

FAQs- CRE with Solar

Community Renewable Energy and Solar

What is Community Renewable Energy's mission?

CRE's mission is to support communities, non-profits, and community-based for-profits through developing sustainable solutions for growth, cost reduction, and environmental conservation.

What kind of experience does Community Renewable Energy have with non-profits?

Community Renewable Energy is an enterprise of Praxia Partners, an enterprise that has 40 years of experience supporting communities, non-profits, and community-based for profits. We've spent decades building capacity with our non-profit partners to harness our business acumen to support their missions. This has been done through real estate development and entrepreneurship development, and now CRE is harnessing this expertise to help partners access renewable energy and other innovative technologies.

Why is now the right time to go solar for my organization?

From a financial perspective, now is always the right time to lower operational costs! From an environmental perspective, now is definitely the right time for us all to be reducing our carbon footprint. With our decades of experience working alongside non-profits, Community Renewable Energy understands that operational cost-savings to a non-profit aren't just a number on the bottom line. Increased operational savings means more meals delivered by a foodbank. It means more beds provided at a homeless shelter. It means more tutors at an after-school center. It's our goal to maximize your savings, so that you can strengthen your mission throughout the community.

Feasibility

How will I know if my roof is suitable for solar?

We can figure it out for you. We conduct a thorough analysis of your building, site, and current energy consumption to determine the feasibility of solar for your property. For our non-profit partners, we conduct that feasibility study for free! We will provide the full analysis for your review detailing our findings and our recommendations for you to maximize your potential clean energy savings. If barriers to solar are identified, we will also provide recommended solutions for consideration.

Cost

What is the cost to my organization?

Our solar will not put any new burdens on your budget. We understand the barriers that prevent non-profits from accessing renewable energy, and we've created a model that specifically addresses those. Our solar requires no upfront capital cost from you, and doesn't require additional dollars from your valuable mission. In fact, we only will proceed with a project if our feasibility study shows that we can meet or beat your current energy price. Our model allows non-profits to avoid upfront installation costs and lock in rates that will bring the organization savings over the lifespan of the solar facility. The only financial commitment from the host, is to continue paying for the electricity you consume. We will develop, finance, install, own, and maintain the system for your use.

Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)

What happens at the end of the PPA?

Solar technology is projected to last for 35 years. Most PPA's last for a shorter period of time. In fact, because the economics of our solar depend on our excellent maintenance and upkeep of the systems, at the end of the contract, the systems will be still working at peak performance.

However, most PPA's don't last that long. So at the end of the PPA, you have a couple of paths to choose from, and we will work with you to help determine which will work best for your needs.

You can opt to end using the system, and our team will remove the system and dispose of it at no cost to you. You could also opt to retain the system and take on ownership of it, allowing you to provide yourself the renewable energy at a nominal cost (effectively the cost of annual operations and maintenance). Ahead of the contract expiring we will evaluate the costs of removing and disposing of the system, as well as share the present-day costs of operating and maintenance so you have the most current information available to consider the past path forward for you at that time.

What if we move or build additions?

When designing a system, we work with your leadership to try to anticipate any changes to the building that might occur. If they are able to be anticipated we can often build it into the project, like building in phases, or holding off on installation while construction is underway. However, there is always the possibility of unanticipated changes. The Power Purchase Agreement outlines ways the host and generator can address those unforeseen scenarios throughout the system's life. Whether that means early termination, relocating the systems, or temporarily shutting down, these options are outlined in our contract so that your organization is fully prepared to handle anything that comes your way. We understand the competing priorities non-profits face and are here to work with you and your board to determine how to best capitalize on solar.

Should we buy the system?

Maybe! It depends on your circumstances, your access to capital and the ability to utilize tax credit opportunities. Our team is prepared to work with you and yours to determine the best answer for you.

In our experience the best option for nonprofits is a Power Purchase Agreement model. This is because the Solar Investment Tax Credit allows for a reduction in the cost of installation by a minimum of 26% by utilizing tax equity investments. Non-profits can't take advantage of this tax-credit, but CRE can harness that tax

credit and pass along the savings to you as our host, through lower power costs. That being said, we have worked with organizations with endowments and access to capital, such as institutions of higher learning, and have developed hybrid models to fit their specific needs. Designing creative approaches is our specialty! And we are happy to discuss further to find the right approach to maximize the impact of solar for you.

Can I see a Power Purchase Agreement?

Sure! Our standard Power Purchase Agreement is based on the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's recommended contract. It has been further refined through partnerships and discussions with non-profit partners to ensure that common challenges non-profits face are anticipated and thoroughly considered. Furthermore, we are open to additional discussion with your team, to make sure it fits your organizations needs. The document itself is a 50+ page legal document, but we've created an annotated version that gives a summary of each clause in plain english so you can leave the legalese to your lawyer, and still get a full preview as you consider this opportunity.

Operations and Maintenance

Who operates and maintains the solar system to ensure it is working properly?

We do. In addition to routine checkups, our systems are monitored remotely 24/7, and if any hiccup is flagged a work order is immediately issued so that it can be promptly addressed. Our solar design includes walkways and setbacks from existing utilities on your roof, so access to both is easy. Solar facilities have very few moving parts, and are assembled in a modular fashion, which ensures that one panel, or one inverter needing attention doesn't affect the rest of the system. It also makes it easy for our team to isolate issues and repair without intruding upon your operations.

How do I do maintenance on my roof? (patch holes, access HVACs, etc.)

Our solar design includes walkways and setbacks from existing utilities on your roof, so access to both is easy. It is installed in modular fashion so access to one part of the roof does not require a full removal of the system. Larger issues that require shutdown of the system for long periods of time or other issues that would interrupt production in a substantial way are anticipated in the Power Purchase Agreement, with fair accommodations detailed at the onset in case those unexpected scenarios arise down the road.

Do I need insurance?

We will maintain insurance for the system, at no cost to you. The insurance requirements we hold ourselves to are detailed in the Power Purchase Agreement. You will continue maintaining insurance on your property as usual.

What about my roof warranty?

We consult with your warranty to ensure that everything we install is in compliance. For flat roofs we specifically use a racking system called “ballasted” that uses a weighted system instead of roof penetrations so that the integrity of your roof is maintained. Where penetrations are required—often only where the conduits are necessary for the electrical lines—we hire your roofer to do them to further ensure our installation is in compliance with your warranty.

More!

We understand that there are a variety of questions, both anticipated and unanticipated, that come with making a decision like installing solar for your organization. Have further questions after reviewing? Let us know. It’s our job to make you feel comfortable with your decision to go solar.