

The Local Power Blueprint

How states can strengthen grid reliability and lower bills with local clean energy

The challenge

For over a hundred years, our electricity system has been built around centralized power plants that send electricity across hundreds of miles of wires to where people work and live. Today, that system is straining under growing demand, aging infrastructure, and extreme weather, while every new plant or transmission line takes years to build and costs billions.

Utilities have little reason to change course. They earn nearly all of their profit by building infrastructure, so the more they build, the more they earn.

20%+

rise in average
household electric bills,
2020-2024

1 in 6

U.S. households
are behind on their
energy bills

3x

more outage time
per customer,
2015-2024

\$1.4T

in utility capital
spending planned over
five years

Local power is the answer

There is a better, cheaper, and faster way to keep the lights on and prices low. Rooftop and community solar, home and neighborhood batteries, electric vehicles and chargers, smart thermostats, and efficient technologies can do the job of new power plants at a fraction of the cost and time. This is local power, sometimes called distributed energy resources or virtual power plants, and it is already working across the country.



Lowers bills for everyone



Costs less to build than
alternatives



Builds fast and is modular



Provides reliable, secure power
that keeps the lights on



Is efficient and clean



Is built for today's grid

MEASURED RESULTS

Solar + efficiency

NEW ENGLAND

\$224-246M

Estimated customer savings during a single weeklong heat wave in 2026.

Virtual power plant

CALIFORNIA

500 MW

Delivered by batteries in the state's virtual power plant, about the capacity of a 500-megawatt gas plant.

Distributed solar

NEW YORK

8%

Drop in statewide demand from distributed solar during a summer heat wave, saving consumers an estimated \$200 million.

Batteries

TEXAS

1.5 GW

Distributed batteries installed by the end of 2024, more than either large nuclear reactor southwest of Houston. A program paying local power for grid services grew nearly 20x in about two years.

Demand response

TENNESSEE VALLEY

1.3 GW

Demand reduced during a record winter peak in January 2025, saving more than \$1 million in a single day.

60 GW

THE POTENTIAL

Independent experts estimate 60 gigawatts of virtual power plants, equal to the capacity of 29 Hoover Dams, nationwide could meet future grid needs for \$15-25 billion less than the alternatives over ten years.

What states can do

I. PRODUCE MORE POWER LOCALLY, AND DO IT FAST

1. **Write clear rules of the road to build local power.** Let home and community solar, batteries, EV charging, microgrids, and plug-in solar get built, connected, and paid.
2. **Turn growing demand into an opportunity.** Require data centers and other large new customers to fund local clean power and offer flexibility as a condition of grid access.
3. **Cut red tape and financing costs.** Adopt fast, predictable statewide interconnection and instant online permitting, and use green banks to lower the cost of capital.
4. **Pay people fairly for the local power they provide,** and for shifting when they use electricity.
5. **Make sure everyone benefits.** Design programs so renters, low-income households, small businesses, and rural and Tribal communities can take part.

II. USE THE SYSTEM WE HAVE MORE EFFICIENTLY

1. **Set binding efficiency goals.** Require utilities to cut overall use and help customers shift their electricity use.
2. **Turn local resources into power networks.** Let local solar, batteries and smart devices work together in virtual power plants that households and businesses can participate in and facilitate data access.
3. **Reward utilities for performing well.** Reform the utility business model to profit when they perform well — put local power to work, cut costs, and improve reliability — and penalize them when they miss the mark.
4. **Make local power part of planning from the start.** Require utilities to show where the grid is strained and let local solutions compete before building new infrastructure.
5. **Make financing available.** Allow third-party ownership and inclusive utility investment so upfront costs do not keep people out.

The time to act is now

Electricity bills are climbing faster than Americans can keep up, but nothing about this is set in stone. State policymakers write the rules that determine what gets built, who builds it, who profits, and who is left holding the tab. Costs being debated in utility proceedings today could show up on bills within the next year, and every unnecessary new power plant locks in spending that customers will pay off for decades. Local power is here now and can be deployed in months.

The cheapest, fastest, most reliable power we can add to the grid is power produced closer to where it is used. States across the country have already shown what's working. This blueprint lays out how they did it, policy by policy, as a resource for governors, legislators, regulators, other state officials, advocates, the press, and the general public.

ABOUT COMMON CHARGE

A coalition of innovators, including consumers, nonprofits, and businesses, built to put power — literally — back in the people's hands by creating a reliable energy system that works for everyone, everywhere.

Full blueprint: commoncharge.org · Policy: Info@commoncharge.org · Media: Press@commoncharge.org

COALITION MEMBERS

ACEEE, Advanced Energy United, Amalgamated Bank, Aquanta Inc., Charge Ahead Partnerships, Chesapeake Solar and Storage Association, Coalition for Community Solar Access, Community Energy Solutions, ConnectDER, EcoCapitol/Monarch Strategic Ventures, GRID Alternatives, Hawaii PV Coalition, Initiative for Energy Justice, Institute for Local Self Reliance, Mission:data, Nautilus Solar Energy, Nicholson Energy Consulting, North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association, Permit Power, Pivot Energy, Rábago Energy, Rewiring America, RWE, Sabreez PBC, Solar United Neighbors, Sunrun, Think MicroGrid, Tribal Energy Alternatives, Voltus, Vote Solar