

# Community solar could provide an economic path forward

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A new report released by the UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) gives a positive outlook for proponents of community solar initiatives.

Community [solar projects](#) are large-scale facilities that individuals can buy into. They are an alternative to placing panels on houses and offer

opportunities for low-income and non-homeowners to purchase their energy from [renewable sources](#). In addition, people who buy into community solar can receive credit on electric bills for their share of power produced.

"In alignment with the governor's plan for 50 percent renewable energy by 2030, this report illustrates that community solar has the potential to be a highly beneficial addition to the sustainable energy industry in New Mexico," said Rose Rohrer, BBER Research Scientist.

Local businesses can also benefit by becoming "anchor" customers—purchasing larger portions of the solar facilities and offsetting costs to individual investors.

"Future community solar projects could be beneficial to the local economy, particularly during the [construction phase](#), due to a large demand for labor," said BBER Research Scientist Omar Solis. "The potential benefits of these types of facilities will depend on future legislative actions to govern state-wide allowable limits for solar power generation."

The report outlines potential economic and [fiscal impacts](#) of implementing community solar projects in New Mexico, showing the facilities could substantially contribute to New Mexico's economy in several ways.

## **Opportunities for workers**

Community solar projects could create opportunities for workers affected by the closure of energy plants reliant on fossil fuels. In addition to the environmental benefits associated with [renewable energy](#), these projects can potentially provide [economic benefits](#) through jobs creation and the expansion of fiscal revenues.

## Opportunities for sustained revenues

Community solar installations would bring both one-time and sustained revenues into the state. The impact analysis demonstrates that economic changes resulting from the construction and operations phases of the installation of a single 2 MW solar array in the state of New Mexico can potentially support 12 jobs, provide \$463,000 in labor income, and create \$1.64 million in industrial output. Effects generated through the construction and operation of a 5 MW facility in the state suggest that a total of 38 jobs are created, with \$1.47 million in labor income and \$5.17 million in output.

## Opportunities for land use

Community solar projects provide lease dollars for fallow lands. Many renewable installations require open, unobstructed space to maximize energy production; however, as community solar installations are smaller in scale, their development could provide benefits to landowners who might be overlooked in larger utility projects.

**More information:** The report is available online:  
[lber.unm.edu/media/publication...ar\\_Impact\\_Report.pdf](https://www.lber.unm.edu/media/publication...ar_Impact_Report.pdf)

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