



CLIMATE
CULTURE

rare

Solar Helping Ignite Neighborhood Economies (SHINE)

Photo Credit: Robert Wallace

More and more Americans want to go solar.

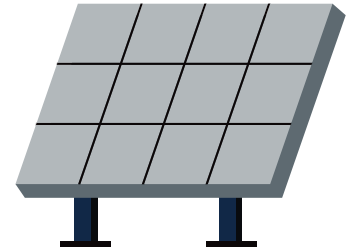
According to Pew, the percentage of Americans interested in installing rooftop solar—and the number of Americans who say they already have—has doubled in the last six years. But what about residents whose roof is unsuitable or who may not own their home? This slice of the population, which includes many low-income households, is effectively denied entry into the clean energy revolution.

Community solar is a solution that expands access to the benefits of clean energy and saves households money. It also enables more solar development, drives down solar prices, and reduces fossil fuel use. But even with positive economics and federal incentives, adoption of community solar lags. Meanwhile, disadvantaged communities across Boston spend twice as much of their household income on energy as the statewide average.

Now, Rare is working with local Boston partners on an initiative that addresses both challenges, while also providing an on-ramp for under- or unemployed people to develop the skills to benefit from the new jobs in the clean energy revolution.

SHINE Pilot Program

Through its new *Solar Helping Ignite Neighborhood Economies (SHINE)* pilot program, Rare is pairing climate-positive behavior with community economic development. This multi-faceted project undertaken with Boston’s leading anti-poverty agency, Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), and other local organizations, will advance the energy transition needed to meet societal, federal, state, and municipal climate objectives, as well as reduce energy bills for residents.



The four components of the initiative are:

1 Recruit, train, and support job placement for under- and unemployed residents.

The initiative will train aspiring solar technicians and help build Massachusetts’s renewable energy workforce needed for electrification of the Massachusetts economy as envisioned by the State’s Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2025 and 2030.

2 Reduce the utility bills of energy-burdened communities.

Tapping its expertise in behavior-based strategies for engaging communities, Rare and partners will expand signups for community solar through a campaign that builds awareness, shifts attitudes and drives action. Community members and graduates of the job training program will be recruited as spokespeople for community sign-up campaigns.

3 Build community solar installations in underserved communities.

The installations will increase the resilience of the local electric grid while making community solar visible—a key behavioral strategy to improve sign-ups and confidence in the program. In the event of widespread power outages like those resulting from extreme weather events, the solar and battery facilities can support warming or cooling centers as needed.

4 Bring electrified transportation within reach of more communities.

Local community solar facilities will support charging of e-bikes and e-scooters with the potential for EV car-sharing or non-residential EV charging, enhancing residents’ ability to get to their new clean energy jobs.



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Both the federal and Massachusetts governments have expressed interest in this partnership model to engage communities, train local residents as solar technicians, drive interest in community solar and build the energy resilience of vulnerable communities. The initiative has been awarded a grant from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and an U.S. Department of Energy Community Power Accelerator Prize.

This pilot will prove a replicable model of community solar engagement that overcomes historic marginalization and modern-day barriers by providing cheaper, cleaner energy to low-income neighborhoods, while empowering residents with solar job skills, more job opportunities, and greater energy resilience.

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