

Energizing Rural Communities Prize The Appalachia Chispa Partnership Plan

Claudia Matthews is living the American dream as a proud woman, Latino-owned business owner of the Puesta Del Sol Farm and Event Venue in the great state of West Virginia in the rural County of Hampshire in the Appalachian. Claudia has led Puesta Del Sol to be one of the few net-zero farms and event venues in the United States; her sustainability mission was achieved by adding geothermal and solar systems. But that is just the start, with plans of implementing agrivoltaics; an anaerobic digestion biogas system; a battery electric storage system, and a combined heat and power system, she looks to be the spark for other farms to replicate at scale to support their farm operations. In addition, these energy systems will be used to support the local community as an emergency resiliency shelter and tele-school equity hub.

Additionally, the balance of energy will be available for a community-based program for the local community to lower their electric bill while using renewable energy. Another value-adding benefit of the project is a new local food supply that will further reduce emissions and fuel consumption.



Partnerships are critical to the project's success, including project partner Jamie Cooke, who has championed the planning and/or implementation of numerous large solar microgrid and green hydrogen projects. In addition, the team includes partners that will assist with the technical and installation of the systems, community outreach, and workforce development. In addition, the Appalachia Chispa (Spark) will impact the local community with the potential of an optimistic regional replication and holistic impact by providing a proof-of-concept example.

