Investment Ready Communities

Expert guidance to protect your property rights



Help your community welcome renewable energy development and create better opportunities for landowners.

REFA's Investment Ready Communities service helps farming and ranching communities proactively prepare for renewable energy development through our partnership with Clean Connect Strategies. Instead of waiting for developers to show up and face potential opposition, this program helps communities get ahead of the process by building support, addressing concerns, and creating clear pathways for responsible development.

Who this helps:

Farmer and rancher landowners who want to:

- Improve their chances of hosting renewable energy projects
- Help their community become more welcoming to clean energy development
- Reduce local opposition and conflict around renewable projects
- Ensure their community benefits from renewable energy opportunities

Local community organizations seeking to:

- Build economic opportunities through renewable energy
- Create jobs and additional tax revenue
- Reduce conflict around energy development
- Prepare for responsible renewable energy growth

What is an "Investment Ready" Community?

An Investment Ready community has completed a comprehensive engagement process that results in clear guidelines for renewable energy development, broad community support, and established benefit-sharing agreements. This certification signals to developers that the community:

- **Welcomes responsible renewable development**
- **Has clear, predictable permitting processes**
- **Offers reduced political and regulatory risk**
- **Provides established community benefit frameworks**

For landowners, this means more developers will be interested in your community, creating better opportunities and potentially more competitive lease terms.

How the Program Works

Phase 1: Community Assessment & Engagement

- Conduct listening sessions to understand community needs and concerns
- Map key stakeholders including farmers, local officials, and community leaders
- Identify opportunities and potential challenges for renewable development

Example: Clean Connect facilitates town halls where farmers can share their experiences with renewable projects and address neighbors' questions about land use, property values, and agricultural operations.

Phase 2: Benefit Planning & Policy Alignment

- Work with the community to develop benefit-sharing frameworks
- Review local policies and ordinances for renewable energy development
- Create clear guidelines for project siting and community engagement

Example: The community develops standards for how lease payments might support local schools, road improvements, or emergency services, while ensuring agricultural operations can continue alongside energy projects.

Phase 3: Certification & Developer Outreach

- Certify the community as "Investment Ready"
- Market the community to renewable energy developers
- Provide ongoing support for project negotiations and implementation

Example: Your community gets marketed to developers to identify welcoming locations, increasing the likelihood that multiple developers will compete for projects in your area.

Benefits for Farmers & Ranchers

Better Project Opportunities

- More developers interested in your area means more potential projects for your land
- Reduced local opposition creates smoother development processes
- Clear community guidelines reduce uncertainty and delays

Stronger Negotiating Position

- Community-wide support gives individual landowners more leverage
- Established benefit frameworks provide benchmarks for fair compensation
- Reduced development risk can lead to better lease terms

Preserved Relationships

- Proactive community engagement reduces neighbor conflicts
- Transparent processes build trust and understanding
- Focus on agricultural compatibility protects farming operations

Economic Benefits

- Additional tax revenue and enhanced investment supports local services and infrastructure
- Job creation during construction and operations
- Increased economic activity in rural communities

Benefits for Communities

Economic Development

- New tax revenue and enhanced investment for schools, roads, and public services
- Local job creation in construction and maintenance
- Support for local businesses during development phases

Energy Independence

- Local energy production strengthens America's energy security
- Reduces dependence on foreign energy sources
- Supports American energy leadership and rural economic strength

Controlled Growth

- Community-driven development standards
- Protection of important agricultural and environmental resources
- Balanced approach that preserves rural character

About Clean Connect Strategies

Clean Connect Strategies specializes in community-centered renewable energy siting with policy and political experience across 36 states and numerous rural communities. Their team brings expertise in:

- **Community engagement and stakeholder mapping**
- **Political campaign strategy and coalition building**
- **Regulatory policy and permitting processes**
- **Multi-stakeholder project management**

The partnership ensures REFA members receive professional community engagement services from experts who understand both renewable energy development and rural community dynamics.

Success Stories

Communities that have completed similar processes report:

- **Reduced development timelines** due to less local opposition
- **Better project outcomes** with stronger community benefits
- **Improved relationships** between landowners and neighbors
- **Enhanced economic opportunities** beyond just landowner payments

Example: In one Midwest farming community, the proactive engagement process led to three different developers competing for projects, resulting in higher lease rates for farmers and additional community benefits including broadband infrastructure and school funding.

Getting Started

The process typically takes 12-18 months from initial assessment to certification. Clean Connect Strategies works with communities of all sizes, from individual townships to multi-county regions.

Who Can Participate

- Individual REFA members interested in organizing their community
- Groups of farmers and ranchers in the same area
- Local organizations and governments seeking economic development
- Communities facing renewable energy bans or moratoria

Investment Required

- Time commitment for community meetings and input sessions
- Coordination with local officials and community leaders
- Participation in benefit planning and policy discussions

Important Notes:

- This service is free for REFA members and their communities
- The process focuses on community-driven decision making
- Participation doesn't guarantee specific projects will be developed
- Communities maintain local control over development standards
- Agricultural operations and land use remain the priority

Ready to Get Started?

Contact REFA to learn how your community can become Investment Ready:

- **Phone:** 630-299-8615
- **Email:** jannas@renewableenergyfarmers.org
- **Online Community:** Submit a service request