

Pioneer Electric Cooperative
COMMUNITY  SOLAR

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the community solar program?

The program was created to provide residential members with an alternative to rooftop solar. It offers an option for convenient, economic solar participation for both renters and homeowners who may have inadequate solar irradiance on their roof (too much shade), or those who do not want the ownership hassles associated with rooftop solar such as roof damage and ongoing maintenance costs.

The Community Solar program is a part of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation's renewable energy rider and it's administered on a retail level by Sunflower's member cooperatives. Pioneer is a member-owner of Sunflower and Sunflower supplies Pioneer with wholesale power generation and transmission services.

Q: How does the community solar program work?

Sunflower generates solar energy at its Johnson Corner solar facility near Johnson City in Stanton County, Kansas. Sunflower transmits wholesale energy from its Johnson Corner solar facility to Pioneer via the electric grid. Pioneer then delivers energy to its members through the electric distribution system.

Residential members of Pioneer can choose to subscribe to the Community Solar program at a cost of \$5/share per month. Community Solar subscriptions will be in addition to members' monthly energy bills. One share is equivalent to 125 kWh or two solar panels. In return, on your monthly electric bill, your energy costs will reflect the performance of your subscribed number of solar shares. This is based on the amount of power generated by Johnson Corner Solar and the market revenues from the power sold into the energy market, each month.

Q: What are the benefits of the program?

Participating in a community solar program has several advantages over installing rooftop solar:

- If you rent or have homeowner agreements that prevent the installation of rooftop solar, participating in community solar may be an option. If your home is too shaded or your roof isn't strong enough to support a solar array, you can participate in community solar. If you can't afford an upfront investment in a solar array, you may be able to afford participation in a community solar unit.
- Johnson Corner Solar is a 20 MW facility and about 2,000 times bigger than a typical residential rooftop solar installation. The utility-scale size of Johnson Corner provides a significantly lower price for solar energy compared to solar energy from rooftop installations because Community Solar systems have the advantage of economies of scale, meaning that costs decrease as the size of the system increases. The costs can also be spread out amongst many participants. That makes a portion of a large solar system less expensive than a comparable residential rooftop system.
- The Johnson Corner Solar project also has tracking motors that adjust the angle of the solar panels throughout the day to maintain maximum exposure to the sun. This provides maximum utilization of solar irradiance with no impacts from shading from trees or adjacent buildings.
- Participating in Community Solar allows subscribers to avoid the upfront cost, hassle, and maintenance of rooftop solar.
- If a subscriber moves to a new house within Pioneer's service territory, their subscription may transfer to their new service. The subscription may need to be adjusted based upon the past year's usage of their new home.

Q: How do I sign up?

Pioneer members can subscribe on a first-come, first-served basis beginning June 1, 2023. Subscriptions will be applied to accounts starting in July of 2023 and will be reflected on bills starting in August 2023. Subscriptions implemented after that time will be applied at the start of the next billing period. Members having an interest in participating can sign up by completing the Pioneer Community Solar Share Agreement.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of shares in which I can subscribe?

Participation is limited to a member's 12-month average electric consumption. For example, if a member's 12-month average consumption is 1,000 kWh, the member can subscribe to no more than eight shares.

Q: Are there fees associated with a Community Solar subscription?

There is no application, administration, or other fees to participate in the Community Solar program.

Q: Will I be locked into my subscription for a certain amount of time or is it on a month-by-month basis?

Once enrolled in Pioneer's Community Solar program, you will be subscribed until you terminate the subscription. Your subscription and solar adjustment will be added to your electric bill every month to reflect your participation in the program.

Q: Can I change the number of shares I've subscribed to?

Members may lower or raise the number of shares subscribed up to two times within a 12-month period. Member will be required to follow and agree to the terms and conditions expressed within the Community Solar Share Amendment Form (available from a customer service representative). Amendment of subscriptions will still be subject to share availability and maximum participation allotments.

Q: What happens if all the available shares sell out?

Shares are subscribed on a first-come, first-served basis and if Pioneer's available shares sell out, you have the option of being placed on a waiting list to be contacted if/when additional shares become available.

Q: Can I terminate my subscription at any time?

Members can decide to unsubscribe from the Community Solar program at any time, but you must wait one year before you can subscribe to the program again. Pioneer cannot guarantee there will be shares available if you decide to rejoin the program at a later date.

Q: Will I save money under this program?

While we project members will save money under the Community Solar program, we can't guarantee savings as the solar adjustment is based on the revenues the solar facility receives in the Southwest Power Pool Integrated Market. When market prices are high, participants may save money. When market prices are low, participants may pay a premium.

Q: Will Community Solar offset my energy use?

Community Solar does not directly offset a subscribers energy use. Instead, you pay a subscription for each share, and receive an adjustment each month based on the performance of the facility. The net of the participation fee and the market revenue adjustment offset your electric bill.

Q: How will I be billed for the subscription?

Your subscription will be added to your monthly electric bill. There will be two additional line items added. The first line item will be a \$5 subscription for EACH share purchased (listed as Community Solar Sub. - JC on bills). The second line item will be the solar adjustment (listed as Community Solar Adj - JC on bills), which is based on the monthly performance of Johnson Corner Solar and the market revenues derived from the power sold into the energy market.

Q: How is the monthly energy production attributed to a subscriber's account calculated?

The monthly adjustment (\$/kWh) is calculated by taking the total revenue Johnson Corner solar facility receives from selling solar energy into the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) Integrated Market for that month, divided by the total electric output from the facility during the month.

Q: What if I move to a new home?

If you move to a new home in Pioneer's service territory, you can take your shares with you. If you move outside of the service territory, you will no longer be able to participate in the program and will have to give up your shares unless you move to another Sunflower member cooperative. In that case, your shares can be transferred if that cooperative still has shares available.

Q: Do I actually own solar panels if I participate in this program?

Participants in the Community Solar program do not actually own any solar panels. You are buying a monthly subscription to the energy from the solar farm.

Q: Will the energy I receive at my house come directly from the solar facility?

Due to the way electricity is transmitted, the electricity generated from the solar facility goes directly to the regional electric grid. The energy delivered to your home is from various power generation resources. However, your participation in the community solar program allows you to receive the benefits of the revenues received by the community solar program and support the production of solar energy in Kansas.

Q: How does Community Solar compare to owning a rooftop solar system?

When you choose to install a solar system on your own roof, you are responsible for deciding what system to purchase, choosing a reputable contractor, and more. It's a big investment, requiring significant time for researching, asking questions, obtaining multiple bids, and reviewing contracts. To cover the cost of purchasing a solar system, you can pay cash or obtain a loan. This system will be yours, and you'll reap the benefits of the power generated from the system, but since you are the owner of the system, you will also be responsible for paying up front for the components, installation, and connectivity costs. You'll also be responsible for all maintenance and repair costs over the life of the system, and bear the liability for the system. Some installers offer service and maintenance contracts, but many do not.

As a rooftop solar system owner, you can take advantage of federal, state, and local incentives. By subscribing to Community Solar, you will not be responsible for owning, operating, or maintaining any solar equipment. This is a good choice for members who logistically are not able to install rooftop solar, or simply do not want to install their own solar system.

Q: Can I be removed from the program if I am late or don't pay my electric bill?

Participation in the Community Solar Program will require the member to maintain good standing with their cooperative. Disconnection of service due to non-payment or three late payments within a year will result in the termination of the community solar contract. Members that leave the program, either voluntarily or through disconnection, cannot subscribe to the program again for one year.

Q: Will I still have to pay a solar subscription or will I receive an adjustment if Johnson Solar Farm is unable to generate power?

In the event the solar farm is unavailable due to an event outside of the control of Pioneer Electric or Sunflower, the monthly subscription charge and Renewable Energy Adjustment will not be applied to bills until the facility is returned to full operation. Johnson Corner may also be subject to physical damage, equipment failure and other events that may degrade or limit its output. Pioneer Electric will be under no obligation to issue any credit or refund to the member based on the efficiency or output of the Johnson Corner Solar Farm.

Additional Resources:

Renewable Self-Generation



Solar Calculator



Community Solar



Give us a call!: (620) 356-1211 or 1-800-794-9302
www.pioneerelectric.coop