How Can Utility-Scale Solar Development Benefit Rural Communities?

Hyon K. Rah M.Arch, M.Sc., LEED AP, ENV SP, EcoDistrict AP

Where are

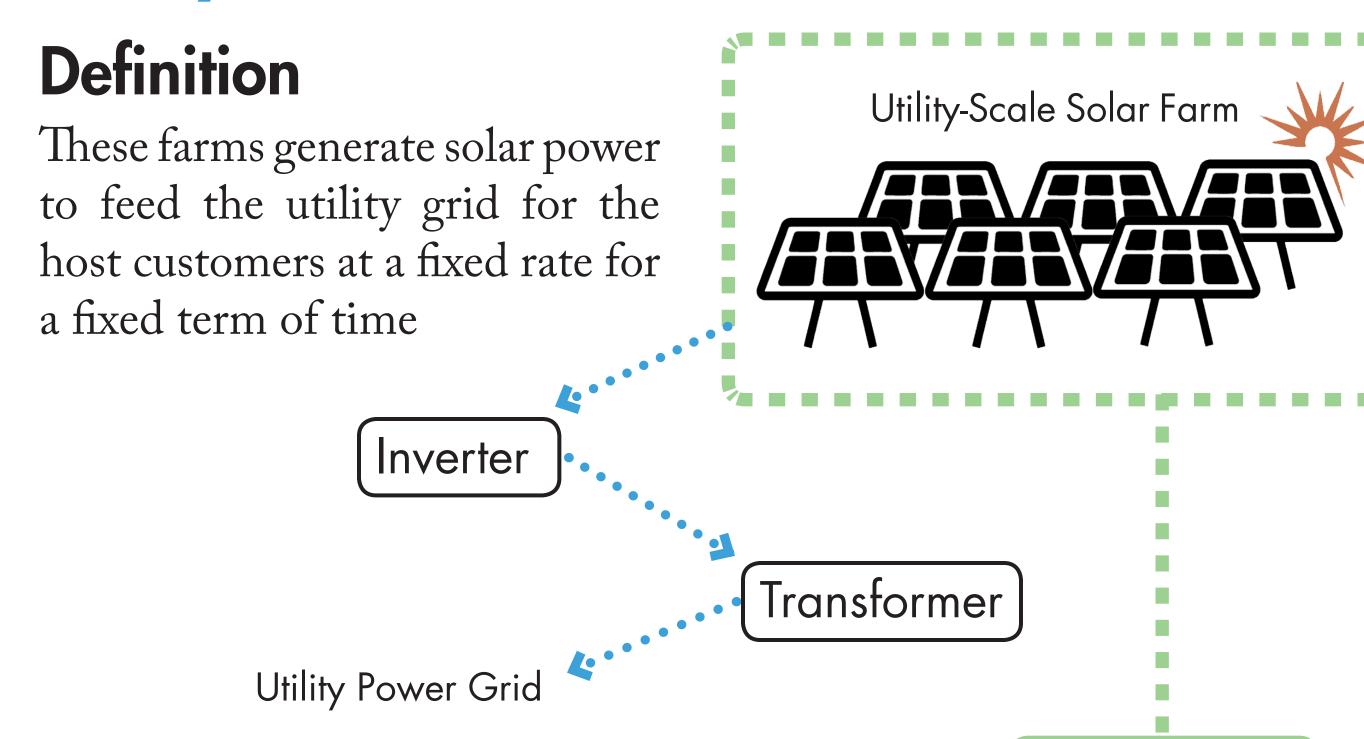
they located?

RAH SOLUTIONS A Woman Owned Small Business (WOSB)

Principal & Founder, RAH Solutions (Washington, DC) Adjunct Professor, University of the District of Columbia (Washington, DC) & Goucher College (Baltimore, MD)

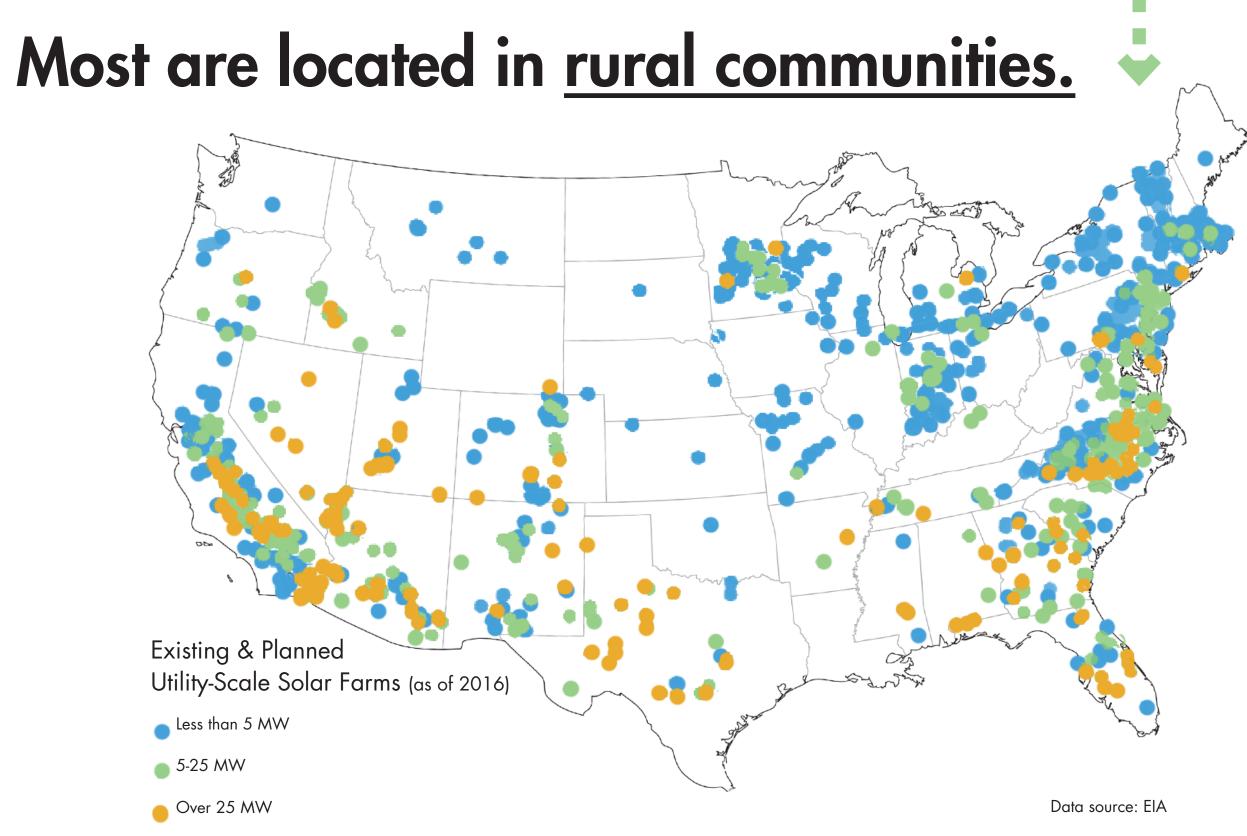
CONTACT hyon@rah.solutions

Utility-Scale Solar Farms



Meaning,

Solar power generated does not directly supply the local community



Projects that lack obvious community benefits can face delayed progress or outright opposition. Integrating tangible local benefits into the project planning process can mitigate these risks.

Utility-Scale Solar Project Planning Process

 $(1) \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot (2) \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot (3) \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot (4) \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot (5)$ **Pre-Development** Roles, Business Structure & Regulations capital investment development costs:

Main Considerations

Site: Potential project locations Resource: Feasibility analysis Off-take: Buyer of generated power (e.g., PPA)

Team: Assemble & engage those who can facilitate, approve, and champion the project - including developers, utilities, governments, and community members

Technology: Analyzing bankability and reliability

Main Considerations Policy & Regulations:

Land use, water rights, building codes, net-metering options, interconnection rules, etc.

Permits: Identify permitting needs & site use conditions, including environmental reviews, state & local jurisdiction permits

Finalize Business Structure, **Team & Permitting**

inancial close **Main Consideration**

Capital: Technology, financing and development costs

Meaningful community engagement & developer transparency are key to fostering positive community attitude and mitigating investment risk.1

Project Implementation

Operation & Maintenance

Important Questions for Community **Engagement & Consensus Building**

- •What is important to the local community, especially in terms of land use and future of their community?
- •What is the local community worried about?
- How can the project incorporate and address these priorities and concerns?
- •What initiatives, regulations, or funding exist that can help create community benefits*?
- * Construction of utility-scale solar offers economies of scale compared to smaller installations. Potential construction job creation is temporary and simply too little.

Utility-Scale Solar for Rural Community Benefit - Examples



Supporting Public Education (AZ)

This makes public schools direct beneficiaries of utility-scale solar projects located in these areas.



Creating Pollinator Habitat

Land lease payments for sites fully owned by the Pollinators, critical for plant reproduction and our Arizona State Land Department go directly to food system, need flowering plants for survival. AZ's K-12 public school and teacher funding. Adding ground cover and pollinator habitats supports pollinators, stabilizes the soil, and reduces air temperature, contributing to solar performance.²



Co-Locating Agriculture

Co-locating agriculture and solar allows for dual use of farmlands and dual income for farmers. At La Ola Solar Farm, HI, resident sheep help manage weeds and keep plants trimmed and away from solar panels.³

