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# COOPERATIVE FUND of New England

## Pioneer Valley PhotoVoltaics Co-op: Good, Green Jobs

There is a lot of talk these days about green jobs—creating employment in emerging industries that are focused on preserving or restoring environmental quality. But green jobs should also be good jobs, and worker co-ops like Pioneer Valley PhotoVoltaics, or (PV)<sup>2</sup>, are growing good, green, *co-operative* jobs. In the process, they are not only supporting a more healthy environment but building a model for business that is rooted in the community and creates ownership opportunities for workers.

A designer and installer of renewable energy systems including solar, wind and small hydro projects across Southwestern New England, (PV)<sup>2</sup> is committed to the highest quality service while creating jobs at fair wages. Their mission is to increase the use of renewable energy, to reduce the region's dependence on fossil fuels, and to help communities reduce their environmental footprint.

"We pride ourselves on designing systems that will make the most power in the smallest footprint and installing those systems in such a way that it will perform for you for years to come," says Kim Pinkham, a founding member, chief financial officer and board secretary for the co-op. "At the same time we are building a business that will be around in 20 years when your system may need an upgrade."

Founded by four members in 2002, the co-op benefited from the support of organizations such as the Co-operative Development Institute. Early projects included solar installations for area food co-ops such as Green Fields Market (Franklin Community Co-op) in Greenfield, MA, and River Valley Market (Northampton Community Food Co-op) in Northampton, MA. "The opportunity to collaborate with another co-op on the installation of our solar system was a deciding factor in doing the project," says Suzette Snow-Cobb, general manager at Franklin Community Co-op. "We not only got

an excellent system, but demonstrated a successful example of the principle of co-operation among co-ops."

As (PV)<sup>2</sup> has expanded beyond photovoltaic systems to offer a range of renewable energy options including small wind and hydro projects, they have also grown their customer base, which now includes homeowners, businesses, community organizations and local governments. The co-op employs fifteen people in their Greenfield, MA, and New Britain, CT offices, and actively supports other co-ops through their work with the Valley Alliance of Worker Co-ops, a network of co-operative enterprises in western New England ([www.valleyworker.org](http://www.valleyworker.org)).

As Kim points out, the marketplace for renewable energy is constantly evolving. "There are more and more people getting into the business, more competition, and the regulatory climate changes from year to year," she says.

A line of credit from the Cooperative Fund of New England (CFNE) has helped the co-op stay ahead of the curve. "CFNE has made a generous amount of money available to us that would allow us to make a very large grant-supported project possible for our clients, even if they cannot mobilize the capital for such a project up front," says Kim. "This lets us pursue projects that we would have to pass up otherwise."

Whether you're considering renewable energy for your home, business or community organization, (PV)<sup>2</sup> can help. And when you give your business to a worker co-op, you'll also be supporting a more just, democratic and sustainable regional economy.

You can also help grow co-ops like (PV)<sup>2</sup> through your investment in the Cooperative Fund, or with a charitable contribution to support our work in the region. For more information, please contact us or visit [www.coopfund.coop](http://www.coopfund.coop). —Profile by Erbin Crowell (Updated 6/10).



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