

Our OPALCO.com Decatur (who paid?) It's not outright DECEPTION but,....

What OPALCO says

- OPALCO says solar microgrids are funded by "Subscribers" and "Grants"
- They conveniently don't mention "**Members**" (added to everyone's rate)

What actually happens

- **The full Decatur microgrid cost \$3.158 million** (1 MW/2.6 MWh battery storage system + installation, site work, electrical, overheads, taxes, contingency)
- Funding sources:
 - **Subscribers**: ~\$828,000–\$847,000. (from ~270 members) for the solar array portion only.
 - **Grants**: \$905,000 from Washington state Clean Energy Fund (CEF II) Grid Modernization program (primarily for the battery), plus \$207,000 USDA REAP grant (for solar).
 - **Members: \$1.425 million** (remaining battery/installation costs, overheads, etc.)
They just add it to the rates!

How it works

- OPALCO's public messaging (website, quick facts, budget reports) never quantifies or highlights this OPALCO share as "ratepayer-funded." Instead, they repeatedly say:
- "Funded by member subscriptions and grants."
- "Member survey results show preference for no rate funding; projects are not funded through rates."
- "These projects are funded 100% by individual member investors" (for community solar array).
- Battery: "Received a grant... that allocates funds to Washington consumers."
- They separate the solar array (explicitly subscription-funded) from the full microgrid (battery + infrastructure), **rarely discussing the complete cost split in member-facing materials.**
- In budget packets and quick facts, similar projects are described with "offsetting funds from grants" or "member contributions," **implying no net rate impact** (due to benefits like demand savings offsetting costs).
- No line-item disclosure like "non-subscribers contributed \$1.425M via rates"—it's treated as internal capital, not a direct pass-through.
- This selective emphasis (highlighting subscriptions/grants, omitting the residual OPALCO share) can give the impression that non-subscribers pay nothing, even though the co-op's structure means they actually do. **It's not outright deception—but it lacks full transparency** on the indirect burden.
- If this concerns you, public records like OPALCO's IRS Form 990s (via ProPublica) show overall financials (capital additions, equity changes), though not project-specific. Member letters in local papers (e.g., Orcasonian) have raised similar points about hidden costs.