

Solar Industry Perspective: Interconnection Technical Review Group

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Albany, NY

Vision

- “To research and aggregate information to identify improvements and facilitate the adoption of best practices that drive a continued simplification and streamlining of the interconnection process, lower interconnection costs, and meet REV and other state goals while maintaining the safety and reliability of the State’s electric distribution system.”

Expectations and Goals

1. Researching and synthesizing best practices for regulatory standards as well as utility and developer processes
2. Harmonizing technical standards where possible
3. Providing transparency on technical standards being used by utilities and the rationale supporting them
4. Enabling greater communication and collaboration between utilities and developers to
 - identify what is working well and where there are areas for improvement
 - offer suggested improvements to the SIR allowing it to more rapidly reflect identified best practices and improved processes

Researching Best Practices

- **Example: Supplemental Review**
 - Research from jurisdictions like Massachusetts and California to determine:
 - Number and percentage of applications seeking supplemental review
 - Number of applications and size of systems successful in avoiding full studies under supplemental review
 - Average length of time required for supplemental review versus full study for similar sized systems
 - Suggestions from utilities and developers for improvements

Researching Standards for Emerging Technologies

- **Example: Smart Inverters**

- Research on the state of industry and regulatory standards being explored including the:

- Potential for increasing penetration of solar PV on distribution lines
- Potential for improving operation / lifetime of distribution equipment
- Potential for increasing complexity of things like anti-islanding protection with the use of volt/var capabilities
- Connection to larger REV goals associated with the Distributed System Platform (DSP)

Harmonizing Standards where Possible

- Identification and adoption of best practices uniformly across the state
 - Substation Back-feeding / 3Vo
 - Remote Monitoring / Communications
 - Anti-Islanding and Direct Transfer Trip (DTT)
- Identification and removal of barriers to interconnection unique to practices in certain service territories
 - Blanket requirements for upgrades based on system size alone
- Clarify differing interpretations of the standards set forth in the SIR and public service law
 - Application of the 20% rule

Providing Transparency

- Massachusetts Technical Standards Review Group provides a starting point
 - Common Technical Standards Manual and Guideline Matrix
- Transparency of both the standards and the underlying technical justification of the differences will improve understanding by developers, limit surprises, and thus speed the interconnection process
- Even where consensus cannot be reached or unique aspects of the system in different service territories prevent standardization

Enabling Greater Collaboration

- Providing a feedback channel for issues identified internally by the Utilities or developers
 - *For example:* If Utilities identify consistent issues with the completeness or accuracy of applications the ITWG can provide a means to let the development community know at a higher level
- Sharing unique or innovative strategies to lower interconnection costs and complexity
 - *For example:* Adjusting the power factor away from unity at a particular site

Making the SIR a Living Document

- To meet the Governor's goals for the NY-Sun Initiative and his goal of generating 50% of the State's electricity from renewables by 2030, a rapid increase in the deployment of solar and other distributed generation will be needed
- The ITWG can help to ensure that interconnection standards remain optimized by
 - offering recommendations and best practices for inclusion into the SIR as they are identified on a rolling basis
 - assessing the value of changes after they are made to determine their impact on simplifying and streamlining the interconnection process

Other Outstanding Issues

- A number of critical issues for improving the interconnection process may or may not fit well under the ITWG but are important to have addressed in some formal setting
 - Interconnection queue management
 - Customer name designation on application
 - Process for updating CESIRs
 - Project bundling and other cost sharing mechanisms
 - Timeline enforcement mechanisms