Policy Brief

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SOLAR FOR ALL ON THE GROUND: IMPLEMENTATION, INNOVATION, AND UNCERTAIN FUTURE



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IEJ translates complex energy challenges into actionable resources and empowers US communities and policymakers to create an equitable clean energy system.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) $7 billion Solar for All program represents the nation's largest ever investment in making clean energy accessible to low-income and disadvantaged communities across the U.S. However, fifteen months after launch, most of the 60 grantees remain in planning phases rather than active deployment, revealing a critical gap between program ambitions and implementation realities.

Our analysis of grantee interviews and program data reveals that federal policy uncertainty is the primary barrier to deployment, with administrative complexity and community trust-building emerging as secondary challenges. This uncertainty has intensified dramatically with the passage of the Reconciliation Law (P.L. 119-21), commonly referred to as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," in July 2025, which eliminates most clean energy tax credits and creates an existential threat to solar deployment nationwide.

While early successes demonstrate the program's potential—including workforce development achievements and innovative community engagement models—the current federal policy landscape threatens to undermine energy justice goals during a period of rising energy costs and increasing energy burden for vulnerable populations. Additionally, the coordination model led by the Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) demonstrates how dedicated intermediary organizations can scale proven coordination principles to manage unprecedented complexity in federal clean energy programs, offering a replicable framework for future initiatives. Our findings are based on interviews we completed by July 2025.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Solar for All funding disrupted:** After experiencing a prolonged funding freeze early in 2025 that locked grantees out of EPA's funding portal, the program faces further setbacks as the Trump administration sent termination letters to grantees in August 2025, despite funds having been obligated to grantees
- **Federal policy upheaval has escalated from uncertainty to crisis**: The "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" signed July 4, 2025, eliminates the 30 percent residential solar tax credit after December 31, 2025, nearly a decade ahead of the original 2032 schedule, and phases out commercial solar incentives by 2028
- **State program integration accelerates deployment:** Oregon's model of building on existing community solar infrastructure demonstrates faster implementation pathways compared to programs that have to be built from scratch—we recognize that many of the grantees are first-time awardees for solar projects and lack additional program administration infrastructure needed to deploy the program
- **EPA guidance delays:** Critical requirements like "meaningful savings" calculations continue to compound implementation challenges

- **Coordination enables resilience:** Weekly coordination among 50+ grantees, real-time policy interpretation, and crisis adaptation demonstrate the critical value of intermediary organizations for complex federal programs
- **Community trust-building prioritized:** Successful programs prioritize community trust-building through established partnerships with community-based organizations
- **Administrative burden affects smaller organizations:** Federal compliance requirements disproportionately burden smaller community-based organizations (CBOs), unfamiliar with these processes
- **Workforce development shows early promise:** Tribal programs successfully trained and placed workers in solar careers before facing current policy barriers
- **Housing infrastructure creates barriers:** Roof repairs, electrical upgrades, and other prerequisites create additional barriers requiring coordinated funding approaches

I.Introduction and Policy Context

The Energy Burden Crisis: A Persistent Inequality

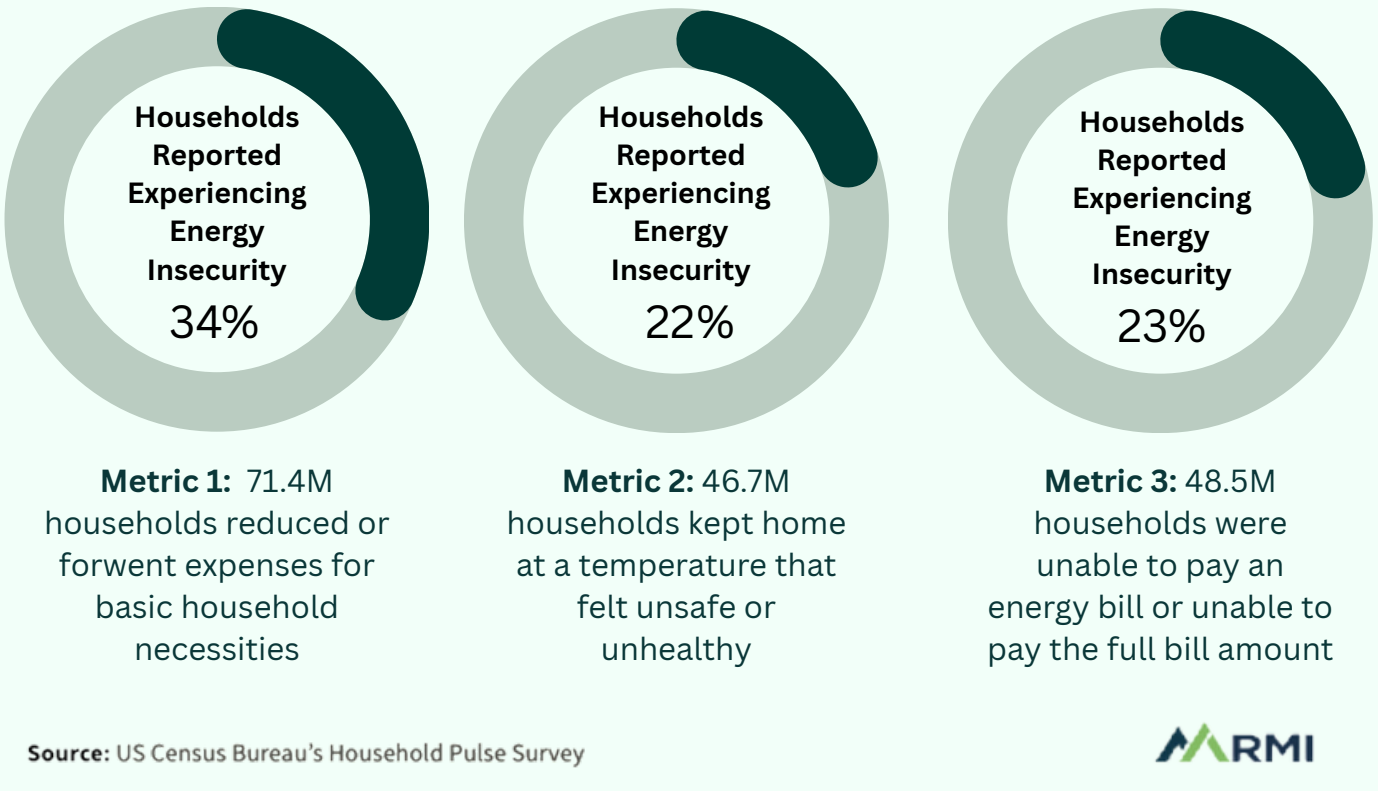
Low-income American households spend 8.6 percent of their income on energy bills—nearly triple the 3 percent spent by higher-income families.[1] This stark disparity reflects a persistent gap in clean energy access that has existed across the country for decades, with some communities experiencing energy burdens as high as 30 percent. While upper and middle-income households are more likely to benefit from solar installations, tax credits, and energy efficiency upgrades, low-income households remain trapped in a cycle of high energy costs and aging, inefficient housing stock.

A comprehensive 2025 national study examining all 64,835 measurable census tracts in the United States found that even when controlling for income levels, majority African American census tracts face significantly higher average energy burdens than other communities.[2] This analysis demonstrates that racial disparities in energy burden persist across income levels, with the effects most pronounced in lower-income communities where African American households in the poorest census tracts pay 7.5 percent of their income on energy compared to 5.7 percent for White households in similar economic circumstances. The study reveals structural factors that compound energy disadvantages for communities of color: African American majority census tracts have homes that are, on average, 21 percent older than those in White majority tracts, indicating less energy-efficient housing stock. Additionally, lower homeownership rates in these communities limit access to energy efficiency programs that typically target property owners, creating what researchers term "intersectional" disadvantages where race, income, and housing characteristics combine to worsen energy burden outcomes.

The geographic distribution of this burden reveals troubling patterns of environmental injustice. Using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), communities identified as disadvantaged often cluster in areas with aging housing stock, limited weatherization, and higher pollution exposure—the same communities that face the highest energy costs have the least access to clean energy solutions. These patterns reflect historical legacies of discriminatory policies, including redlining practices that concentrated African American families in neighborhoods with deteriorating housing infrastructure and limited investment in energy efficiency improvements.[3] These communities frequently lack access to rooftop solar due to credit barriers, low rates of home-ownership, rental housing restrictions, and inadequate roof conditions that necessitate costly repairs before solar installation becomes feasible.

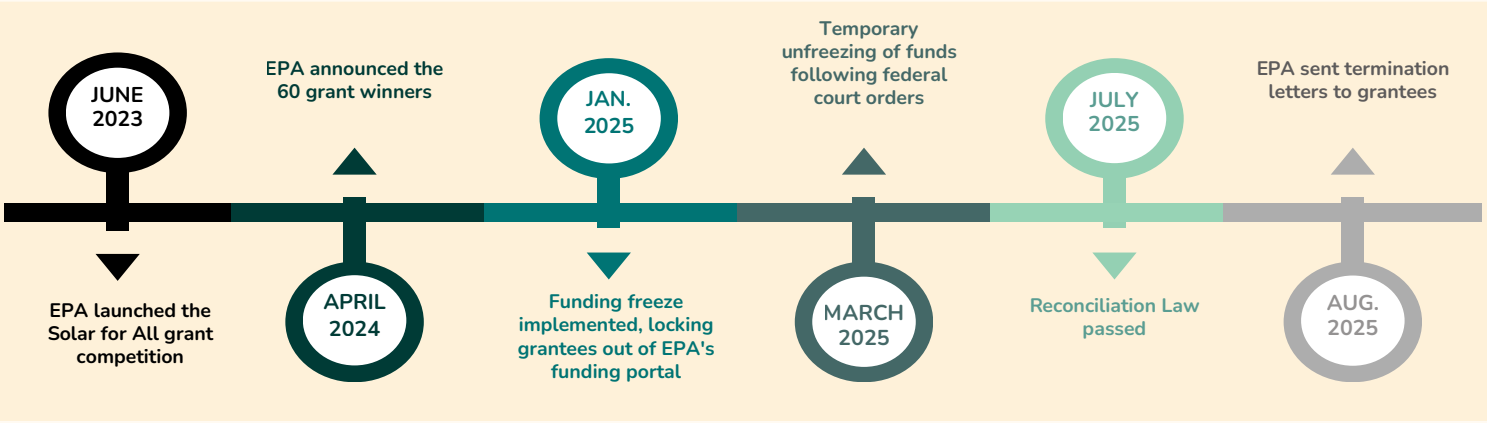
This energy inequality isn't just about monthly bills—it's about families choosing between heating and medicine, students unable to study in adequately lit homes, and businesses struggling to remain viable in their communities (Figure 1). The ripple effects extend to public health, educational outcomes, and economic development, creating compounding disadvantages that perpetuate cycles of poverty and environmental injustice.

Figure 1: Source RMI

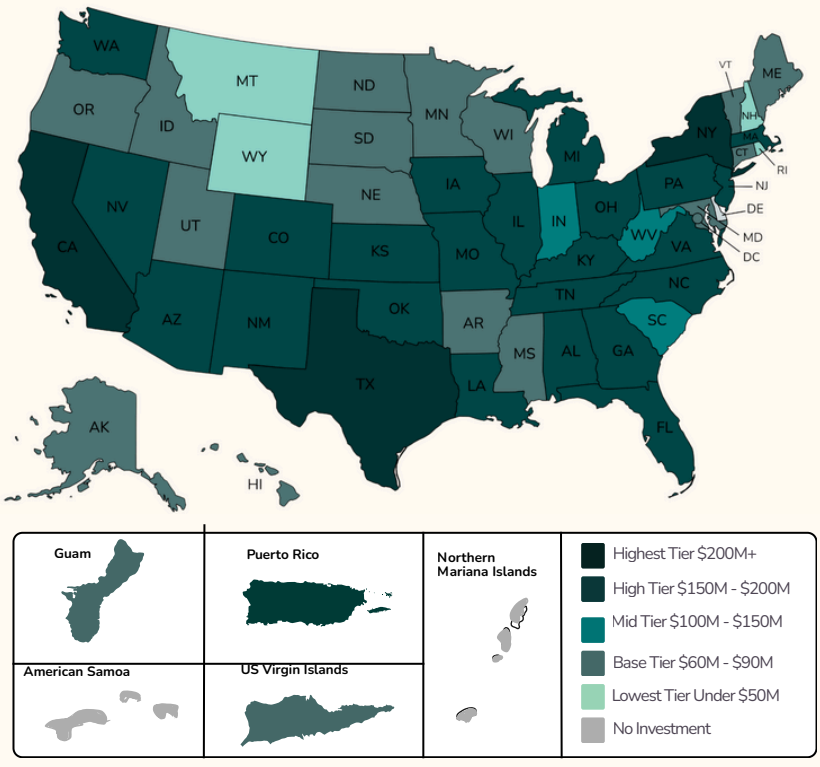


Solar for All: A Historic Investment in Energy Justice

Solar for All emerged from President Biden's landmark Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) with a simple but transformative promise: bring solar power to nearly one million American households that have been historically left out of the clean energy transition. This $7 billion federal program represents the nation's largest-ever investment in making clean energy accessible to low-income and disadvantaged communities, with an ambitious goal that goes far beyond just installing solar panels.



The program's design reflects a comprehensive understanding of energy justice challenges. EPA distributed the $7 billion across 60 diverse recipients: 31 state organizations, 22 nonprofit organizations, 6 tribal organizations, and one municipal government.[4] This strategic mix ensures the program can reach communities through trusted local partners who understand their specific cultural, economic, and geographic contexts. The largest single awards of $249.8 million each went to California Infrastructure Economic Development Bank, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, and GRID Alternatives' multistate affordable housing program, while tribal grants averaged $62.45 million with total tribal allocation of approximately $375 million.[5] (Figure 2)



The expected impact numbers also tell a powerful story:[6]

- **900,000 households** enabled to access distributed solar
- **Deployment of over 4 GW** of distributed solar energy for low-income communities
- **Creation of hundreds of thousands** of good-quality, local jobs
- **Average household savings** of **~$400 annually** on electricity bills
- **Total household savings are** projected at **over $350 million annually**
- **More than $8 billion** in cumulative savings over a standard twenty-five-year solar project life
- Expected **reduction of over 30 million metric tons of CO2 emissions** (equivalent to taking 7 million cars off the road)

2.Federal Policy Impacts and Implementation

The "FY2025 Reconciliation Law" Impact

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed the FY2025 Reconciliation Law, fundamentally altering the clean energy landscape and creating an existential crisis for solar deployment nationwide.[7] The legislation eliminates the 30 percent residential solar tax credit after December 31, 2025, nearly a decade ahead of the original 2032 schedule, while phasing out commercial solar investment and production tax credits for projects beginning construction 60 days after enactment or entering service after 2028.[8]

Immediate Market Impacts - Solar stocks experienced dramatic sell-offs following the legislation's passage, with Sunrun dropping 41 percent, SolarEdge falling 26 percent, and Enphase Energy sliding 18 percent.[9] Industry analysts describe the legislation as creating "a worse than feared scenario" for solar, with clean energy deployment potentially declining by 57 percent to 72 percent over the next decade.[10]

Solar for All Programs at Risk - The legislation's impact extends beyond tax credits to federal programs. Projects cannot claim tax credits if they receive "material assistance" from prohibited foreign entities, creating what analysts call "a de facto repeal of the credit as early as next year" due to supply chain dependencies on Chinese materials for solar panels and battery components.[11]

2.1 Current Program Status

Fifteen months after program launch, Solar for All implementation faces unprecedented challenges. After facing a temporary freeze in the distribution of awards early this year, the money has now been distributed to grantees. Yet, the gutting of the underlying policies that spurred solar deployment will create headwinds for the successful implementation of the program. Our interviews with six diverse grantees—representing state agencies, multistate nonprofits, utilities, and tribal organizations—conducted before the passage of the FY2025 Reconciliation Law reveal that most programs remained in planning and design phases rather than active deployment, even under previous policy uncertainty.

According to EPA requirements, grantees must "develop a program plan that deploys all grant funds within five years of receiving the award, including up to one year of program planning." EPA anticipated that awardees would finalize contracts in summer 2024 and begin substantial community outreach in fall and winter 2024, with existing programs able to deploy funds upon contract finalization. However, the funding freeze and federal policy uncertainty throughout 2025 made it difficult for grantees to move forward with confidence and caused delays in hiring additional staff needed to plan and implement the program.

Solar for All Grantees

Organization	Grantee Type	Geographic Coverage	Target Population	Project Types	Implementation Status	Key Characteristics
Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF)	Multistate Nonprofit	Idaho, Montana, Wyoming	Low-income, tribal, and disadvantaged communities	Rooftop solar, community solar	Planning and design phase	Rural focus; utility coordination emphasis
People's Solar Energy Fund (PSEF)	Nonprofit	Multiple states (Coalition model)	Low-income households, CBOs	Community solar, financing innovation	Supporting planning/design phase	Financial innovation focus; CBO support
GRID Alternatives	Multistate Nonprofit	Nationwide	Affordable housing, Low-income households	Rooftop solar, affordable/public housing, workforce development, community solar	Early design phase	Largest award; affordable housing specialist
Energy Trust of Oregon	Nonprofit	State-wide	Low-income households	Community solar, rooftop solar, affordable/public housing, workforce development	Planning with stakeholder engagement	State integration model; existing program infrastructure
Massachusetts Solar for All Coalition	State-led Coalition	State-wide	Low-income and disadvantaged communities	Community solar, rooftop solar, affordable/public housing, workforce development	Launch planned late summer 2025	Community engagement innovation
Indigenized Energy	Tribal Nonprofit	Coalition of 14 tribal communities (Midwest and Plains)	Tribal communities	Rooftop solar, workforce development	Most advanced - 2 installations complete, with planned installs on 12 other reservations	Early implementation success; cultural integration

Our interviews, conducted before the federal policy upheaval, revealed universal concern about policy uncertainty among all grantees. This concern proved to be well-founded as federal policy uncertainty escalated from challenge to existential crisis:

- **Bonneville Environmental Foundation -** "Federal uncertainty caused delayed hiring" and program was "impacted by freezing of funds"
- **People's Solar Energy Fund -** Federal uncertainty on funding and program status created administrative barriers
- **GRID Alternatives -** Policy uncertainty led to paused payments, requiring re-budgeting due to tax credit changes
- **Energy Trust of Oregon -** Federal funding freeze described as "a huge challenge"
- **Indigenized Energy -** Federal funding freeze created "fear around moving forward with contracts"

Beyond federal uncertainty, grantees face consistent challenges that compound deployment delays:

- **EPA Guidance Delays -** Critical program requirements lack definitive guidance, creating implementation paralysis. As one grantee noted: "EPA guidance has been slow to be developed, and they're figuring it out a couple steps ahead of us... oftentimes, we're asking questions that they haven't had time yet to consider." The lack of clear "meaningful savings" calculation guidance particularly affects community solar programs operating within utility frameworks, as programs need to demonstrate specific savings thresholds to qualify for federal support but cannot finalize program designs without clear metrics.
- **Administrative Complexity -** Federal program requirements create disproportionate burdens for smaller community-based organizations. PSEF's experience highlights this challenge: "getting people to the baseline... keeping paperwork that they wouldn't normally need to keep... most people don't have to do these checks." While the IRA included capacity-building grants to help organizations navigate federal compliance requirements like Davis-Bacon and Build America Buy America, many grantees still struggle with the learning curve. This challenge particularly affects states standing up completely new programs or organizations without existing federal grant networks, requiring significant lead time for new hires or CBOs to digest complex legislation and implement programs.
- **Contractor Network Development -** Qualified contractors face dual administrative burdens—they already meet high state/industry standards but must invest significant additional resources for parallel federal compliance, potentially deterring participation despite technical qualifications. Energy Trust of Oregon's Trade Ally Network maintains over 1,900 contractors with rigorous standards that exceed basic building codes, while GRID Alternatives has trained 1,700+ individuals through comprehensive programs.[12,13,14] However, federal Solar for All programs require these qualified contractors to navigate additional Davis-Bacon compliance procedures, with one developer estimating $1.25 million in first-year administrative costs plus $294 per project.
- **Grid Interconnection Issues -** Multiple programs cited utility interconnection as a major barrier, requiring coordination between developers and utility interconnection teams that often lack standardized processes. Lengthy wait times for interconnection approvals can slow down project deployment as well.
- **Community Outreach Complexity -** Breaking through historical distrust of solar programs and government initiatives requires sustained relationship-building that conflicts with federal timeline expectations.

Federal Policy Shift Impacts - The elimination of residential solar tax credits creates a December 31, 2025 deadline for any residential installations to capture the 30 percent federal credit. This compressed timeline, combined with ongoing funding freezes, creates a near-impossible implementation scenario for most Solar for All programs still in planning phases. However, the August 2025 attempt to terminate the program has eliminated access to federal funds entirely, with the EPA citing the FY2025 Reconciliation Law as justification, despite legal challenges arguing that the termination violates existing contractual obligations. Legal experts challenge EPA's authority to rescind already obligated contracts, citing potential breach-of-contract liability. This compressed timeline, combined with the attempt to completely terminate the program, leaves 900,000 households without promised access to clean energy.

3.Early Implementation Successes

Pioneering Tribal Leadership

Even amid the current federal crisis, Solar for All has begun demonstrating its transformative potential through early success stories that provide blueprints for resilience. In January 2025, the nonprofit Indigenized Energy announced a groundbreaking achievement: the Chippewa Cree Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe completed the nation's first Solar for All installations, delivering approximately 8 kW of clean, low-cost power to participating homes on tribal lands.[15]

This early success represents more than just kilowatts installed—it demonstrates how community-centered approaches can overcome systemic barriers. Indigenized Energy's achievement extends beyond infrastructure to workforce development, successfully training 6 tribal members who were subsequently hired by Freedom Forever, a major solar installation company. These workers are now installing projects all over the country while maintaining connections to their home communities, creating a model for sustainable career pathways that keep benefits within tribal communities.

Key Success Factors from Tribal Implementation:

- **Cultural Integration -** Incorporating traditional ceremonies and practices into project timelines, with breaking ground ceremonies that honor tribal values while embracing clean energy innovation
- **Energy Sovereignty Alignment -** As solar developments are seen as an advancement of tribal self-determination rather than external assistance, clean energy is aligned with broader goals of community independence
- **Grassroots Engagement -** Direct participation in tribal meetings and effective use of tribal Facebook pages for recruitment, demonstrating the power of culturally appropriate communication strategies and cocreation with tribal communities
- **Long-term Vision -** Focus on developing tribal renewable energy departments rather than one-time installations, ensuring sustained community capacity and ownership

3.1 State-Level Innovation and Partnership Models

Oregon's Integration of Community Solar - Energy Trust of Oregon demonstrates how strategic integration with existing infrastructure can accelerate deployment even under crisis conditions. Their coalition model leverages Oregon's established community solar program with 50 percent low-income participation requirements, while integrating the existing Trade Ally Network (TAN) to provide immediate quality control, installer training, and consumer protections. This approach eliminates typical startup delays by building on established stakeholder relationships and proven program frameworks.

Massachusetts' Comprehensive Approach - The Massachusetts Solar for All Coalition exemplifies sophisticated community engagement through its innovative "Education and Outreach Grants" program, which directly funds municipalities and community-based organizations to conduct local informational campaigns. This strategy recognizes that trusted messengers are essential for overcoming historical skepticism and builds sustainable community partnerships that extend beyond specific funding cycles.

PSEF's Financial Innovation - People's Solar Energy Fund has developed crucial alternative financing mechanisms—including predevelopment loans, bridge loans, member developer lines of credit, and construction loans—that become even more critical as traditional federal support mechanisms face uncertainty. Their focus on making federal compliance accessible to community-based organizations through "plain language compliance checklists" addresses a crucial gap in program implementation capacity.

3.2 Workforce Development Achievements

The most tangible early benefits appear in workforce development. Indigenized Energy's success in training and placing six tribal members with Freedom Forever demonstrates the program's potential for career pathway creation. While workforce development numbers may appear limited, these represent significant community-centered achievements that include local hiring, cultural integration, and career pathway development that previous programs did not emphasize or integrate. These workers are now "travelling the nation and gaining skills," with Indigenized Energy maintaining contact to provide opportunities for return to tribal communities.

Massachusetts leverages existing workforce infrastructure through MassCEC's Equity Workforce Program, which includes over 100 active grant organizations and 200+ partner organizations. Their four-pillar approach encompasses career pathway training, career awareness and exploration, support to disadvantaged business enterprises, and expanded access to high-quality solar jobs within LIDACs.

Oregon's approach demonstrates how existing workforce infrastructure can accelerate Solar for All implementation. The state's coalition integrates with Energy Trust of Oregon's established Trade Ally Network (TAN), which connects customers to over 1,900 qualified contractors and allied professionals. This network provides ongoing training and support to licensed and insured contractors well-versed in energy programs and standards, offering immediate quality control and consumer protections for Solar for All participants. Oregon is actively working to diversify the network by enrolling more businesses owned by people of color, women, veterans, and those certified by Oregon's Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity, directly supporting workforce equity goals central to Solar for All's mission.

3.3 Coordination Through an Intermediary Organization

Our analysis reveals that Solar for All's most significant innovation may not be just its $7 billion investment, but rather the emergence of the CESA as essential coordination infrastructure that enables implementation despite unprecedented federal policy upheaval. CESA is a national, member-supported nonprofit established in 2002 that serves as a bipartisan coalition of state energy agencies. CESA is funded by its members (primarily state agencies), foundations, and the U.S. Department of Energy, maintaining independence while facilitating state-led clean energy initiatives. CESA functions as what we term "missing infrastructure" for federal program success; demonstrating that large-scale federal investments require dedicated intermediary organizations to translate federal resources into implementable state and local programs.

CESA's Comprehensive Support Model - CESA "serves as the connective tissue among its network of over 50 grantees, regardless of CESA membership, ensuring they are well-informed, bringing them together several times per week for discussions, and sharing best practices and resources to support program design and implementation." This represents **unprecedented coordination** for a federal energy program—most provide funding and expect states to figure out implementation alone.

Real-Time Crisis Adaptation - CESA "convenes the Solar for All (SFA) network weekly, biweekly, or monthly, depending on the topic, as requested by the national SFA grantees network"—providing **crisis-responsive coordination** during the current federal policy upheaval that no previous federal program has attempted at this scale.

Translation of Federal Complexity - CESA provides "targeted trainings such as how to use publicly available modeling tools, regulatory and strategic design support, template contracts, RFPs, guidelines, or other program documentation creation"—literally **translating federal requirements into implementable state actions** that would otherwise overwhelm individual grantees.[16]

3.4 Integration of Proven Coordination Principles

CESA's approach builds on coordination models proven successful in other contexts, but integrates them at unprecedented scale and complexity:

Weatherization Assistance Program's 40-Year Success - The Weatherization Assistance Program demonstrates that long-term federal-state coordination works, with "weatherization returns $2.78 in non-energy benefits for every $1.00 invested in the Program." However, WAP operates within **established program parameters** with standardized procedures, unlike Solar for All's **diverse grantee types and rapidly changing policy environment**.

Regional Energy Efficiency Organizations (REEOs) - REEOs demonstrate effective intermediary coordination, "operating at the nexus of federal, state, and local governments" and "uniquely positioned to support their regions' energy goals while convening local actors to achieve state and federal initiatives." However, REEOs focus on **specific sectors and regions**, while CESA coordinates **60 diverse grantees nationally across multiple program types**.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's (ARRA) Decentralized Success - The ARRA proved that "a decentralized delivery system conducted through intergovernmental grants can effectively allocate federal expenditures for promoting innovative activity in energy technology-related fields." However, ARRA was a one-time **stimulus** without the **sustained coordination infrastructure** that CESA provides.

4.Community Partnership and Resilience Strategies

The Foundation of Trust in Energy Justice Work

Successful Solar for All implementation requires deep community trust—a finding that emerged consistently across grantee interviews, regardless of geography or population served. Historical experiences with predatory solar sales, failed government programs, and extractive development patterns have created justified skepticism that programs must actively address through sustained relationship-building and transparent community engagement.
The current federal clawback of funds and mass layoffs in agencies make trust-building even more critical. Communities that have experienced decades of disinvestment and broken promises need assurance that clean energy programs will deliver promised benefits even when federal policies change. This requires moving beyond transactional approaches toward authentic community partnerships that acknowledge historical harms while building toward shared energy justice goals.

4.1 Community-Specific Implementation Insights

Tribal Communities: Sovereignty and Cultural Integration

Indigenized Energy's early success reflects the deep integration of cultural practices with technical deployment. Their approach includes:

- **Community ownership** models that prioritize local/community control
- **Cultural alignment** strategies that integrate clean energy with existing community values and ceremonial practices
- **Grassroots communication** through trusted local networks rather than outside messengers
- **Institution building** that creates permanent capacity rather than one-time or temporary projects

Despite remote location challenges and limited utility support, tribal programs show the highest community engagement rates and most successful workforce development outcomes.

Affordable Housing: Navigating Complex Incentive Structures

Massachusetts provides the most detailed analysis of affordable housing implementation challenges, revealing systemic barriers that extend beyond simple split incentives, when the person who pays for energy improvements (usually the landlord) is different from the person who benefits from lower energy bills (usually the tenant):

- **Utility Allowance Complications -** Solar savings can trigger utility allowance reassessments that eliminate intended benefits for tenants
- **Multiple Funder Coordination -** Affordable housing properties typically involve multiple lenders and funders who must approve solar additions, creating lengthy approval processes
- **Infrastructure Prerequisites -** Many properties need roof repairs, electrical panel upgrades, and other improvements before solar installation is feasible
- **Alternative Benefit Delivery -** When direct savings aren't feasible, programs must develop alternative approaches through tenant services or building improvements

Multistate Programs: Scale vs. Localization

PSEF's Community Power Coalition model and GRID Alternatives' nationwide approach face unique challenges coordinating requirements across multiple state jurisdictions while maintaining community-centered approaches. Their solutions include:

- **Regional hub models** that provide localized support within multistate frameworks
- **Collaborative learning networks** among grantees (facilitated by CESA)
- **Standardized compliance checklists** adapted for local regulatory environments
- **Community advisory boards** that shape program tools and implementation approaches

4.2 Education and Community Engagement

Several grantees have developed innovative approaches to community engagement that offer models for broader replication:

- **Information Accessibility -** PSEF's approach to addressing administrative burden includes creating "resource guides, plain language compliance checklists that are simplified and don't have the Federal jargon that can get really confusing." Their recognition that "just because we have the resources laid out doesn't mean that they're accessible" has led to a comprehensive redesign of outreach materials.
- **Trusted Messenger Networks -** GRID Alternatives emphasizes the "importance of partnering with trusted messengers in communities" and highlights that "there's so much distrust in the energy space." Their strategy leverages existing partner communication networks rather than building parallel outreach systems.
- **Consumer Protection Integration -** Programs emphasize "airtight consumer protections that are particularly protective of lower-income and marginalized consumers" as essential for maintaining community trust.

5.Recommendations for Future Success

While the federal policy upheaval has created challenges for Solar for All, the program's early successes and innovative coordination models demonstrate the resilience of community-centered clean energy initiatives. State and local leadership are uniquely positioned to develop creative solutions with communities and organizations to continue serving low-income households regardless of federal political changes. These recommendations build on demonstrated successes to protect current investments while establishing durable frameworks that can thrive through political transitions and ensure sustained progress toward energy equity for all communities.

Develop Emergency Contingency Funding - States must immediately establish backup funding mechanisms to replace lost federal tax credits. Options may include emergency appropriations, philanthropy, utility ratepayer programs, green banks, Community Development Financial Institutions, or state tax credits. States like California with robust clean energy programs may need to significantly expand existing incentive structures.

Accelerate Deployment Timelines - States with Solar for All programs must compress implementation timelines to capture remaining residential tax credit benefits before December 31, 2025. This requires emergency streamlining of permitting, interconnection, and program approval processes.

Integrate with Existing Programs - Building on established infrastructure can accelerate deployment when time is critically limited. States should immediately leverage existing community solar programs, contractor networks, and utility relationships rather than developing new systems.

Institutionalize Coordination Infrastructure in Federal Programs - Future federal clean energy legislation should include dedicated funding for intermediary coordination organizations as essential program infrastructure, not administrative overhead. CESA's success demonstrates the value of this approach, building on "over a decade of expertise in LMI solar" to assist 40+ states in applying to Solar for All and convening 50+ grantees weekly. Federal programs should replicate this model of pre-implementation relationship building and expertise development to ensure the success of future programs.

6.Conclusion and the Pathway Forward

The current federal crisis threatens to undermine the largest investment in energy justice in American history, but the early successes and innovative partnerships developed through Solar for All provide a foundation for resilience. The August 2025 attempt to terminate the program represents a devastating setback for the 900,000 households that were promised access to affordable clean energy, particularly tribal communities that had achieved breakthrough implementation success despite systemic barriers. We anticipate near-term legal challenges to this decision to improperly terminate the Solar for All program, given that funds were already obligated under signed contracts.

However, grantees are not just waiting for federal resolution. Tribes and organizations are actively seeking philanthropy, short-term funding, and conventional financing to cover delays and gaps in project costs. The Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy has rapidly deployed emergency support, offering grants from $50,000 to $500,000 and loans up to $1 million (convertible to grants if tribes default) to help cover sudden funding gaps. This demonstrates how **state, regional, and local coordination** infrastructure becomes even more critical when federal support vanishes.

Yet energy justice continues to advance beyond any single program or policy—it requires sustained commitment from communities, states, and organizations that recognize the fundamental importance of energy affordability and access. States, regions, and communities that invest in coordination infrastructure now will be positioned to capitalize on future federal opportunities while maintaining progress toward energy equity through political transitions.

The path forward requires acknowledging that energy justice is not just about installing solar panels; it's about reshaping power relationships, building community wealth, and ensuring that clean energy benefits flow to communities that have been systematically excluded from economic opportunity. Solar for All has begun this transformation, and its continuation depends on our collective commitment to making energy justice a reality regardless of federal political conditions.

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