

N.M. Gov. Grisham: EPA Awards New Mexico \$156 Million for Solar for All Program - Funds Will Make Solar Power Available to 21,000 Low-Income Households

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FULL TEXT

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, D-New Mexico, issued the following news release on April 22, 2024:

Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that New Mexico has been awarded \$156 million from the federal agency's \$7 billion Solar for All competition.

The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) will administer New Mexico's Solar for All Program, designed to make solar power available to an estimated 20,910 New Mexico households that otherwise might not be able to access this clean, renewable form of energy.

"The EPA's Solar for All program is an unprecedented investment in clean, affordable renewable energy for low-income communities across the country," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "It is only natural that New Mexico--a national leader in clean energy --would be among the states selected to participate. This will help ensure that all New Mexicans, regardless of income level, can benefit from our clean energy transition."

EMNRD's Energy Conservation and Management Division (ECMD) estimates the Solar for All program will save New Mexico residents more than \$299 million in energy costs over a 20-year period, while preventing the release of 116,628 tons of carbon-dioxide into the atmosphere. With federal funding now secured, EMNRD is working toward an official program launch, with expectations that the program's first solar system installations will begin in early 2025.

EMNRD's plans for deploying the Solar for All Program include making a series of grants and low-interest loans available to entities that will provide access to solar power in low-income and rural households across the state.

"Our Solar for All Program is designed to reach New Mexico's underserved communities by focusing on supporting shared solar access projects in rural and tribal communities," said EMNRD Deputy Secretary Dylan Fuge.

Shared solar access projects--sometimes referred to as community solar--create solar-powered systems from which multiple households, including renters in multifamily units, can draw power. EMNRD's strategy also calls for working with the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) to fund local utility power infrastructure upgrades to ensure that community solar systems will function properly.

Grants also will be available to develop residential solar systems in areas where community solar is not viable, such as tribal households that are not connected to a power grid. Such households will be served by battery backup power; the program will repair roofs to accommodate solar panels when necessary.

Preliminary modeling by ECMD shows the Solar for All program adding 21 megawatts of solar energy capacity to the state's power grid. The program also is expected to produce 8.1 megawatt hours of stored energy for deployment when sunlight is insufficient to generate solar power. Where possible, ECMD hopes to install storage alongside solar panels to boost the grid and build resiliency.

"Our first step is forming an Environmental Justice Advisory Committee to help us ensure that the program delivers benefits most effectively for low-income residents," said ECMD Division Director Rebecca "Puck" Stair. "We want to these funds to provide the highest possible valuable to our residents both environmentally and economically."

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Original text here: <https://www.governor.state.nm.us/2024/04/22/epa-awards-new-mexico-156-million-for-solar-for>

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