rate vary for each project?**

It is anticipated that the Energy Rate paid by NSPI to project owners to purchase electricity will vary based on each project, but will fall within a predetermined range.

### **Does the Community Solar Program allow for an escalating Energy Rate?**

We expect the Energy Rate will be fixed for the term of the agreement (25 years).

### **Will project owners be able to set their own retail rate for subscribers, and or charge a subscription fee?**

No. The Energy Rate awarded to project owners will be the only source of revenue for the project. All costs related to the project will be considered and accounted for in the awarded Energy Rate.

## Section 5: Subscriptions

### **How will projects find subscribers?**

Project owners will be required to engage and retain their own subscribers.

### **Who can be a subscriber?**

Any existing customer of NSPI can be a subscriber.

### **How will existing NSPI customers apply to become a subscriber?**

Details of the process are in development and will be shared once finalized.

### **How many subscribers will each community solar garden be required to have?**

Community solar gardens are expected to have 100% of their project capacity subscribed to within a specified date after their project commences commercial operation. The details regarding the minimum number of subscribers for each project are in development and will be shared once the program opens.

**How will subscribers be billed?**

NSPI is responsible for billing subscribers. Details of the process are in development and will be shared once finalized.

## Section 6: Additional Information

**Will there be a webpage where I can access information about becoming a project owner and/or a subscriber?**

Yes. A webpage and other educational information are in development and will be made available once complete.

**Will there be an opportunity for additional input from stakeholders?**

No additional consultations are planned at this time. The program was designed based on considerable input from stakeholders. That input included:

- stakeholder engagement sessions held in 2021 by Clean Foundation, who were contracted by Natural Resources and Renewables for that purpose
- best practices and learnings from community solar projects in multiple jurisdictions and geographical areas across Canada and internationally
- an online survey that was sent to a cross-section of stakeholders in March 2023
- one-on-one consultations with multiple stakeholders that have been ongoing since 2021

**What can we do now to prepare for the program launch?**

Community solar gardens require considerable planning, including preliminary community engagement and readiness, and feasibility studies such as site selection, preliminary engineering design, and geotechnical studies.

However, the program requirements and eligibility are in development, and we recommend waiting until all details are finalized before completing preparatory work.

You can start preparing your high-level financial projections and cash flows now. Consider the size of your project, capital investments and operational costs, the land you propose using, and any land preparations and government permits you may require.

**Please note:** any investment you make prior to the program launch is at your own discretion and does not guarantee eligibility for the program or program approval.

**What are the anticipated funding sources for approved projects?**

We are exploring potential funding options. We encourage you to research all available funding options now.