Project Name:

DMEA INCOME QUALIFIED COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY

Electric cooperative brought early solar energy benefits to LMI members through state demonstration project

Size:
151 kW_{DC}

Location:
11925 6300 Road, Montrose, CO 81401

# of LMI customers:
60

Project Website:
https://www.dmea.com/community-solar-array

BEST PRACTICES

- No-cost Site Lease
- State and Federal Grants or Funding
- Renewable Energy Certificate (RECs)

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Overview

When built in 2016, Delta-Montrose Electric Association's (DMEA) Income Qualified Community Solar Array (IQCSA) - which is 100% dedicated to low-income subscribers - was the largest of its kind in the country. DMEA's Board of Directors was motivated to create a local and resilient energy source for their low-income electric cooperative members. The IQCSA was part of a 2015 statewide initiative (Low-Income Community Solar Demonstration Project) that aimed to reduce electricity costs for low-income households by offering community solar options to the same households that are eligible for weatherization services. The Colorado Energy Office identified DMEA as a project partner for the Low-Income Community Solar Demonstration Project and provided funding support and project evaluation.

GRID Alternatives Colorado (GRID) developed the design and implementation framework, designed and led the installation of the system, provided workforce development and outreach, and managed subscriptions. The panels, energized in 2016, are installed adjacent to DMEA's headquarters on land owned by DMEA. DMEA also provided funding and interconnection. Currently, GRID provides ongoing operations and maintenance to the project and DMEA provides bill credits, billing support, and owns the installation.

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CLEAN ENERGY WORKS

Southface

Photo Credit: GRID Alternatives

Using a "barn-raising" community development model, GRID and DMEA installed the array alongside volunteer community members. DMEA and GRID contacted potential subscribers by using program brochures and conducting in-person workshops. The workshops discussed program and contract details, and established expectations for system performance and cost savings. Both DMEA and subscribers reported successful outreach. The first subscriber signed up in November 2016, and 100% subscription was achieved in one month.

To qualify, subscribers must earn less than 80% of HUD's area median income by county. DMEA may deny applicants for poor credit history. Systems are sized to offset approximately 50% of subscribers' electricity costs and average 3.6 kW. DMEA has committed to providing subscriptions for 20 years. Individual subscriptions last five years, with the option to renew contracts. Any unsubscribed production is allocated back to subscribers.

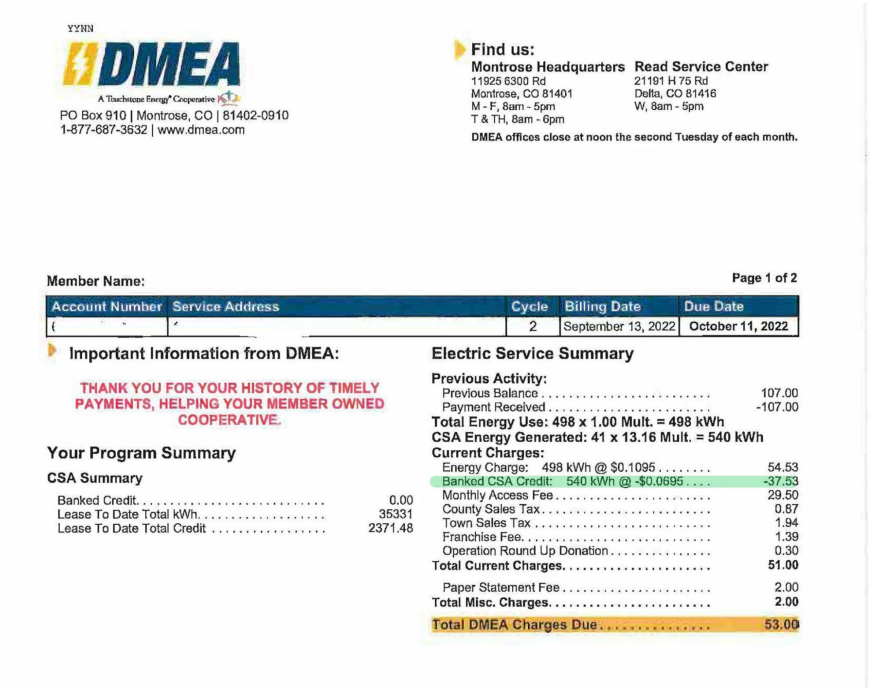
The subscriber pays DMEA the retail rate for electricity consumed, fixed monthly charges, and an access fee. In return, DMEA provides a bill credit to subscribers for the electricity produced by their allocation of the installation. For subscribers, a constant and known solar payment provides insulation against rising electricity costs and helps subscribers budget for long-term energy costs.

On the subscriber bill on the next page, the green highlight shows the production credit.

DMEA's renewable energy growth was restricted by Tri-State's 5% cooperative-owned generation cap when the project was first energized. DMEA is no longer a Tri-State member, and no longer subject to the cap. However, no state electrical permit was required, since solar installations owned by electric utility cooperatives are exempt.

Innovative Approaches

- Workforce development. GRID's model of including workforce development with community solar provided additional benefits to the local community.
- Informational workshops. These community workshops set clear expectations for program participation and anticipated savings, leading to 100% subscription within one month.



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DMEA
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

PO Box 910 | Montrose, CO | 81402-0910
1-877-687-3632 | www.dmea.com

Find us:

Montrose Headquarters
11925 6300 Rd
Montrose, CO 81401
M - F, 8am - 5pm
T & TH, 8am - 6pm

Read Service Center
21191 H 75 Rd
Delta, CO 81416
W, 8am - 5pm

DMEA offices close at noon the second Tuesday of each month.

Member Name:

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Account Number	Service Address	Cycle	Billing Date	Due Date
[redacted]	[redacted]	2	September 13, 2022	October 11, 2022

Important Information from DMEA:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HISTORY OF TIMELY PAYMENTS, HELPING YOUR MEMBER OWNED COOPERATIVE.

Your Program Summary

CSA Summary

Banked Credit	0.00
Lease To Date Total kWh	35331
Lease To Date Total Credit	2371.48

Electric Service Summary

Previous Activity:

Previous Balance	107.00
Payment Received	-107.00

Total Energy Use: 498 x 1.00 Mult. = 498 kWh
CSA Energy Generated: 41 x 13.16 Mult. = 540 kWh
Current Charges:

Energy Charge: 498 kWh @ $0.1095	54.53
Banked CSA Credit: 540 kWh @ -$0.0695	-37.53
Monthly Access Fee	29.50
County Sales Tax	0.87
Town Sales Tax	1.94
Franchise Fee	1.39
Operation Round Up Donation	0.30
Total Current Charges	**51.00**
Paper Statement Fee	2.00
Total Misc. Charges	**2.00**
Total DMEA Charges Due	**53.00**

Lessons Learned

- Agreements with generation and transmission utilities can put limits on community solar installations. DMEA was constrained in its ability to offer more community solar and to manage operating costs because of Tri-State's renewable energy policies. These limit self-generation to 5% of total consumption and require that DMEA pay for the electricity consumed by its members that is offset by solar. In addition, Tri-State's renewable energy policies prohibit the community solar array from offsetting peak demand charges.

LIFT by Groundswell

This case study is a part of the LIFT Toolkit initiative. To explore more case studies and best practices visit LIFT.Groundswell.org
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