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Filer:	Hannah Gbeh
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Community Benefit Agreement Strategy

A Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) is an agreement signed by community benefit groups and a developer, identifying the community benefits a developer agrees to deliver, in return for community support of the project. Community benefit groups are coalitions comprised of neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, unions, environmental groups and other stakeholders. They represent the interests of residents who will be impacted by proposed developments. CBAs can ensure that measurable, local benefits will be given to a community. They are enforceable, legally binding contracts for all parties that stipulate community benefits and are the direct result of substantial community input (DOE 2017).

At Soda Mountain LLC, we value the communities we work in and recognize that meaningful engagement is core to improving the regions we operate within. We believe CBAs can improve many state and local government approval processes by promoting these values: Inclusiveness, Enforceability, Transparency, Coalition-Building, Efficiency, and Clarity of Outcomes. Our team is committed to meeting these goals when implementing our CBAs.

- **Inclusiveness.** Our CBA negotiation process will ensure that community issues are heard and addressed.
- **Enforceability.** Our CBAs will ensure that developer and community promises regarding community benefits are legally enforceable.
- **Transparency.** Our CBAs will help the public, community groups, state and local government officials, and news media monitor a project's outcome.
- **Coalition-Building.** Our process of negotiating a CBA will foster new alliances among community groups that may care about different issues or have different constituencies.
- **Efficiency.** Our CBAs encourage early negotiation between our team and the community.
- **Clarity of Outcomes.** Our CBAs provide government entities with the information they need to illustrate successful delivery of promised benefits.

Our team is fully committed to implementing a sustainable CBA that focuses on the areas that matter most to local stakeholders. Our aim is simple, to make a positive difference to the lives of people around the projects we operate. Communities in the vicinity of the Soda Mountain Solar Project include Baker, California and Barstow, California. These are the communities that our CBA strategy for the Soda Mountain Solar Project will focus on.

Anticipated Timeline

Phase 1 of the CBA for Soda Mountain Solar Project will begin in July 2024 when the Soda Mountain LLC project team will begin meeting with the community organizations in the region to discuss the local and regional needs of residents in the project area. Phase 1 of the CBA for the Soda Mountain Solar Project includes:

- Identifying relevant stakeholders and building public trust. Stakeholders will represent a diverse group of community-based organizations and individuals.
- Engaging community representatives, as well as coalitions, and communicating project benefits with open dialogue/transparency.

- Ensuring stakeholder representatives are part of the project development team early in the process and aligning project goals and schedules with their understanding.
- Initiating project briefings with key state and local government officials.
- Training company project representatives about community outreach and CBAs.
- Educating stakeholders about the technical aspects of the Project.

Between September 2024 and February 2025, we intend to implement Phase 2 of the CBA strategy, which includes executing legally binding agreements with at least three community organizations. To satisfy AB 205's opt-in requirements and to be in compliance with Public Resources Code Section 25545.10, an executed CBA will be submitted no later than 45 days after completeness review. Our team will update its application with relevant information about the counterparties and the terms of agreements and conversations as they progress.

Areas of Focus

Our CBA Strategy includes creating a community coalition that is broad and benefits a cross-section of residents and other stakeholders in our Project region. Our goal is to establish clear and measurable commitments that include expectations for deliverables and clarity regarding any public reporting requirements.

Below is an overview of our CBA areas of focus and target organizations. We expect to execute one legally binding CBA for each area of focus.

1. Education

- Target Organizations:
 - Baker Valley Unified School District
 - Barstow Unified School District
 - Barstow Community College
- CBA Strategies:
 - Direct cash assistance to local school foundations
 - Establishment of a scholarship program
 - Donations of supplies or materials to support educational goals.

2. Nutritional Support

- Target Organizations
 - Barstow Entrepreneur Resource Center
 - Desert Manna Food Bank
 - Barstow Community College
- CBA Strategies:
 - Direct cash assistance to local food banks
 - Donations of supplies or materials to support food distribution.

3. Biological Resources

- Target Organizations
 - Barstow Community College
 - National Park Conservation Association
- CBA Strategies:
 - Direct cash assistance towards research opportunities supporting biological diversity.

- Allow site access in undeveloped areas of site for biological resources research and study.

References

U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Minority Business and Economic Development. Guide to Advancing Opportunities for Community Benefits through Energy Project Development. August 1, 2017.