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Utility to launch solar programme for low-income customers

North America, Carbon Reduction, COP 23, Smart Cities, Sustainable Energy, Sustainable Innovation Forum

The new pilot programme to make renewable energy available for low-income customers proposed by the utility Con Edison has recently been approved by the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC).

Con Edison will be installing solar arrays on company-owned rooftops and properties in Brooklyn, Queens and Westchester County from 2018.

The utility will have developers bid for the contracts to install the solar arrays on the properties and rooftops.



The panels will generate 3MW of energy, powering 800 to 1,600 of the company's customers, for no cost to low-income participants, allowing them more than \$60 every year.

The company projects that the pilot programme will quickly expand to 11MW – enough to power 6,000 customers.

Con Edison's project aims at overcoming low-income customers' difficulty to access solar energy, notably due to the upfront costs of installing solar panels and the lack of control of their rooftops, while living in multi-family buildings.

The utility is looking to involve community organisations to help them involve those low-income customers.

The first phase of the programme is estimated to cost \$10 million.

Matthew Ketschke, Vice President of Distributed Resource Integration at Con Edison said: "We thank the state Public Service Commission for its careful review and approval of the first phase of our Shared Solar Pilot Program, which will make renewable energy available to a group of customers who have been largely shut out of the solar market. More customers having access to renewable energy will mean a cleaner environment here in New York City and Westchester County."

John B. Rhodes, Chair, PSC said: "This pilot program will not only show how community distributed generation, or CDG, can benefit a low-income neighbourhood; it will also contribute to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's visionary [50% by 2030] clean energy standard adopted by the commission last year. By serving low-income residents with clean energy, Con Edison is filling a niche that hasn't been fully served in the state. Furthermore, we believe this project, and the insight gained from this pilot, will lead to market development of other shared solar arrays around the state that will bring the benefits of clean energy to more low-income customers."

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