

Neighborhood Solarize Programs

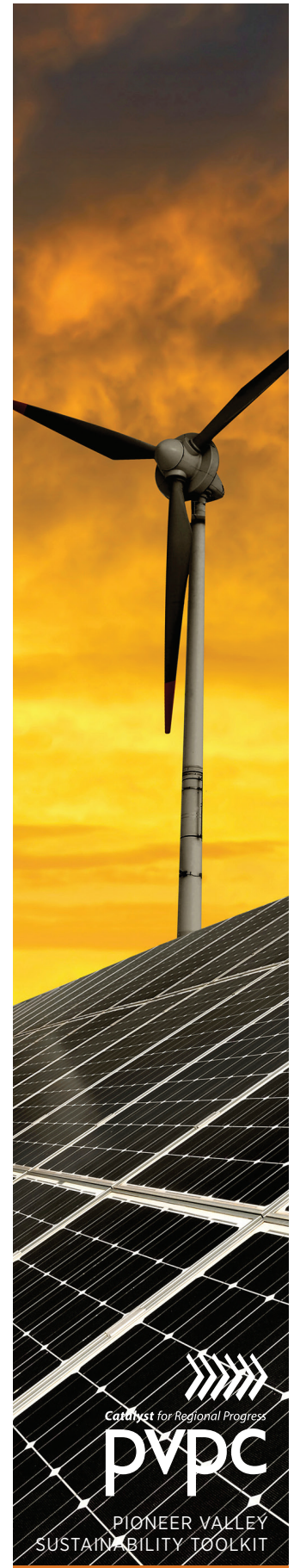
PURPOSE

Reduce the start-up costs of installing solar energy systems for residents and small businesses by organizing group purchases to achieve bulk purchase discount pricing.

HOW IT WORKS

As members of Sam’s Club and Costco know: buying in bulk saves money. The same is true for installing solar energy systems on your home or business. One important tool for achieving this kind of group purchasing discount power for solar energy is group purchase discount, sometimes known as “solarize,” programs. A solarize program encourages property owners to sign up to have a pre-qualified solar vendor install a solar energy system on their building. And the more property owners who sign up, the greater the discount the vendor agrees to give—which can be as much as 20% less than the cost of individual installation.

Solar group purchase discount programs depend on a strong public education and outreach effort to reach potential customers. With numerous state and federal financial and tax incentives available, property owners need time to ask questions and work the numbers to understand how to get the best deal. Programs may focus on a single neighborhood, or on a large city or region. The key is to make the outreach fun! By talking with neighbors and other property owners to learn about the potential benefits of solar energy, people also make social connections within their community.

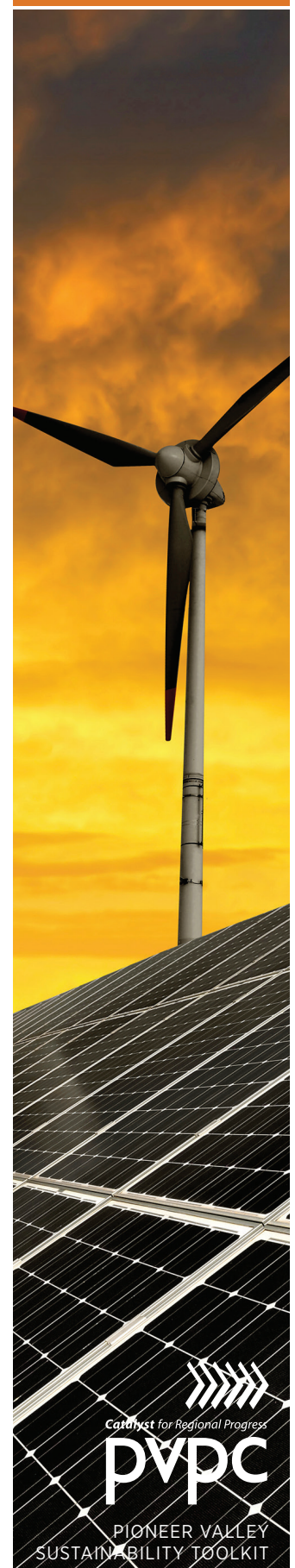


EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL "SOLARIZE" PROGRAMS

Solarize Mass, Massachusetts

The Solarize Mass program of the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center is one of the most successful solar energy group purchase programs in the country. Solarize Mass kicked off in 2011, and as of 2014 has yielded nearly 1,000 new solar energy systems being installed on homes and businesses in 25 communities.

The Solarize Mass program depends on local grassroots outreach that is led by local volunteers. It features a tiered pricing structure that increases the savings as more home and business owners in a community sign up. This further encourages neighbor-to-neighbor outreach to increase sign-ups. Property owners can choose to own their own system, or opt for a power-purchase agreement arrangement that requires little or no up-front costs (the installer owns the panels and installment payments are paid from the revenue that they generate by feeding electricity back into the grid).



Portland, Oregon

Oregon has also been a “Solarize” leader, supporting group purchase discount programs throughout the state. Solar Oregon assists through solar education outreach and data management.

In the City of Portland, the “Solarize Portland” program run by several Portland neighborhood associations. Photovoltaic systems are purchased in bulk, and are then installed by a single solar contractor to reduce costs. The program’s first round achieved 120 new residential installations in just six months. This unexpected success spurred more projects in other neighborhoods of Portland and other Oregon cities.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

SOLARIZE MASS:

<http://www.masscec.com/solarizemass>

SOLAR OREGON:

<http://solaroregon.org/residential-solar/solarize-communities>

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

413-781-6045

60 Congress Street, Floor 1

Springfield, MA 01104-3419

www.pvpc.org

