

Abstract #: 178

Author Name: Jill Cliburn

Author Company: Cliburn and Associates, LLC

Second Author's Name:

Abstract Title: A Prosperous Marriage? A Program Design That Combines Community Solar and Demand Response

Abstract Text:

The market for community solar has grown from a handful of projects nationwide in 2010 to more than 50 last year. Increasingly, community solar programs sell out long before they meet customer demand; the market is predicted to add 500 MW by 2017. By contrast, utilities promoting demand response have generated far less excitement—and occasional resistance. Yet, as solar penetration increases, new DR strategies (and related storage) could play an important role in balancing the grid. Test programs have shown measures, from fast-response equipment cycling to pre-cooling and storage water heaters, can address most aspects of solar variability cost-effectively. By marrying the attractions of community solar with the value of DR/storage, communities could participate not only in adding more solar, but also in demonstrating a more complete locally-based, low carbon solution. This presentation draws on findings of a US DOE SunShot-funded project, helping design value-added community solar programs for SMUD and Public Service of New Mexico, through a learning community that also includes stakeholders and utilities in other states. Market research has explored whether public likability of community solar can, in effect, “recommend” DR as a companion measure; what non-economic benefits and motivations increase participation in a combined program; what kind of feedback (besides incentives) boosts results? Also, we explore practical challenges in cross-departmental program design and messaging around this potentially complex offer, and we report on compelling story lines that have—at least in a few cases so far—shown promise for this unlikely marriage of energy strategies.