EDUCATING BY EXAMPLE
AVON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IN LIVINGSTON COUNTY

The Avon Central School District is located in northern Livingston County. It serves approximately 1,000 students and combines the benefits of a tight-knit rural community with the proximity to technology and cultural opportunities offered by Rochester, just 20 miles north.

PROGRAM
Before installing a solar array, Avon Central paid about 10 cents per kWh to their local utility, Niagara-Mohawk, for the 1.5 million kWh of electricity it used each year. Now, it pays just over nine cents per kWh for the roughly 1.9 million kWh the 10,000 solar panel array produces annually. This price will adjust at a fixed rate annually over the 25-year period of the power purchase agreement. Although the district is buying power at a cheaper rate, it is also purchasing more than it currently needs. This has led to a slight cost increase initially, but will allow the school district room to grow its energy use in the future, saving more than $1 million over the life of the project, and the possibility of selling the excess energy credits to nearby municipalities. Additionally, knowing what the district will will pay per kWh for the next 25 years allows it to better predict its energy costs each school year. With stability in pricing, Avon Superintendent Aaron Johnson, Ed.D says, “we no longer have to budget $300,000, worrying there’s going to be a really tough winter or a spike in electricity costs or anything like that.”

In addition to two smaller pilot projects, Avon’s solar array will offset 930 metric tons of greenhouse gases each year—the equivalent of taking 200 cars off the road.

PROCESS
Avon’s road to renewable energy began in 2008, when the district installed a 5 kW set of solar panels on top of the middle school’s roof followed by a 45 kW array on the high school a couple years later. To explore additional solar power, the district worked with New Energy Equity, which provided development, project management, and financing, and WGL Energy, which installed a solar

10 http://www.thelcn.com/cn01/avon-centrals-solar-array-is-energy-educational-asset-20180729
11 https://www.newenergyequity.com/project/avon-school-district/
array on a 7.5 acre site near the schools. New Energy Equity received a $564,000 grant through NYSERDA’s NY-Sun initiative for planning and design of the district’s array. The district signed a power purchase agreement (PPA) with WGL under which it paid no upfront costs for the array’s construction, but will pay for the energy it produces. Under the PPA the school board leases the land, WGL owns and maintains the project, and the school purchases the power at a fixed rate.

**TAKEAWAYS**

Avon Central School District now hosts the largest public school solar project in New York State, generating more than enough electricity to serve the district’s current needs while also reducing its carbon footprint and costs over the life of the project. While some residents initially raised aesthetic concerns about the array, students can now see it every day on their way to and from school. Both students and their teachers can log into a website to get real-time information on current and total power generated by the panels, making it a useful educational tool in the classroom that provides a glimpse into a field they may decide to work in someday. In addition to any financial savings from the project, Avon Central School District has a valuable asset in its solar project. The panels are a visible symbol of how it leads by example in teaching environmental values and that each person can make choices to live a more sustainable life.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Contact Dr. Aaron Johnson at ajohnson@avoncsd.org
STATE PROGRAMS

CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITIES

Amherst, East Hampton, Red Hook  Under NYSERDA’s Clean Energy Communities program, communities that complete four out of the 10 High Impact Actions and meet all other eligibility requirements are designated by New York State as a Clean Energy Community and are eligible to apply for grants to fund additional clean energy projects. Those ten actions are:

- **Benchmarking** - Adopt a policy to report the energy use of buildings
- **Clean Energy Upgrades** - Achieve 10% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from buildings
- **LED Street Lights** - Convert street lights to energy efficient LED technology
- **Clean Fleets** - Install electric vehicle charging stations or deploy alternative fuel vehicles
- **Solarize** - Undertake a local solarize campaign to increase the number of solar rooftops
- **Unified Solar Permit** - Streamline the approvals process for solar
- **Energy Code Enforcement Training** - Train compliance officers in energy code best practices
- **Climate Smart Communities Certification** - Get certified by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- **Community Choice Aggregation** - Put energy supply choices in your community’s hands
- **Energize New York Finance** - Offer energy upgrade financing to businesses and non-profits

CLEAN ENERGY STANDARD/RPS

Eagle, East Hampton  The Clean Energy Standard requires that 50% of New York’s electricity come from renewable energy sources such as solar and wind by 2030. New renewable projects provide enormous benefits to local communities, including reduced emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, economic investment and PILOT payments, and new, high quality jobs in the clean energy sector.

COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION

Ossining  Community Choice Aggregation allows local governments to work together through a shared purchasing model to procure energy supply service and distributed energy resources for eligible customers within the jurisdictional boundaries of participating municipalities. Eligible customers will have the opportunity to have more control to lower their overall energy costs, to spur clean energy innovation and investment, to improve customer choice and value, and to protect the environment, thereby fulfilling an important public purpose.

GROUND SOURCE HEAT PUMP REBATE

Lockport  NYSERDA’s Ground Source Heat Pump Rebate provides funding for the installation of ground source heat pump systems for residences, businesses and institutions. Benefits include lower and less volatile energy bills, greater resiliency and reliability, and health benefits from this emissions-free technology.

MUNICIPAL ZERO EMISSION VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE REBATE PROGRAM

Amherst, DeWitt, Red Hook, Schenectady  The Municipal ZEV Infrastructure Rebate Program provides rebates to cities, towns, villages, and counties (including New York City boroughs) to install publicly available charging stations. Installation of these charging stations will help electrify New York’s transportation sector and meet its climate goals, putting local communities on the road to energy independence while helping to reduce emissions harmful to the environment.

NY-SUN

Avon, Clarkstown, Delaware, DeWitt, Grand Island, Red Hook, Schenectady  NY-Sun provides multiple resources for local governments to install solar energy, including financing, incentives, and training/education to identify opportunities and mitigate barriers, providing the tools necessary to build clean, affordable solar programs to power their communities.

REFORMING THE ENERGY VISION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Schenectady  New York State is seeking demonstration projects to show how new products and services can capture latent value on the grid, and how new business models can monetize and distribute that value across third parties, utilities and customers. While New York’s investor-owned utilities have been directed to partner with third parties to develop a first round of REV demonstration projects, the utilities will continue to undertake demonstration projects until these kinds of products and services are fully integrated into core system operations.