

The Sun Also Rises in Washington

Methodology

CETI worked in partnership with the University of Washington to examine the potential benefits of community-scale solar development for this project, *The Sun Also Rises in Washington*.

Research for this project included:

- Interviews with staff at organizations whose work intersects with distributed energy resources and/or rural communities in Washington (n=5).
- Focused review of relevant online resources, white papers, and other literature.

This research project was reviewed by University of Washington's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (STUDY00022858). The IRB exempted this project from a full review and made the following determination: human subjects research, exempt status (Category 2).

Interview Guide

Thank you for speaking with me today. This interview is about distributed solar and storage in rural Washington communities. This interview will help inform a project we are working on with University of Washington researchers that aims to develop an interactive map that investigates potential for developing distributed solar in rural areas of Washington.

CETI has been part of several economy-wide energy modeling efforts, which tend to show the economic value of utility-scale solar over distributed solar. But there may be other local benefits associated with distributed solar, such as community energy resilience and local economic development, as well as local challenges. We are conducting a series of staff interviews to help inform our project approach.

Do you have any questions for me before we start?

For note-taking purposes, would it be okay if we record this conversation?

[IF PERMISSION GRANTED, START RECORDING]

[AFTER RECORDING STARTS] Thank you for allowing me to record.

As a reminder, these interviews will be kept confidential within the University of Washington-CETI research team, and we will not attribute anything you say to your name or organization. The list of who we have interviewed will also be kept confidential.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Could you please briefly describe your roles and responsibilities with <ORGANIZATION NAME>?
2. How many years have you been working at your <ORGANIZATION NAME> and/or doing that work?

3. What geographic location does your organization primarily serve?
4. Could you tell us about how <ORGANIZATION NAME>'s work intersects with solar energy (both utility-scale and distributed) in rural communities in Washington—whether directly or indirectly?

Distributed Solar

5. Distributed solar can be built at different scales, from rooftop to utility-scale. We are interested in exploring “community-scale” solar. Is there a definition that comes to mind when you think of “community-scale solar”?
[PROBE IF NEEDED: OUR WORKING DEFINITION IS SMALLER THAN UTILITY-SCALE, BUT LARGER THAN A SINGLE ROOFTOP INSTALLATION – IN THE APPROXIMATELY 200 KW – 1 MW RANGE. FOR EXAMPLE, IMAGINE AN INSTALLATION ON THE ROOFTOP OF A WALMART STORE OR A SCHOOL BUILDING]
6. In <ORGANIZATION NAME>'s view, what role, if any, can this type of distributed community-scale solar play in Washington's clean energy future? [PROBE: EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS, BENEFITS TO ELECTRICITY GRID]
7. Are there specific considerations for rural communities with regard to the potential role of distributed solar?
8. What benefits are associated with distributed solar energy for <ORGANIZATION NAME> or the communities you serve?
9. When you think about community energy resilience, what comes to mind for the communities you work with?
10. How, if at all, does distributed community-scale solar promote community energy resilience?
[PROBE: DOES IT HINDER?]
11. How, if at all, does distributed community-scale solar promote local economic development?
[PROBE: DOES IT HINDER?]
12. How can a distributed solar project be designed to maximize the benefits it can bring to a local community?
13. What are challenges associated with distributed solar energy for <ORGANIZATION NAME> or the communities you serve? [PROBE: FINANCING MECHANISM; SPECIFIC EXAMPLES]
14. What financing mechanisms or ownership models are you aware of for community-scale distributed solar? [PROBE: PROS/CONS OF MODELS MENTIONED?]

Closing

15. Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there any other topic or information that we have not discussed that you think would be helpful for us to know?
16. Do you have any recommendations for other organizations/contacts for us to reach out to?

[IF CONTACT PROVIDED] Thanks for this/these contact(s). I've found that I sometimes get a better response to my outreach I'm able to share where I received the contact from. Are you ok if I mention that you recommended that we speak with this/these contact (s) or would you prefer if I did not mention it?