



Founding Co-Sponsors:



## CaliforniaFIRST Program Report

County of \_\_\_\_\_  
(as of November 6, 2009)

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## I. Introduction

This CaliforniaFIRST Program Report (this “Program Report”) outlines the basic design and financing structure of a property assessed municipal financing program called CaliforniaFIRST (the “CaliforniaFIRST Program”) for the County of \_\_\_\_\_ (the “County”).

### A. California Communities

The California Statewide Communities Development Authority (“California Communities”) is a statewide joint powers authority sponsored by the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities. California Communities’ mission is to provide local governments access to low-cost financing for projects that provide a tangible public benefit, contribute to social and economic growth, and improve the overall quality of life in local communities.

### B. Purpose of the CaliforniaFIRST Program

California Communities is offering the CaliforniaFIRST program on a statewide basis, and the County is offering the CaliforniaFIRST Program in the County, to encourage utilization, by the existing building stock, of distributed generation renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and water efficiency improvements. California Communities will facilitate a statewide bond pool, which will allow property owners to access competitive interest rates offered by the public bond markets.

With the passage of AB 32, California set ambitious goals for reducing carbon emissions and building alternative energy use. The California Public Utilities Commission has set a goal of retrofitting over 13 million residences in the State to be at least 30% more energy efficient. Many California cities and counties have also set their own greenhouse gas reduction targets. Similarly, water conservation efforts, including the promotion of water-related improvements to residential, commercial, industrial, or other real property, are necessary to address the issue of chronic water shortages in California.

Property owners can help to achieve greenhouse gas reductions and reduce water use and, at the same time, save money by investing in distributed generation renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, and/or water efficiency improvements. Yet most people still resist making these improvements. The number one barrier is the large upfront cost.

Utilities sell power and water to their customers as a simple pay-as-you-go service. Homes and businesses can be converted to clean energy and reduce water use quickly, but many believe that it can happen only if paying for distributed generation renewable energy sources, energy efficiency improvements and water efficiency improvements is more like paying a utility bill. The CaliforniaFIRST Program can make this happen.

### C. Assessment Financing; Contractual Assessments

The CaliforniaFIRST Program uses a tool that is widely used by local agencies in California to finance public benefit projects: land-secured financing. California law has long provided cities and counties with the power to issue bonds and levy assessments on the County property tax bill to finance public projects such as sewers, parks, and the undergrounding of utilities.

Chapter 29 of the Improvement Act of 1911, commencing with Section 5898.10 of the Streets & Highways Code of the State of California (“Chapter 29”), authorizes the levy of “contractual assessments” to finance the installation of distributed generation renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and water efficiency improvements to be permanently affixed to residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, or other real property.

A “contractual assessment” is an assessment that is levied by contract pursuant to Chapter 29. For the CaliforniaFIRST Program, the assessment contract will be an “Agreement to Pay Assessment and Finance Improvements” in the form attached to this Program Report as Exhibit A (the “Assessment Contract”). The Assessment Contract will be executed by each participating property owner and California Communities.

Under the CaliforniaFIRST Program, a contractual assessment lien is placed on each participating property in an amount necessary to (i) finance the installation of authorized renewable energy, energy efficiency and water efficiency improvements over a 10-20 year period of time, depending upon the useful life of the financed improvements and (ii) pay the costs of administering the CaliforniaFIRST Program. The contractual assessments are paid on the County property tax bill. If the owner sells the property, the repayment obligation remains an obligation of the property. California Communities will issue bonds payable from the contractual assessments.

The CaliforniaFIRST Program is completely voluntary and property taxes for properties in the County that do not choose to participate are completely unaffected by the Program.

## **D. Purpose of this Program Report**

This Program Report constitutes the report required pursuant to Section 5898.22 of Chapter 29 for the County's CaliforniaFIRST Program. The CaliforniaFIRST Program will be offered throughout the entire County as shown on the boundary map attached as Exhibit B. If a property is located in a city's incorporated territory within the County, a property may participate in the CaliforniaFIRST Program only after the city has adopted a resolution asking California Communities to offer the CaliforniaFIRST Program within its boundaries.

## **E. Program Administration**

California Communities will be responsible for implementing the CaliforniaFIRST Program in the County, including providing assessment administration and issuing the bonds. California Communities has selected Renewable Funding to administer the CaliforniaFIRST Program. Renewable Funding will review applications and provide marketing and customer service through its custom websites, email, and toll-free phone number. California Communities has selected Royal Bank of Canada Capital Markets to serve as the bond underwriter for the CaliforniaFIRST Program.

The California Center for Sustainable Energy (CCSE) and EcoMotion are program partners. They are participating in program design and will be involved in providing services to some communities. Other program partners or affiliates may be added. The program's legal counsel includes Jones Hall (bond counsel to California Communities) and Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP (issuer's counsel and disclosure counsel to California Communities).

## **II. Duration**

The CaliforniaFIRST Program will continue as long as there is sufficient demand.

## **III. Program Requirements**

This Program Report identifies the CaliforniaFIRST Program requirements relating to the types of improvements that can be financed under the CaliforniaFIRST Program (including the required "loading order"), eligible properties and financing parameters. Additional requirements are set forth in the CaliforniaFIRST Program Terms, which are attached as Exhibit C.

### **A. Authorized Improvements**

The CaliforniaFIRST Program offers financing of the installation of those distributed generation renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and water efficiency improvements listed on Exhibit D (the "Authorized Improvements"). In the pilot stage of the CaliforniaFIRST Program, water efficiency measures are ineligible for financing.

Property owners are responsible for the Authorized Improvements installed on their property. Property owners must address performance and other system-related issues directly with the installer according to the terms of the contract with the installer. The CaliforniaFIRST Program is a financing program only.

Neither California Communities nor the administrator is responsible for the system or its performance.

## B. Loading Order Process

Based on guidelines established by the California Energy Commission (the "CEC") as part of its competitive grant program, authorized energy efficiency measures from an approved list or recommended by an energy audit must be installed before or contemporaneously with renewable energy improvements to be eligible for financing under the CaliforniaFIRST Program. The CaliforniaFIRST Program will comply with all state and federal requirements for loading order.

Due to the need for additional market development to meet demand, there are two pathways to meet the loading order requirement. First, a property owner can obtain a whole house energy audit by a Building Performance Institute<sup>1</sup> ("BPI"), Home Performance with Energy Star<sup>2</sup> ("HPwES") or Home Energy Rating System<sup>3</sup> ("HERS") II rater. Energy efficiency measures can be implemented based on the outcome of the audit. Second, a property owner may install a basic package of standard energy efficiency measures. This "prescriptive path" would include measures such as air sealing, attic and water heater insulation. This second pathway is currently under development by the CEC and California Public Utilities Commission (the "CPUC") and is scheduled to be completed by the CaliforniaFIRST program launch.

## C. Quality Assurance

**Renewable Energy; Energy Efficiency.** The CaliforniaFIRST Program will use the quality assurance protocols of existing renewable energy programs and pending energy efficiency programs as the basic platform for its quality assurance and quality control, and adjust requirements as necessary to remain compliant with state and federal requirements. The CaliforniaFIRST Program will not provide quality assurance beyond the third party services described below.

Until otherwise indicated by the standards of a CPUC statewide rebate program, energy efficiency projects will be subject to one of two levels of review depending on whether the project falls under an existing certification program or if the project is completed without contractor certification.

- 5% of projects reviewed by BPI, HPwES and HERS II raters will be subject to field inspection and review as part of existing programs and carried out by the California Building Performance Contractors Association (CBPCA).
- 15% of projects undertaken by licensed contractors that do not have BPI, HPwES or HERSII certification, and are installing the prescriptive package, will be subject to field inspection and review by CBPCA, and the contractors will be required to become BPI certified by 01/01/11. These projects are subject to an additional administrative fee to cover the cost of the quality assurance inspection. This cost is explained in the Administrative Fees section of this Program Report.

Approximately 14% of solar photovoltaic ("PV") and solar water heating ("SWH") projects will be subject to field inspection and review within the California Solar Initiative ("CSI") program.

**Water Efficiency.** A quality assurance procedure for water efficiency installations is currently under development.

**Subject to Change.** All quality assurance and quality control procedures are subject to review and

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<sup>1</sup> BPI is a global organization that supports the building performance industry through individual and organizational credentialing and a rigorous quality assurance program. More information on BPI is available here: <http://www.bpi.org/>

<sup>2</sup> HPwES is a national program from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy, which offers a comprehensive, whole-house approach to improving energy efficiency and comfort at home. More information on HPwES is available at the following link, [http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home\\_improvement.hm\\_improvement\\_hpwes](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_improvement.hm_improvement_hpwes)

<sup>3</sup> A HERS II rater is part of the Home Energy Rating System Program, developed by the CEC. The CEC developed the program "to provide reliable information to differentiate the energy efficiency levels among California homes and to guide investment in cost-effective home energy efficiency measures". More information on HERS is available at <http://www.energy.ca.gov/HERS/>.

adjustment based on applicable state and federal standards.

#### D. Property Eligibility Criteria

In order to receive financing from the CaliforniaFIRST Program, a property must meet the following requirements:

- a. The property to be improved with the Authorized Improvements (the “subject property”) must be located in the boundaries of the CaliforniaFIRST Program. If a property is located in the unincorporated territory of the County, then it is eligible to participate. If a property is located in a city’s incorporated territory within the County, a property may participate in the CaliforniaFIRST Program only after the city has adopted a resolution asking California Communities to offer the CaliforniaFIRST Program within its boundaries.
- b. The subject property may be used for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. If the subject property is used for residential purposes, the property owner(s) do not have to occupy the subject property as their primary residence.
- c. The contractual assessments levied pursuant to an Assessment Contract will constitute a senior lien on the related property, which means pre-existing private liens, such as purchase money mortgages, will be subordinate to the contractual assessment lien. Owners of residential properties (including owners of individual condominiums and townhouses) must, at a minimum, notify their pre-existing private lenders in writing of the proposed contractual assessment lien, unless otherwise provided by applicable law. Owners of residential properties will be required to obtain the consent of their lenders if their mortgage documents required consent. Owners of properties that are not residential properties (which may include owners of multi-unit residential properties) must receive written consent from their pre-existing private lenders. Property owners are responsible for complying with consent if it is required by the mortgage documents. California Communities will provide property owners with lender notification and consent forms.
- d. All owners of the fee simple title to the subject property must sign the Program Documents, as described in the CaliforniaFIRST Program Terms. Therefore, before submitting an initial application, applicants must ensure that all owners of the fee simple title to the subject property wish to participate in the Program on the terms set forth in the CaliforniaFIRST Program Terms.
- e. All participating properties will be required to meet local, state and federal program requirements and guidelines, including those described in “Loading Order Process” above.
- f. California Communities reserves the right to waive the energy efficiency audit requirement for buildings seeking water efficiency improvements only. However, such projects may be required to provide similar audit or project technical analysis documentation in order to verify the expected benefits of the project.
- g. Property owners will be required to participate in appropriate state incentive programs. For example, property owners planning to finance the installation of a solar PV system will be required to participate in the CSI program with respect to the subject property. Property owners will also be required to participate in similar incentive programs for solar thermal (hot water) systems and home energy efficiency retrofits.
- h. The property owners(s) must agree to participate in surveys and CaliforniaFIRST Program evaluations directed by California Communities. In addition, property owners will be required to sign a waiver allowing the CaliforniaFIRST Program to collect utility usage data as appropriate to comply with state and federal reporting standards.
- i. The property owner is highly encouraged to participate in a workshop about or on-line review of the CaliforniaFIRST Program before deciding whether to participate. All property owners will be required to read and acknowledge their agreement to the CaliforniaFIRST Program Terms before applying.
- k. California Communities will review all applications to ensure that the proposed Authorized

Improvements, the subject property, the property owners and the contractors meet CaliforniaFIRST eligibility requirements. At the completion of installation of the Authorized Improvements, property owners will be required to submit a set of project verification documents. Verification forms may include but are not limited to a customer sign-off form, final invoices from contractor(s), building permit(s), and rebate documents before financing is available. Details on the verification documents can be found in the CaliforniaFIRST Program Terms.

- i. The property owner(s) must not have declared bankruptcy in the past 7 years.
- j. The property owners must be current in the payment of all obligations secured by the subject property, including property taxes, assessments and tax liens, within the past 3 years (or since ownership commenced, if it has been less than 3 years). California Communities may review public records, including the County real property records, to verify compliance with this requirement. Certain allowances may be made for property tax payment delays that do not reflect financial distress. Commercial properties that are currently appealing a property tax assessment will be reviewed and eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- k. There must be no notices of default or foreclosure filed against the subject property within the last 5 years (or since ownership commenced, if less than 5 years). California Communities reserves the right to deny a reservation and a request for funding to a property owner if any other property it owns has been subject to foreclosure in the past 5 years. However, a property with a notice of default or foreclosure may be allowed to participate in the CaliforniaFIRST Program if it receives consent from the property's current lender(s).
- l. The property owners must not have involuntary liens, defaults or judgments applicable to the subject property in excess of \$500. California Communities may review public records, including the county real property records and court documents, to verify compliance with this requirement. A property owner with an involuntary lien of greater than \$500 may be allowed to participate in the CaliforniaFIRST Program if it can demonstrate an acceptable reason for the lien, default or judgment and a path for resolution. A commercial property with an involuntary tenant's lien will be reviewed and eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- m. The "private loan to value ratio" must be 80% or less based on (i) private property debt including mortgages and (ii) the assessed value of the property and/or the average market value of comparable properties. If the private loan to value ratio is only met with respect to the assessed value or the average market value of comparable properties, but not both, California Communities may request additional information before ruling on the application. If the title search does not provide adequate information to calculate the private loan to value ratio, the property owner will also be asked to provide a current mortgage statement reflecting the outstanding balance and any payment delinquencies. Lender consent to participation can allow for waiver of the private loan to value ratio requirement. This ratio may be adjusted in order to comply with state and federal requirements.
- n. The "public loan to value ratio" must be 10% or less based on (i) the CaliforniaFIRST assessment and overlapping special assessments and special tax debt and (ii) the assessed value of the property and average market value of comparable properties. If the public loan to value ratio is only met with respect to the assessed value or the average market value of comparable properties, but not both, California Communities may request additional information before ruling on the application.
- o. Because the CaliforniaFIRST Program involves issuance of bonds by California Communities, California Communities is concerned that property owners who participate in the program will pay their assessments in full on a timely basis. Therefore, California Communities reserves the right to request additional information.

## E. Eligible Costs

The CaliforniaFIRST program may finance the costs of installing Authorized Improvements, audit costs and application fees. All local and state rebates must be deducted from the financed amount prior to approval. The federal Income Tax Credit value may be included in the financed amount.

## F. Eligible Contractors

Contractor eligibility is being standardized throughout the country, and the CaliforniaFIRST Program will comply with applicable state and federal laws.

**Renewable Energy; Energy Efficiency.** The CaliforniaFIRST Program requires contractors installing energy efficiency measures to meet the eligibility requirements of the pending CPUC statewide energy efficiency rebate program. The current draft requirements include BPI certification, HPwES certification, and/or a HERS II rating.

Contractors installing solar PV and/or SWH must meet the eligibility requirements of the CSI. Other renewable energy technologies must be installed by licensed contractors who qualify for other state rebate programs such as the Self Generation Incentive Program and/or Emerging Renewables Program.

**Water Efficiency.** The CaliforniaFIRST Program is currently developing the eligibility criteria for contractors installing water conservation measures. At a minimum, contractors must be properly licensed and abide by the codes and standards of the local building department.

## IV. Financing of the CaliforniaFIRST Program

### A. Minimum and Maximum Financing Amounts

**Maximum Financing Amount for the CaliforniaFIRST Program.** The maximum aggregate dollar amount of the principal component of contractual assessments to be levied under the CaliforniaFIRST Program for the County is \$1 billion.

**Minimum Financing Amount for each Property.** The minimum installation cost that can be financed is \$5,000.

**Residential Properties.** Residential properties are eligible for financing up to the lesser of (i) \$75,000 or (ii) 10% of the assessed and/or market value of the property. For this purpose, residential properties include detached single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhouses, twin homes, and multi-family and tenancy in common properties with up to four units.

**Non-residential Properties.** Non-residential properties are eligible for financing up to 10% of the assessed and/or market value of the property. For this purpose, non-residential properties consist of commercial, industrial, large multi-family, community facilities, and non-profit-owned properties. Large multi-family properties are defined as those that contain five or more units.

### B. Financing Structure

California Communities will finance the installation of Authorized Improvements using three different financing structures at the County level, as described below. In order to provide the lowest possible interest rates through credit diversification, California Communities will purchase bonds issued for each county's CaliforniaFIRST program and issue bonds to the public bond market on a statewide basis.

The CaliforniaFIRST Program may utilize three different bond structures to finance the installation of Authorized Improvements in the County. In all three cases, bonds will be issued to finance the installation of Authorized Improvements for a specific list of properties in the County and debt service on the bonds will be secured by and payable from contractual assessments paid by participating properties in the County. The interest rate on bonds issued for the CaliforniaFIRST Program will be reflected in the amount of the contractual assessments paid by property owners.



- Microbonds: "Micro-bonds" are bonds issued to finance the installation of Authorized Improvements for one or a limited number of properties. These bonds will be purchased by Renewable Funding and will be remarketed by RBC Capital Markets to the public bond market when a significant number of micro-bonds have been issued. The interest rate on micro-bonds will be set daily or weekly. The interest rate on bonds issued for the CaliforniaFIRST Program will be reflected in the amount of the contractual assessments paid by property owners, and, with micro-bonds, the contractual assessments will be fixed for the duration of the repayment period in the Assessment Contract. Property owners may drop out of the program up to the time the lien is placed on the home without penalty beyond the cost of the application fee.
- Pooled bond: "Pooled bonds" are bonds issued to finance the installation of Authorized Improvements for a large group of properties. Pooled bonds will be sold to the market on a quarterly or more frequent basis depending upon the demand for financing by property owners in the County. In order to facilitate pooled bond financings, Assessment Contracts will be signed by property owners prior to issuance of the pooled bonds. The contractual assessments will reflect a not-to-exceed interest rate on the pooled bonds. No bonds will be issued if the not to exceed interest rate would be exceeded. If a property owner withdraws from the CaliforniaFIRST program after the Assessment Contract has been signed and/or pooled bonds have been issued, the property owner must pay the costs associated with removing the lien, including the administrative, financing, and pre-payment costs.
- Stand-Alone: Large commercial projects may be eligible for a stand-alone bond issuance dependent on the size and type of project. Banks and other financing partners may be utilized to provide funding for these projects. Under this approach, California Communities will issue a bond and the bank or other financing partner will purchase the bond.

In the pilot stage of the CaliforniaFIRST program, it is anticipated that both residential and non-residential properties will utilize the pooled bond approach.

### C. Financing Process

The process for property owners to receive financing through the CaliforniaFIRST Program is designed to be straightforward.

- **Education.** Property owners visit the dedicated website to: learn about the program, the financing terms and other details; read the terms and conditions; and find approved contractors and improvements. Property owners must determine that they will meet the eligibility requirements.
- **Application.** Property owners apply on-line for a funding reservation from the CaliforniaFIRST Program and pay a non-refundable application fee. Applications will include a proposed project and contractor bid. Property owners must electronically agree to the CaliforniaFIRST Program Terms as part of the application.
- **Review and Approval.** California Communities performs title work to confirm ownership, screens for unpaid taxes or other delinquent property-based debt, applies loan-to-value metrics, and evaluates the proposed project. California Communities will approve an application only after confirming that the property meets the underwriting criteria, loading order process, and other CaliforniaFIRST Program requirements.
- **Reservation.** If their application is approved, property owners then receive a reservation for funding. In a micro-bond approach, the property owner then proceeds with installation of the Authorized Improvements and requests funding when the property has met all the applicable requirements for funding. The property owner will sign the Assessment Contract and the lien of the contractual assessment will be placed on the property at this time. In a pooled bond approach, property owners sign the Assessment Contract and the lien of the contractual assessment will be placed on the property when the funding reservation is approved. However, property owners must wait to receive a Notice to Proceed before beginning the work on their property in order to make certain bond issuance is successful. Property owners have at least six months after receiving the Notice to Proceed to install their renewable energy, energy efficiency or water efficiency improvements and return to the website to request payment. Residential properties are eligible for

reservation extensions. The fee for reservation extension will be defined in the CaliforniaFIRST Program Terms.

- **Installation.** A qualified installer must complete the installation of Authorized Improvements on the property. See “Eligible Contractors” above.
- **Evidence of Compliance; Funding.** After the property owner has provided all required documentation and met all applicable CaliforniaFIRST Program requirements, California Communities will release funds to the property owner. The property owner must make a funding request and submit all required documents within a minimum of 180 days of application approval for residential projects and within the determined reservation period set at application approval for non-residential projects.
- **Repayment.** The property owner will be expected to pay the contractual assessment installments in the amounts and at the times specified in the Assessment Contract.

Applications from property owners for financing will be considered based on a first-come–first-served basis. If a request from a property owner for financing would cause the CaliforniaFIRST Program to exceed the authorized amount, then the last property that caused the authorization amount to be exceeded will be ineligible for financing. All applications receive a time stamp in order to allow for first-come–first-served priority.

#### D. Interest Rate

Market conditions will determine the interest rate on bonds issued to finance the CaliforniaFIRST Program.

#### E. Administrative Costs

The costs of administering the CaliforniaFIRST Program will be financed through city/county set-up fees, participant application fees, and an administrative component of the contractual assessment installments.

Application fees for property owners will not exceed \$300. On-going administrative fees will not result in an increase to the aggregate interest rate reflected in the contractual assessment installments of more than 1%.

Energy efficiency improvements installed by a contractor without BPI or HPwES certification and without a HERS II evaluation will be subject to an additional fee to cover increased quality assurance requirements. The anticipated fee for an energy efficiency improvement installed without BPI, HPwES or HERS II will not exceed \$100.

The fee charged by the County for the collection of the contractual assessment installments on the County property tax bill and the cost of recording the various notices in the real property records will be included in each property’s contractual assessment. California Communities has consulted with the County and determined that the fee charged by the County for the collection of the contractual assessment installments on the County property tax bill will not exceed 3% of each annual installment.

#### F. Other Financed Amounts

The costs of issuing bonds will be financed through the contractual assessments. California Communities estimates that the costs of issuance will not exceed 5% of the cost of installing the Authorized Improvements.

The contractual assessments may also finance a debt service reserve fund to pay debt service on the bonds in the event of contractual assessment installment delinquencies. Debt service reserve funds will typically be equal to approximately 10% of the principal component of the contractual assessment.

In addition, because there is a July 1 deadline for placing the contractual assessments on the County property tax bill, contractual assessments may also finance the first year’s installments if the deadline cannot be met.

## G. Prepayment

The assessment may be prepaid, in whole or in part, at any time upon the payment of the unpaid principal component of the assessment, the accrued but unpaid interest component of the assessment through the prepayment date and a prepayment premium in the amount set forth in the Assessment Contract. The premium may vary based upon the timing of the prepayment.

## V. Public Agency Official

California Communities has authorized a number of authorized representatives to execute Assessment Contracts, including the following:

<b>Name:</b>	Daniel B. Harrison
<b>Title:</b>	Administrative Director
<b>Phone:</b>	(916) 658-8267
<b>Email:</b>	dharrison@cacities.org
<b>Address:</b>	1400 K Street, Suite 400 Sacramento, CA 95814

## VI. Changes to the Report

California Communities may make changes to this Report and the CaliforniaFIRST Program documents from time to time in its absolute discretion. No such changes will affect the amounts payable by a property owner under an existing Assessment Contract.

## VII. Appendices and Exhibits

Exhibit A: Assessment Contract – Agreement to Pay Assessment and Finance Improvements

Exhibit B: Boundary Map – Territory of contractual assessments (not included)

Exhibit C: Draft CaliforniaFIRST Program Terms (not included)

Exhibit D: Draft CaliforniaFIRST Program Authorized Improvements