

PROGRAM OFFERING FOR LEWIS COUNTY

COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION

October 28, 2021



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OVERVIEW

There are currently many communities in New York State taking advantage of an innovative opportunity to enable 100% renewable energy for competitive electricity supply rates and community solar savings. Joule Community Power is a program administrator, or manager, for programs such as these. As administrator, Joule also collaborates with local partners who are focused on outreach and engagement within municipalities. Alexia Lamb is a dedicated CCA Sales & Operations Associate for New York who will work with Joule to connect with communities and invite more into these auspicious new programs.

Community Choice programs optimize a statewide initiative called Community Choice Aggregation, which is overseen by the New York State Public Service Commission and promoted by the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation climate programs. Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) is a growing movement in the state, transitioning communities further into renewable energy support. CCA in New York began with a program enacted in Westchester in 2016. Today, two thirds of Westchester communities participate in a similar program named Westchester Power. Joule Community Power is the administrator for five other Community Choice Aggregations, serving 700,000 customers in 35 municipalities throughout the state.

Launched the same year that CCA was enabled in New York, NYSEDA's Clean Energy Communities program began encouraging local governments to make energy smart decisions for their residents. In return, incentives such as grants can now be awarded for a range of high-impact clean energy actions. There are several municipalities in Lewis County who are taking paramount steps in this program, earning hundreds of points through various efforts already.

This program has identified CCA initiation among the priority actions a community can take on climate change. An appropriately implemented CCA program awards communities 1,500 points with an additional 500 available when a community solar element is included. Given that most NYSEDA grants start at 3,000 points, initiation of a comprehensive Community Power program would further propel the Lewis County communities towards their goals and access to grants.

In addition, Joule aggregations under the Community Power moniker already comprise an integrated program that includes Community Choice Solar, through which residents and small businesses can support local sources of renewable energy while receiving **guaranteed savings** on their utility bills. Through this dual program, communities can make a measurable difference in reducing their carbon footprint.

There are currently other communities in your region who are considering the benefits of launching their own CCA program. Joule and Alexia Lamb anticipate further aggregating these motivated municipalities to implement a Community Choice program tailored to meet the needs of all.

BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The benefits of Community Power programs include:

- 100% renewable energy
- Low, fixed rates for electricity
- Stronger consumer protection

- More choice for consumers
- Guaranteed cost savings by subscribing to a local solar farm

COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION: YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR CHOICE

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) is a collaborative municipal electricity supply program. Municipalities create a large buying group through which residents and small businesses can purchase renewably generated electricity at competitive rates and enjoy the established savings associated with community solar.

Through CCA programs, the Public Service Commission has empowered municipalities to replace the default electric supply for homes and small businesses within the municipal jurisdiction. CCA with renewable energy can help to gradually displace power plants powered largely by fossil fuels with clean energy sources: currently hydropower and wind power, primarily from upstate New York.

The typical utility company remains responsible for energy delivery, billing, and maintenance/repair, making a simple transition for customers. However, through Community Choice programs, municipalities take back control from the State so that they can make a local choice about what's best for their own communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Community Power programs provide 100% renewable energy, sourced within New York State. The program leverages the buying power of the group to offer clean energy at low fixed rates.

In response to climate change, New York State has set ambitious goals to accelerate the transition to cleaner energy and bring about more equitable consumer access to renewables. Community Power programs make it possible for communities to meet the state's clean energy goals for electricity by making renewable energy more affordable.

COMPETITIVE RATES

Community Power programs are able to offer a guaranteed electricity rate that is lower than the average historical price through the utility.

Typically, two rates are offered through Community Power programs. While only one of the rates is offered in each municipality as the default energy source, consumers may choose either rate at any time.

The renewable energy rate offered through the programs is typically 60 to 70 percent of the rate that individual customers could receive for a comparable product if they were shopping for electricity supply on their own. In addition to the rates offered through CCA, a guaranteed discount on electric bills is offered through the Community Choice Solar program. See more on this below.

STRONGER CONSUMER PROTECTION

Community Choice Aggregation programs protect consumers from predatory practices by energy suppliers:

- No contracts for individual consumers
- No exit fees
- Guaranteed rates for the life of the program
- Community Solar discount for up to twenty-five years
- Locally staffed call center and dedicated community coordinator for the life of the program

FUNDING FOR MUNICIPALITIES

Participation in CCA and Community Solar programs is rewarded with points toward funding for communities through two NYS climate programs: Climate Smart Communities and Clean Energy Communities.

More information is available at the following links:

<https://www.nysrerda.ny.gov/all-programs/programs/clean-energy-communities>

<https://climatesmart.ny.gov/>

HOW THE COMMUNITY POWER CCA PROGRAMS WORK

As program administrator, Joule works with participating municipalities and local organizers to identify program priorities and solicit proposals from qualified energy supply companies on behalf of a municipality, their residents and small businesses. The program will only launch when a proposal submitted by a qualified company meets the requirements identified by participating communities in the aggregation.

Community engagement, outreach, education and feedback are a priority throughout the process.

Outreach activities include:

- Information sessions, tabling at local events, presentations to local groups
- Website and social media
- Press releases, articles, interviews, ads, announcements in e-newsletters, fliers and other print materials
- Ongoing program support through call center and group presentations
- Ongoing updates for municipal leaders and the community at large

CCA and Community Choice Solar programs are both “opt-out” programs. Community members can always opt out of either program at any time and at no cost. There are no contracts for customers to sign within the program and no exit fees.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Joule Community Power is the CCA Administrator for many Community Power programs, providing renewable energy throughout the state with corresponding local partnerships like that with Alexia Lamb. Joule does not charge customers nor the municipality for their services. Rather, they collect fees from the

competitively selected electricity suppliers and solar developers. As Program Administrator, Joule is responsible for:

- Program design and implementation plan and coordinating associated Public Service Commission approvals
- Energy procurement: draft, review and manage energy supply bids and contracts
- Regulatory approvals, compliance, and reporting
- Interface with utilities, energy suppliers and local energy project developers
- Public outreach and community education on program benefits and consumer choice
- Public website: Maintain, update, and develop customer portal for website and changes in enrollment
- Consumer assistance regarding energy choices through ongoing call center and community coordinator

COMMUNITY CHOICE SOLAR

Almost 50% of homes are unable to host solar panels. Community solar enables consumers to enjoy the benefits of solar without installing panels on their rooftop, and without any fees. Through the Community Choice Solar program, consumers support the development of one or more local or regional solar projects while benefiting from a guaranteed discount on their electric bill. Current requirements dictate that these solar energy projects be located within the same utility service territory as the customer.

Joule is the **only** CCA Administrator in NYS with State approved plans for Opt-Out Community Solar programs, which allow community solar projects to be integrated into CCA. By combining community electricity supply and community solar, Joule has created a CCA program that saves money for residents, grows the local economy, and helps meet New York State's climate goals. By enrolling residents by default, the program becomes accessible to a broader population.

As is the case with CCA, Opt-Out Community Solar is incentivized through programs such as NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities and DEC's Climate Smart Communities. Therefore, enacting the program would allow further points towards grants.

To encourage communities along the path towards 100% renewable generation, Joule has also established a Giving Back program as a means of directly investing in participating municipalities through the financing of local sustainability projects. Joule can make these Giving Back donations available by reducing the solar farm developers' customer acquisition costs and redirecting some of those funds to the municipalities. By enrolling all eligible customers as subscribers to local solar farms as part of a municipally endorsed community choice aggregation program, Joule's Community Choice solar program reduces the sales and marketing budgets; instead, funds are channeled toward the advancement of the community's sustainability goal.

In addition to these opportunities, the opt-out Community Solar Program supports:

- The development of local renewable energy generation
- Guaranteed savings on entire electric bill
- No rooftop panels required
- No maintenance costs

- No contract for customers
- No sign-up or cancellation fees
- No credit screens
- Simplified billing: Most community solar programs charge through a separate bill, in addition to the utility bill. Through this program, customers have the convenience of paying only the utility bill, which includes the community solar discount.
- Vetted community solar program. As administrator of the program, Joule meticulously oversees the details of each program in order to protect consumers and maximize benefits.

As the CCA Program Administrator, Joule works to select a community solar provider on behalf of each community. Residents and small businesses are then automatically allocated a share of a solar farm that feeds clean solar energy into the local utility grid. Bill credits (derived from NYS incentives for clean energy generation) are then applied to participants' electricity bills for the energy produced by their share of the solar farm.

NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

In order to participate, The Lewis municipalities would first approve a CCA local law (template and examples can be provided). This does not commit the town or village to implementation, but rather it authorizes the municipality to determine default energy offerings. Next, the municipality would need to choose Joule as the CCA Program Administrator. Similarly, this does not commit them; it simply authorizes Joule to collect data and present contract options. Note: The municipality does not pay Joule for any services.

After that, the timeline would be as follows:

Initial 60-day education campaign

- Community education meetings and events (including virtually when appropriate)
- Regular coverage in local media
- Social media platform management
- Materials for municipal website

30-day opt-out period

- All eligible customers receive letter in mail alerting them of the program
- Customers can contact the Joule staffed call center for questions, concerns, and/or assistance with opting out if need be

Continual education and program support:

- Call center for help throughout the launch process and beyond
- Additional education meetings and events (including virtually when appropriate)
- Updates on program success over time

Support from Lewis County is vital throughout the process, as there are many steps to carry out. Some dedication and time are required to address matters such as service agreement approval and approval of education materials for the general public. Though some municipal coordination and collaboration is necessary, the bulk of the work will be carried out by Joule and Alexia Lamb's dedicated teams to make everything as seamless as possible and to minimize the level of effort required by municipal staff.

ABOUT JOULE COMMUNITY POWER

Joule is a privately-owned corporation specializing in market representation as well as products and services in the areas of clean energy, efficiency, and demand management. Joule partners with municipalities to develop community-scale clean energy solutions, empowering communities to achieve aggressive clean energy and energy reduction targets. Joule Assets and its principals have been recognized as pioneers in demand-side and renewable markets throughout the U.S. and Europe. Furthermore, they sit on several New York State working groups convened by the Public Service Commission.

Joule is a consistent leader in the development and advancement of community energy policy, and an experienced CCA Administrator in New York State. Joule's Public Service Commission-approved Implementation Plan and Data Protection Plan is the only such plan to include the integration of local clean energy resources and a direct procurement of 100% New York State renewable energy default supply option for CCA customers.

Joule's expertise is in designing and implementing inventive new policy and clean energy solutions. Joule principals pioneered Westchester Power, the first CCA program in New York State. Joule currently administers five community aggregates. To date, Joule has also generated more than \$150,000 in funds for local community sustainability projects and COVID-19 relief efforts.

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