



Employee Home Solar Program



Why Offer Green Employee Benefits?

Green Employee Benefits are an easy, fun, and most importantly, low-cost way to engage employees. As cited in the [Practice Greenhealth Employee Engagement toolkit](#), employees who say they have the opportunity to make a **direct social and environmental impact through their job report higher satisfaction levels** than those who don't, by a **2:1 ratio**. Providing incentives and programming to employees to improve the health of their homes, families, and friends is a way to extend the "culture of caring" beyond the walls of the organization.

Green Employee Benefits can facilitate behavior changes with tangible results which also measurably benefit the environment. They have the potential to accelerate meaningful environmental impacts and bring sustainability values deeper into the fabric of an organization. The services can help retain and attract employees, as well as benefit their health and financial well-being.

Introducing the first Green Employee Benefit for Practice Greenhealth members: *Employee Home Solar*.

What is an Employee Home Solar Discount Program?

It started with a pilot program where [Health Care Climate Council](#) and Practice Greenhealth members provided their employees with the opportunity to buy or lease solar systems for their homes at a substantially lower rate than the national average. A pre-approved solar provider provides bulk-purchasing rates for employees. Hospitals then convene sessions to provide information about the program for employees, instruct them on how they can sign up, and track their participation and energy savings.

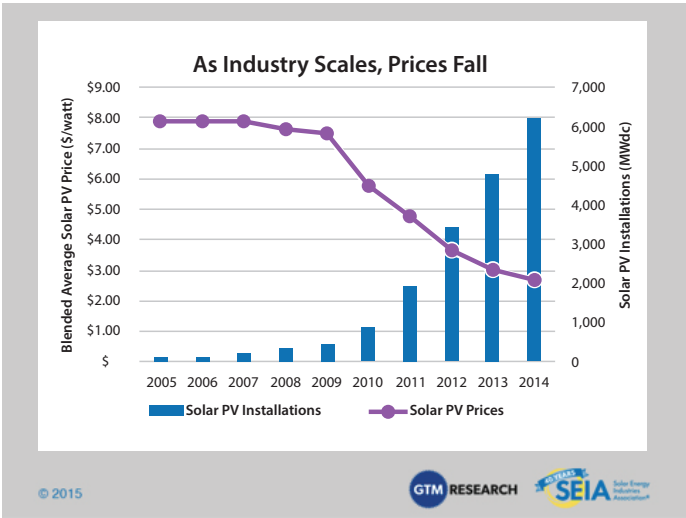
Hospitals have an incredible opportunity to increase their resilience, reduce emissions, and offer a clean energy source for their communities. As the lens of population health continues to rise in importance, looking outside the four walls of a hospital has become a vital practice.

Why Offer Employee Home Solar Discounts?

One growing opportunity that hospitals are beginning to evaluate are renewable energy sources, but as the quote below points out—it’s time to consider more than just their own hospital footprint.

“The total energy used by Cleveland Clinic employees for their personal energy needs is as great as that used by the entire Cleveland Clinic Health System.”

Jon Utech, Senior Director, Office for a Healthy Environment, Cleveland Clinic



The solar industry has made incredible strides in decreasing the price per watt. [Deutsche Bank](#) estimates that the price will decrease as much as 40 percent by 2019 with the greatest cost reductions coming from the residential sector. [Bloomberg New Energy Finance](#) reported that for nearly 60 countries, solar is becoming the cheapest available form of energy.

Finally, a hospital’s mission is focused on health. A [DOE report](#) on its path to the SunShot Initiative, a ten year journey to drive down the cost of solar electricity to \$1/watt, shares that solar power can prevent \$167 billion in health and environmental damages through decreased air pollution.

Success Stories from Health Systems

In 2015, University Hospitals was able to build its program into an existing effort called [Solarize Cleveland](#), and also partnered with a solar company to support the Sustainable Cleveland 2019 initiative. With the support of the city, it made it a bit easier to approach their administration with this program proposal. Lessons from University Hospitals include:

- Find a champion in human resources, start with smaller conversations on the ground, and work up the leadership chain.
- Ensure that the marketing and legal departments work closely together, especially in regards to branding.
- If there is a champion who is already working on energy or employee engagement issues, approach them to work on this together!

The team targeted those employees that had participated in the employee energy challenge as the first round of marketing. UH plans to take a broader approach by incorporating the program into the green living discounts for employees through human resources.

“The relationship between climate change and human health is becoming more apparent,” said Dr. Aparna Bole, Medical Director of Community Integration at UH Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital and Sustainability Advisor for University Hospitals. “Every day our clinicians witness the increasing patient health impact of a changing climate, for example from worsening air quality and extreme weather events. By partnering with a local solar company and Sustainable Cleveland, University Hospitals is working to make solar energy affordable and accessible to our employees. It’s another important way we can help our patients, our employees and our community.”

Goal - Green Employee Benefits	Details
Employee Home Solar Discounts	As part of a health system’s overall sustainability efforts, offer and market incentives to promote affordable solar for employees.

Get Started

Step 1:

Create a project team. Hospitals and health systems have unique decision making structures around what can be offered to employees. Pull together a team with sustainability lead/team, HR, legal, marketing, energy manager, or others that may be interested in this project.

Step 2:

Evaluate what local energy efficiency offers are available for your employees. As with hospital operations, the first step is always to start with energy efficiency and then to find the best energy source. One example is at Partners HealthCare, who helps its employees connects to [mass saves](#), an energy efficiency home incentive program which offers free home assessments and rebates on EE upgrades. Work with your local utilities or other organizations to see what can be offered to your employees as a starting point to decrease their home energy footprint.

Step 3:

Review and select vendors/business partners to work with to offer this employee benefit. If the team hasn't already, include HR, legal, marketing and frontline staff at this point to get input on the partnership review and know how to "pitch" options to leadership. As learned from the pilot health systems, do not be intimidated by the obstacles that legal or other departments may pose.

Potential vendors to consider for this project:

- [EnergySage](#)
- [Pick My Solar](#)
- Local companies/utilities: There are various ways to identify local companies, but contacting your utility provider is a great starting point. One example is Inova Health System, who was able to find a local organization working on a [Solarize Nova](#) campaign to formulate a partnership.

Step 4:

Set up a meeting and make the pitch about various vendors to human resources, legal and/or marketing leadership. Using the various tools provided under [resources](#), pitch this to the decision makers.

Step 5:

Sign agreement between legal and vendor. A word of caution from the pilot systems - this can often take the most time to complete, as the legal department may have several edits to the agreement before it can be signed.

Step 6:

Create a marketing and communications plan. Using the marketing plan template (located under resources), work with leadership to create the message as to why this is important to employees, the hospital, and its community. The communication plan includes both an internal focus with the project team to employees, as well as an external focus with the vendor and the broader community.

Step 7:

Track progress and celebrate success. As with any new initiative, a strong program requires setting some type of goal and then celebrating the milestones along the way with the smaller team and the overall hospital/health system.

Step 8:

Make the program sustainable and continue offering Green Employee Benefits. Ensure continuous education and inclusion in new employee orientation and annual refresher training, to maintain momentum and benefit. Utilize the employee poster template (seen below in the resources) to highlight fellow employees that went with solar.

While Practice Greenhealth is excited to partner with these solar companies to offer this discount, this is not an official endorsement of the organization and/or their products. Practice Greenhealth and Health Care Without Harm are not liable for transactions between any of the above-listed companies and the health system employees.

Resources and Helpful Links:

[Employee Home Solar Pitch Slides](#)

[Employee Home Solar Marketing Plan Template](#)

[New York Times: Home Solar Power Discounts Are Worker Perk in New Program](#)

[Vox: Solar power is already saving lives in the US. Here's how.](#)

[DOE: The Environmental and Public Health Benefits of Achieving High Penetration of Solar Energy in the United States](#)

[SEIA Solar Industry Data](#)