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UTILITY PARTNERSHIPS CAN AMPLIFY IMPACT

Cities should work with the electric utilities serving their areas – whether municipal or investor-owned – as partners in unlocking the potential of solar energy. Since utilities manage energy supply and have existing relationships with customers in their service area, their full cooperation in a solar effort can be hugely beneficial.

Opportunities to collaborate with your local power provider can range from joint outreach campaigns to increase distributed solar deployment, to collaboration on community solar projects to shared ownership of renewable energy or carbon reduction goals. Working hand-in-hand with your utility will make any energy endeavor far more effective than would be possible

without their participation. Utility partnerships offer several benefits:

- Shared projects foster collaborative relationships that will help your city pursue future renewable energy efforts more effectively.
- Working with your utility as a partner will make better use of limited public resources.
- Utilities have more direct control of the local electricity supply, and have greater access and resources for large renewable energy projects than local governments do alone.
- Using customers' existing relationship with their power provider to publicize solar opportunities and programs will advance your outreach efforts and boost solar growth.

CASE STUDIES

The following are three examples of strong city-utility partnerships that led to successful solar energy programs:

- **New York City and Con Edison:** In 2010, Con Edison worked with New York city and state agencies as well as the City University of New York (CUNY) on the 100 Days of Solar program. The effort involved reducing the approval time for a residential solar panel installation by improving coordination between the utility and government agencies, outreach to Con Edison customers about the economic and environmental benefits of solar power and the creation of a utility website where customers can submit solar applications. One year in, solar power capacity had already more than doubled in New York City and Westchester County.

[The NYC Solar Partnership](#) that brought CUNY, the New York City Mayor's Office of Sustainability and the New York City Economic Development Corporation together has since expanded to include a Solarize NYC initiative and a community shared solar program led by Sustainable CUNY.

- **Salt Lake City and Rocky Mountain Power:** Salt Lake City has a community-wide goal of achieving 100 percent renewable energy, and reaching that goal will require a strong partnership with the local electricity provider Rocky Mountain Power. The city and utility came together with a [partnership agreement](#) and clean energy implementation plan. The plan includes increased city funding for the utility's residential energy efficiency efforts, incorporating data from the utility into the city's system for tracking progress and a new community solar program.
- **Minneapolis Partnership on Emissions Reductions:** The City of Minneapolis established a [partnership](#) with Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy, the investor-owned electric and gas utilities serving the city, to achieve its goal of using 100 percent renewable electricity citywide by 2030. Through the partnership, the city and utilities work together to create and implement plans to reach that goal and track progress towards interim benchmarks. Xcel has since announced a plan to achieve zero emissions by 2050 across all the states it serves.

This partnership came only after a [push for municipalization](#) in Minneapolis that drove the utilities to consider a more aggressive approach to renewable energy. Cities served by unsupportive utilities may want to consider forming a municipal utility in order to gain greater control over their local electric grids. The next guide in this toolkit explores that option in greater detail.

- **Asheville's Blue Horizons Project:** The [Blue Horizons Project](#) is a collaborative effort between the City of Asheville, the regional power provider Duke Energy, and other stakeholders that set out to avoid building a new transmission line and coal-fired power plant to meet growing regional energy demand. The group identified that reducing peak demand by 100 megawatts would eliminate the need for a new plant and is working to improve energy efficiency, add local renewable energy and storage projects and update metering infrastructure to avoid adding a new fossil-fuel power plant to the local grid.

RESOURCES

- Learn more about the [NYC Solar Partnership](#) and [100 Days of Solar](#) campaign as a model of a collaborative outreach effort.
- Check out Salt Lake City's [partnership agreement](#) with Rocky Mountain Power.
- Explore the [Minneapolis 2040 plan](#) and learn more about how the [Minneapolis Partnership on Emissions Reductions](#) functions in helping to achieve the city's climate goals.
- Learn more about Asheville's [Blue Horizons Project](#) and how efficiency efforts can amplify the impact of renewable projects in creating a clean electricity grid.
- The Interstate Renewable Energy Council, in collaboration with Vote Solar, provides a [Checklist for Voluntary Utility-Led Community Solar Programs](#) to help drive community solar implementation.
- The American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy provides an [overview of local government-utility partnerships](#) for cities served by investor-owned utilities, which includes engagement strategies, examples and additional resources.