

Project Name:

KEARSARGE JOHNSTOWN

No-cost solar energy for income-qualified subscribers via New York State solar program

Size:

4.77 MW_{AC}

Location:

287 West Street, Johnstown, NY 12078

of LMI customers:

330

Project Website:

<https://www.kearsargeenergy.com/kearsarge-johnstown>

BEST PRACTICES

- Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)
- State and Federal Grants or Funding



Overview

The Johnstown Community Solar project consists of two adjacent ground mount arrays, Johnstown A and B. The capacity of the arrays are 2.8 MW and 2.0 MW respectively. This case study aggregates the two installations together into the “Kearsarge Johnstown” installation, which was energized in 2018. Developed, owned, and operated by [Kearsarge Energy](#), the installations are located on two parcels of previously underutilized land (not ideal for farming) totaling 20 acres.

This project was included in the first wave of awards under the [New York State Energy Research and Development Authority](#) (NYSERDA) [Solar for All](#) program, which is the income-qualified component of [NY-Sun](#). Kearsarge Energy and its partner [Common Energy](#) offer access to solar energy generated by the site to income-qualified 10,000 residents of [National Grid's Upstate](#) utility territory.

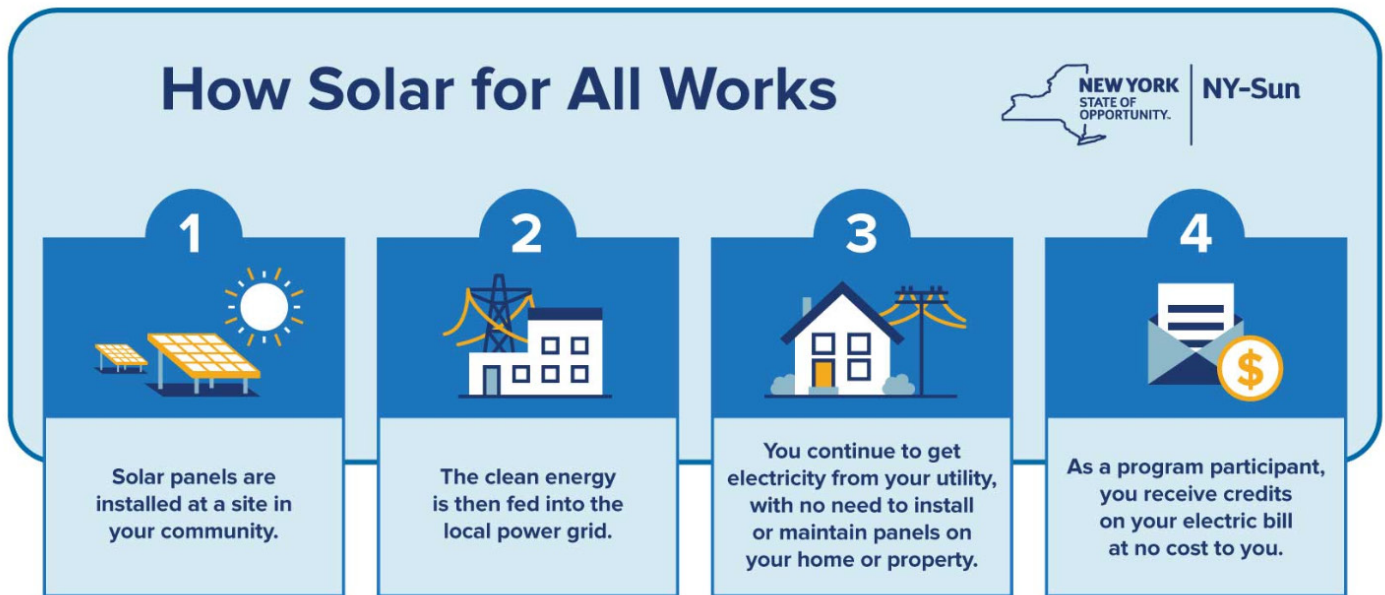
Common Energy enables installation owners - such as Kearsarge - to monetize and manage complex, multi-tenant distributed generation projects. Common Energy's energy management platform provides enrollment and billing functionality.

Under the Solar for All program, solar installations reserve approximately 20 percent of project capacity, up to 1 MW from each installation, for eligible low-



income homeowners and renters in National Grid's Upstate region. As such, 2 MW of this installation's total capacity is dedicated to 330 low- to moderate-income households.

This infographic explains how NY-Sun's Solar for All program works:



A minimum of 10 percent savings is mandated by NY-Sun, and National Grid estimates that subscribers save between \$5-\$15 a month. The Kearsarge Johnstown project is currently fully subscribed.

Eligibility for the Solar for All program is based on the following criteria:

- Applicant is a homeowner or renter
- Applicant pays their own electric utility bill
- Applicant meets [income eligibility requirements](#)
- Applicant lives in a service territory that pays the [System Benefits Charge](#). This charge, paid by customers of certain utilities, funds NYSERDA.
- Applicant used a minimum of 1,000 kWh over the last twelve months of electric bills.

There is no cost to sign up or cancel a subscription. The subscription is paid for by the Solar for All program. Participation in the program does not affect a subscriber's enrollment in other income-qualifying utility bill discounts such as [Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#) (LIHEAP) or utility-specific budget billing programs. Digital marketing, local canvassing, and mass mailings were used to recruit subscribers and resulted in a fully subscribed project.

The total project cost was between \$8-9 million.

Kearsarge financed the project with equity, debt and a NYSERDA grant. The NYSERDA grant disbursements are multi-year, and are based on the actual solar production of the two arrays. The overall project financing benefits from the sale of Renewable Energy Certificate (RECs) resulting from the solar production. Kearsarge makes lease payments to the landowner for the use of the land.

Innovative Approaches

- **Shared land use.** Animals from nearby farms graze on the land where the solar panels are sited - providing community benefits.
- **No-cost Subscriptions.** The Solar for All provides no-cost subscriptions to income-qualified subscribers reducing barriers to access the program.



Lessons Learned

- According to surveys, the qualification process was burdensome and/or time-consuming. Yet the demand was such that the Kearsarge Johnstown project is currently fully subscribed. A simplified application process is being considered by NYSERDA which could further lower barriers to access.



Photo Credit: Kearsarge Energy, photo by Dr. Judy St. Legere, Dutch Barn Farm

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