

RCW 82.16.165 Annual production incentive certification. (1)

Beginning July 1, 2017, the following persons may submit a one-time application to the Washington State University extension energy program to receive a certification authorizing the utility serving the situs of a renewable energy system in the state of Washington to remit an annual production incentive for each kilowatt-hour of alternating current electricity generated by the renewable energy system:

(a) The utility's customer who is the customer-owner of a residential-scale or commercial-scale renewable energy system;

(b) An administrator of a community solar project meeting the eligibility requirements outlined in RCW 82.16.170 and applies for certification on behalf of each of the project participants; or

(c) A utility or a business under contract with a utility that administers a shared commercial solar project that meets the eligibility requirements in RCW 82.16.175 and applies for certification on behalf of each of the project participants.

(2) No person, business, or household is eligible to receive incentive payments provided under subsection (1) of this section of more than five thousand dollars per year for residential systems or community solar projects, twenty-five thousand dollars per year for commercial-scale systems, or thirty-five thousand dollars per year for shared commercial solar projects.

(3)(a) No new certification may be issued under this section to an applicant who submits a request for or receives an annual incentive payment for a renewable energy system that was certified under RCW 82.16.120, or for a renewable energy system served by a utility that has elected not to participate in the incentive program, as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

(b) The Washington State University extension energy program may issue a new certification for an additional system installed at a situs with a previously certified system so long as the new system meets the requirements of this section and its production can be measured separately from the previously certified system.

(c) The Washington State University extension energy program may issue a recertification for a residential-scale or commercial-scale system if a customer makes investments resulting in an expansion of the system's nameplate capacity. Such recertification expires on the same day as the original certification for the residential-scale or commercial-scale system and applies to the entire system the incentive rates and program rules in effect as of the date of the recertification.

(4) A utility's participation in the incentive program provided in this section is voluntary.

(a) A utility electing to participate in the incentive program must notify the Washington State University extension energy program of such election in writing.

(b) The utility may terminate its voluntary participation in the production incentive program by providing notice in writing to the Washington State University extension energy program to cease issuing new certifications for renewable energy systems that would be served by that utility.

(c) Such notice of termination of participation is effective after fifteen days, at which point the Washington State University extension energy program may not accept new applications for certification of renewable energy systems that would be served by that utility.

(d) Upon receiving a utility's notice of termination of participation in the incentive program, the Washington State University extension energy program must report on its website that customers of that utility are no longer eligible to receive new certifications under the program.

(e) A utility's termination of participation does not affect the utility's obligation to continue to make annual incentive payments for electricity generated by systems that were certified prior to the effective date of the notice. The Washington State University extension energy program must continue to process and issue certifications for renewable energy systems that were received by the Washington State University extension energy program before the effective date of the notice of termination.

(f) A utility that has terminated participation in the program may resume participation upon filing notice with the Washington State University extension energy program.

(5) (a) The Washington State University extension energy program may certify a renewable energy system that is connected to equipment capable of measuring the electricity production of the system and interconnecting with the utility's system in a manner that allows the utility, or the customer at the utility's option, to measure and report to the Washington State University extension energy program the total amount of electricity produced by the renewable energy system.

(b) The Washington State University extension energy program must establish a reporting and fee-for-service system to accept electricity production data from the utility or the customer that is not reported electronically and with the reporting entity selected at the utility's option as described in subsection (19) of this section. The fee-for-service agreement must allow for electronic reporting or reporting by mail, may be specific to individual utilities, and must recover only the program's costs of obtaining the electricity production data and incorporating it into an electronic format. A statement of the amount due for the fee-for-service must be provided to the utility by the Washington State University extension energy program with the report provided to the utility pursuant to subsection (20)(a) of this section. The utility may determine how to assess and remit the fee, and the utility may be allowed a credit for fees paid under this subsection (5) against taxes due, as provided in RCW 82.16.130(1).

(6) The Washington State University extension energy program may issue a certification authorizing annual incentive payments up to the following annual dollar limits:

(a) For community solar projects, five thousand dollars per project participant;

(b) For residential-scale systems, five thousand dollars;

(c) For commercial-scale systems, twenty-five thousand dollars;

and

(d) For shared commercial solar projects, up to thirty-five thousand dollars a year per participant, as determined by the terms of subsection (15) of this section.

(7) (a) To obtain certification under this section, a person must submit to the Washington State University extension energy program an application, including:

(i) A signed statement that the applicant has not previously received a notice of eligibility from the department under RCW 82.16.120 entitling the applicant to receive annual incentive payments for electricity generated by the renewable energy system at the same meter location;

(ii) A signed statement of the total price, including applicable sales tax, paid by the applicant for the renewable energy system;

(iii) System operation data including global positioning system coordinates, tilt, estimated shading, and azimuth;

(iv) Any other information the Washington State University extension energy program deems necessary in determining eligibility and incentive levels, administering the program, tracking progress toward achieving the limits on program participation established in RCW 82.16.130, or facilitating the review of the performance of the tax preferences by the joint legislative audit and review committee, as described in RCW 82.16.155; and

(v) (A) Except as provided in (a)(v)(B) of this subsection (7), the date that the renewable energy system received its final electrical inspection from the applicable local jurisdiction, as well as a copy of the permit or, if the permit is available online, the permit number;

(B) The Washington State University extension energy program may waive the requirement in (a)(v)(A) of this subsection (7), accepting an application and granting provisional certification prior to proof of final electrical inspection. Provisional certification expires one hundred eighty days after issuance, unless the applicant submits proof of the final electrical inspection from the applicable local jurisdiction or the Washington State University extension energy program extends the certification, for a term or terms of thirty days, due to extenuating circumstances; and

(b) (i) Prior to obtaining certification under this subsection, a community solar project or shared commercial solar project must apply for precertification against the remaining funds available for incentive payments under subsection (13)(d) of this section in order to be guaranteed an incentive payment under this section;

(ii) A project applicant of a community solar project or shared commercial solar project must complete an application for certification with the Washington State University extension energy program within less than one year to retain the precertification status described in this subsection; and

(iii) The Washington State University extension energy program may design a reservation or precertification system for an applicant of a residential-scale or commercial-scale renewable energy system.

(8) No incentive payments may be authorized or accrued until the final electrical inspection and executed interconnection agreement are submitted to the Washington State University extension energy program.

(9) Within thirty days of receipt of the application for certification, the Washington State University extension energy program must notify the applicant and, except when a utility is the applicant, the utility serving the situs of the renewable energy system, by mail or electronically, whether certification has been granted. The certification notice must state the rate to be paid per kilowatt-hour of electricity generated by the renewable energy system, as provided in subsection (12) of this section, subject to any applicable cap on total annual payment provided in subsection (6) of this section.

(10) Certification is valid for the program term and entitles the applicant or, in the case of a community solar project or shared commercial solar project, the participant, to receive incentive payments for electricity generated from the date the renewable energy system commences operation, or the date the system is certified, whichever date is later. For purposes of this subsection, the

Washington State University extension energy program must define when a renewable energy system commences operation and provide notice of such date to the recipient and the utility serving the situs of the system. Certification may not be retroactively changed except to correct later discovered errors that were made during the original application or certification process.

(11) (a) System certification follows the system if the following conditions are met using procedures established by the Washington State University extension energy program:

(i) The renewable energy system is transferred to a new owner who notifies the Washington State University extension energy program of the transfer; and

(ii) The new owner provides an executed interconnection agreement with the utility serving the premises.

(b) In the event that a community solar project participant terminates their participation in a community solar project, the system certification follows the system and participation may be transferred to a new participant. The administrator of a community solar project must provide notice to the Washington State University extension energy program of any changes or transfers in project participation.

(12) The Washington State University extension energy program must determine the total incentive rate for a new renewable energy system certification by adding to the base rate any applicable made-in-Washington bonus rate. A made-in-Washington bonus rate is provided for a renewable energy system or a community solar project with solar modules made in Washington or with a wind turbine or tower that is made in Washington. Both the base rates and bonus rate vary, depending on the fiscal year in which the system is certified and the type of renewable energy system being certified, as provided in the following table:

Fiscal year of system certification	Base rate - residential-scale	Base rate - commercial-scale	Base rate - community solar	Base rate - shared commercial solar	Made in Washington bonus
2018	\$0.16	\$0.06	\$0.16	\$0.06	\$0.05
2019	\$0.14	\$0.04	\$0.14	\$0.04	\$0.04
2020	\$0.12	\$0.02	\$0.12	\$0.02	\$0.03
2021	\$0.10	\$0.02	\$0.10	\$0.02	\$0.02

(13) The Washington State University extension energy program must cease to issue new certifications:

(a) For community solar projects and shared commercial solar projects in any fiscal year for which the Washington State University extension energy program estimates that fifty percent of the remaining funds for credit available to a utility for renewable energy systems certified under this section as of July 1, 2017, have been allocated to community solar projects and shared commercial solar projects combined;

(b) For commercial-scale systems in any fiscal year for which the Washington State University extension energy program estimates that twenty-five percent of the remaining funds for credit available to a utility for renewable energy systems certified under this section as of July 1, 2017, have been allocated to commercial-scale systems;

(c) For any renewable energy system served by a utility, if certification is likely to result in incentive payments by that

utility, including payments made under RCW 82.16.120, exceeding the utility's available funds for credit under RCW 82.16.130; and

(d) For any renewable energy system, if certification is likely to result in total incentive payments under this section exceeding one hundred ten million dollars.

(14) If the Washington State University extension energy program ceases issuing new certifications during a fiscal year or biennium as provided in subsection (13) of this section, in the following fiscal year or biennium, or when additional funds are available for credit such that the thresholds described in subsection (13) of this section are no longer exceeded, the Washington State University extension energy program must resume issuing new certifications using a method of awarding certifications that results in equitable and orderly allocation of benefits to applicants.

(15) A customer who is a participant in a shared commercial solar project may not receive incentive payments associated with the project greater than the difference between the levelized cost of energy output of the system over its production life and the retail rate for the rate class to which the customer belongs. The levelized cost of the output of the energy must be determined by the utility that administers the shared commercial solar project and must be disclosed, along with an explanation of the limitations on incentive payments contained in this subsection (15), in the contractual agreement with the shared commercial solar project participants.

(16) In order to begin to receive annual incentive payments, a person who has been issued a certification for the incentive as provided in subsection (9) of this section must obtain an executed interconnection agreement with the utility serving the situs of the renewable energy system.

(17) The Washington State University extension energy program must establish a list of equipment that is eligible for the bonus rates described in subsection (12) of this section. The Washington State University extension energy program must, in consultation with the department of commerce, develop technical specifications and guidelines to ensure consistent and predictable determination of eligibility. A solar module is made in Washington for purposes of receiving the bonus rate only if the lamination of the module takes place in Washington. A wind turbine is made in Washington only if it is powered by a turbine or built with a tower manufactured in Washington.

(18) The manufacturer of a renewable energy system component subject to a bonus rate under subsection (12) of this section may apply to the Washington State University extension energy program to receive a determination of eligibility for such bonus rates. The Washington State University extension energy program must publish a list of components that have been certified as eligible for such bonus rates. The Washington State University extension energy program may assess an equipment certification fee to recover its costs. The Washington State University extension energy program must deposit all revenue generated by this fee into the state general fund.

(19) Annually, the utility must report electronically to the Washington State University extension energy program the amount of gross kilowatt-hours generated by each renewable energy system since the prior annual report. For the purposes of this section, to report electronically means to submit statistical or factual information in alphanumeric form through a website established by the Washington State University extension energy program or in a list, table,

spreadsheet, or other nonnarrative format that can be digitally transmitted or processed. The utility may instead opt to report by mail or require program participants to report individually, but if the utility exercises one or more of these options it must negotiate with the Washington State University extension energy program the fee-for-service arrangement described in subsection (5)(b) of this section.

(20)(a) The Washington State University extension energy program must calculate for the year and provide to the utility the amount of the incentive payment due to each participant and the total amount of credit against tax due available to the utility under RCW 82.16.130 that has been allocated as annual incentive payments. Upon notice to the Washington State University extension energy program, a utility may opt to directly perform this calculation and provide its results to the Washington State University extension energy program.

(b) If the Washington State University extension energy program identifies an abnormal production claim, it must notify the utility, the department of revenue, and the applicant, and must recommend withholding payment until the applicant has demonstrated that the production claim is accurate and valid. The utility is not liable to the customer for withholding payments pursuant to such recommendation unless and until the Washington State University extension energy program notifies the utility to resume incentive payments.

(21)(a) The utility must issue the incentive payment within ninety days of receipt of the information required under subsection (20)(a) of this section from the Washington State University extension energy program. The utility must resume the incentive payments withheld under subsection (20)(b) of this section within thirty days of receiving notice from the Washington State University extension energy program that the claim has been demonstrated accurate and valid and payment should be resumed.

(b) A utility is not liable for incentive payments to a customer-owner if the utility has disconnected the customer due to a violation of a customer service agreement, such as nonpayment of the customer's bill, or a violation of an interconnection agreement.

(22) Beginning January 1, 2018, the Washington State University extension energy program must post on its website and update at least monthly a report, by utility, of:

(a) The number of certifications issued for renewable energy systems, including estimated system sizes, costs, and annual energy production and incentive yields for various system types; and

(b) An estimate of the amount of credit that has not yet been allocated for incentive payments under each utility's credit limit and remains available for new renewable energy system certifications.

(23) Persons receiving incentive payments under this section must keep and preserve, for a period of five years for the duration of the consumer contract, suitable records as may be necessary to determine the amount of incentive payments applied for and received. The Washington State University extension energy program may direct a utility to cease issuing incentive payments if the records are not made available for examination upon request. A utility receiving such a directive is not liable to the applicant for any incentive payments or other damages for ceasing payments pursuant to the directive.

(24) The nonpower attributes of the renewable energy system belong to the utility customer who owns or hosts the system or, in the case of a community solar project or a shared commercial solar project, the participant, and can be kept, sold, or transferred at the

utility customer's discretion unless, in the case of a utility-owned community solar or shared commercial solar project, a contract between the customer and the utility clearly specifies that the attributes will be retained by the utility.

(25) All lists, technical specifications, determinations, and guidelines developed under this section must be made publicly available online by the Washington State University extension energy program.

(26) No certification may be issued under this section after June 30, 2021.

(27) The Washington State University extension energy program must collect a one-time fee for applications submitted under subsection (1) of this section of one hundred twenty-five dollars per applicant. The Washington State University extension energy program must deposit all revenue generated by this fee into the state general fund. The Washington State University extension energy program must administer and budget for the program established in RCW 82.16.120, this section, and RCW 82.16.170 in a manner that ensures its administrative costs through June 30, 2022, are completely met by the revenues from this fee. If the Washington State University extension energy program determines that the fee authorized in this subsection is insufficient to cover the administrative costs through June 30, 2022, the Washington State University extension energy program must report to the legislature on costs incurred and fees collected and demonstrate why a different fee amount or funding mechanism should be authorized.

(28) The Washington State University extension energy program may, through a public process, develop any program requirements, policies, and processes necessary for the administration or implementation of this section, RCW 82.16.120, 82.16.155, and 82.16.170. The department is authorized, in consultation with the Washington State University extension energy program, to adopt any rules necessary for administration or implementation of the program established under this section and RCW 82.16.170.

(29) Applications, certifications, requests for incentive payments under this section, and the information contained therein are not deemed tax information under RCW 82.32.330 and are subject to disclosure.

(30) (a) By November 1, 2019, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the Washington State University extension energy program must submit a report to the legislature that includes the following:

(i) The number and types of renewable energy systems that have been certified under this section as of July 1, 2019, both statewide and per participating utility;

(ii) The number of utilities that are approaching or have reached the credit limit established under RCW 82.16.130(2) or the thresholds established under subsection (13) of this section;

(iii) The share of renewable energy systems by type that contribute to each utility's threshold under subsection (13) of this section;

(iv) An assessment of the deployment of community solar projects in the state, including but not limited to the following:

(A) An evaluation of whether or not community solar projects are being deployed in low-income and moderate-income communities, as those terms are defined in RCW 43.63A.510, including a description of any barriers to project deployment in these communities;

(B) A description of the share of community solar projects by administrator type that contribute to each utility's threshold under subsection (13)(a) of this section; and

(C) A description of any barriers to participation by nonprofits and local housing authorities in the incentive program established under this section and under RCW 82.16.170;

(v) The total dollar amount of incentive payments that have been made to participants in the incentive program established under this section to date; and

(vi) The total number of megawatts of solar photovoltaic capacity installed to date by participants in the incentive program established under this section.

(b) By December 31, 2019, the legislature must review the report submitted under (a) of this subsection and determine whether the credit limit established under RCW 82.16.130(2) should be increased to two percent of a light and power business' taxable power sales generated in calendar year 2014 and due under RCW 82.16.020(1)(b) or two hundred fifty thousand dollars, whichever is greater, in order to achieve the legislative intent under section 1, chapter 36, Laws of 2017 3rd sp. sess. [2017 3rd sp.s. c 36 s 6.]

Findings—Intent—Effective date—2017 3rd sp.s. c 36: See notes following RCW 82.16.130.