

# SolarWise Rhode Island FY17 Recap and FY18 Redesign



RI Energy Efficiency



Online Solar Shopping



Solar Bonus for EE Action



# Outline

- Overview
- Results Program Year 2017
- Analysis
- Research Results
- Recommendations for Program Year 2018
- Next Steps

# Overview: Goals

SolarWise was designed with a number of goals in mind:

- **Accelerate adoption of solar** in Rhode Island
- **Encourage customers to implement EE measures first**
- Help customers save money when installing solar by **reducing the size of the system needed** to meet their electricity consumption
- Provide customers **access to competitive bids** by solar installation vendors
- **Increase the number of participants in RE Growth** because the fixed amount of capacity available in RE Growth will be available to more customers when average system sizes are smaller *[based on customers' reducing their PV size based on expected EE savings]*
- **Broaden the product portfolio being introduced through EE customer channels**

Source: November 2015 National Grid program proposal testimony for RI PUC

# How are these goals being addressed?

- **Accelerate adoption of solar** in Rhode Island
  - RE Growth has been successful with driving additional interconnection applications, but SolarWise has played a small role in that acceleration
- **Encourage customers to implement EE measures first**
  - Utilizing the RISE auditors, over 8,000 energy efficiency audits were completed since April 2016
  - In year 1, SolarWise was marketed to existing EE customers and did not meaningfully increase EE participation (via increased savings) by customers going solar.

# How are these goals being addressed?

- Help customers save money when installing solar by **reducing the size of the system needed** to meet their electricity consumption
  - 3 year baseline requirement from RI currently addresses “right sizing”
- Provide customers **access to competitive bids** by solar installation vendors
  - Achieved through EnergySage Marketplace

# How are these goals being addressed?

- **Increase the number of participants in RE Growth** because the fixed amount of capacity available in RE Growth will be available to more customers when average system sizes are smaller *[based on customers' reducing their PV size based on expected EE savings]*
  - Research on RE Growth participants shows that a minority maximize system size without using the SolarWise program – 68% are less than 90% of max
  - Additionally, flexibility in MW available for Small Solar has avoided participation restrictions

# Results FY 17

- Year one program participation was lower than expected
- RI small PV applications in 2016-2017 were strong
  - 901 applications, over subscription in 2016-17 year
- SolarWise participation
  - About 1,500 screenings for SolarWise assessment eligibility
  - 116 Marketplace registrations
  - 26 sales through the Marketplace
- SolarWise Bonus applications
  - 6 Received and Approved

- Implementation was more challenging than expected
  - Integration with EE channels and processes has been time-consuming and delayed launches to all segments
- Marketing beyond the EE channels is needed to achieve meaningful levels of participation in the Marketplace
  - Customers request audits to focus on EE; a minority are interested in solar
  - Auditors make good effort to deliver solar content; however, their priority is EE
- Other elements of customer experience may also contribute to performance based on anecdotal inputs
  - Complexity of customer experience and application process
  - PV system sizing limit based on estimated EE reductions

- National Grid collected feedback on the SolarWise program from a number of stakeholders:
  - Customer survey
  - Conversations with RISE auditors
  - Feedback from NG and DG Board Member experiences
  - Evaluation of customer system sizing factors

# Research Results

- The customer survey provided great insight into customer's understanding of the SolarWise program
  - Customers were not uniformly well versed in the SolarWise program despite introduction by auditors
  - NG is listed as a top source for solar information but half of the participants don't know where to find the information
  - Only 8% of customers attempted to participate in the program
  - Audit participants are selectively interested in solar (20%) and have a variety of barriers that do not relate to the PBI

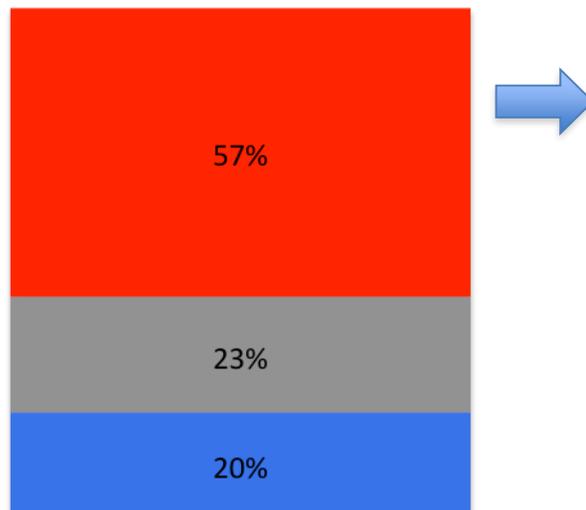
## Interest in Converting To Solar

- Of those who have not installed solar, 1 in 5 participants indicate that they are highly interested (8 to 10).
- Roughly 6 in 10 have low levels of interest (1 to 4).
- Open ended participant feedback indicates that lack of interest is driven by cost/lack of return, aesthetics and the possibility of moving/selling the home.

### Interest In Converting Home To Solar

(Have Not Installed Solar: n=193)

■ High (8 to 10)   ■ Mod (5 to 7)   ■ Low (1 to 4)



### Reasons Not Interested in Solar

#### **COST/LACK OF RETURN**

- “I am interested but the return on investment is not there.”
- “I would not reap its full benefit in my lifetime.”
- “I do not believe New England is the best place to install solar panels. I have heard it takes a long time to get the money back in savings.”
- “It costs too much.”
- “I don’t have a high enough electric bill to warrant it.”

#### **AESTHETICS**

- “Don’t want solar panels on roof, on front side of my house.”
- “Because it is not very attractive from the street.”

#### **SELLING/MOVING**

- “I may be selling soon and it is not worth my investment.”
- “We are selling the home.”

#### **HISTORIC HOME**

- “Historic home.”
- “We have a historical home and don't believe solar energy panels would work for us.”

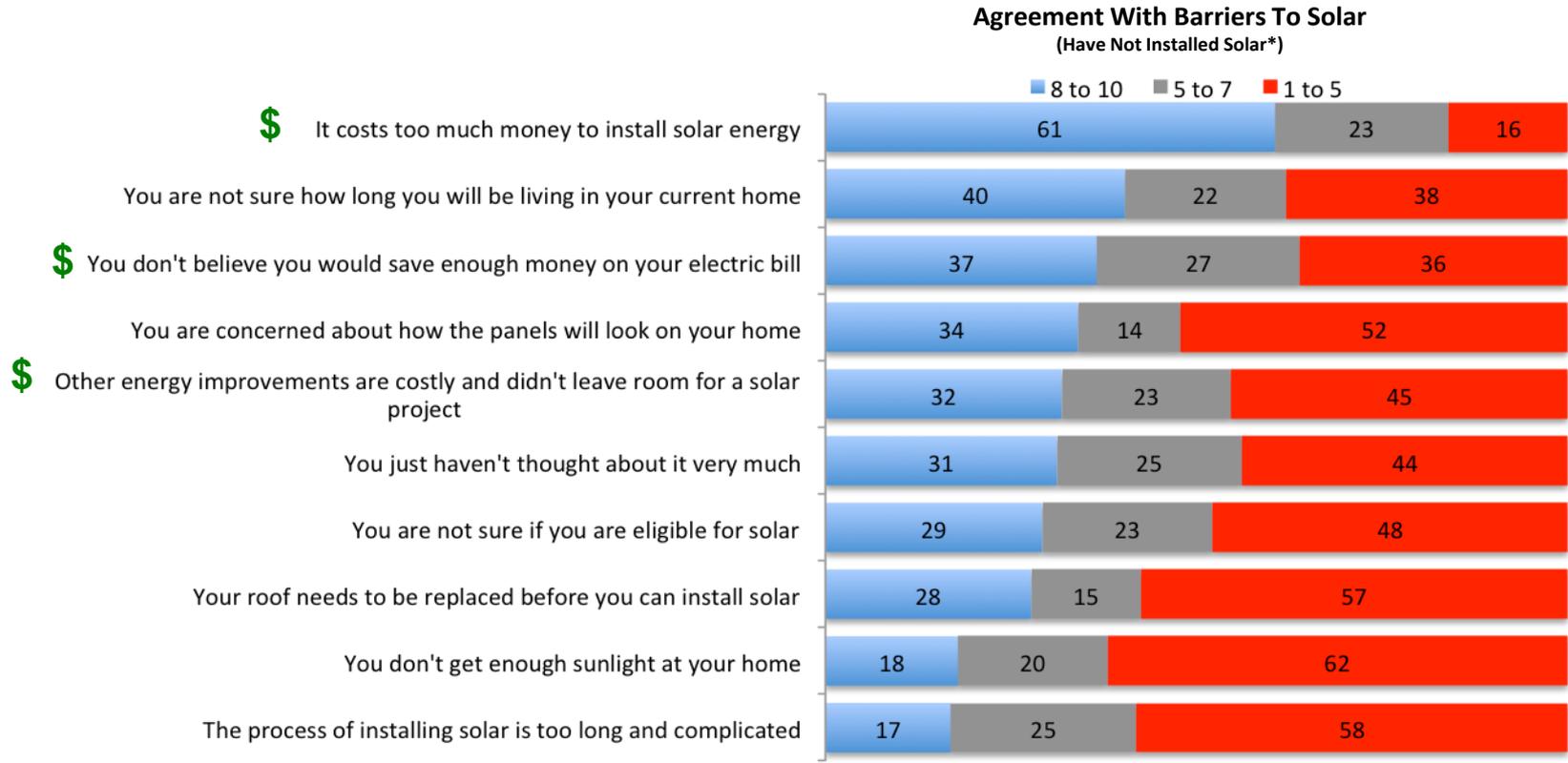
#### **OTHER**

- “I am 75 years old. Let the next owner of the house do it!!”
- “I have not thought about it.”
- “I would have to cut the trees down.”
- “It was not compatible with the electric box with the generator connected to it.”

How interested are you in installing a solar energy system at your home in the future? Please use a 10-point scale, where 1 means “not interested at all” and 10 means “extremely interested”.

## Barriers To Conversion

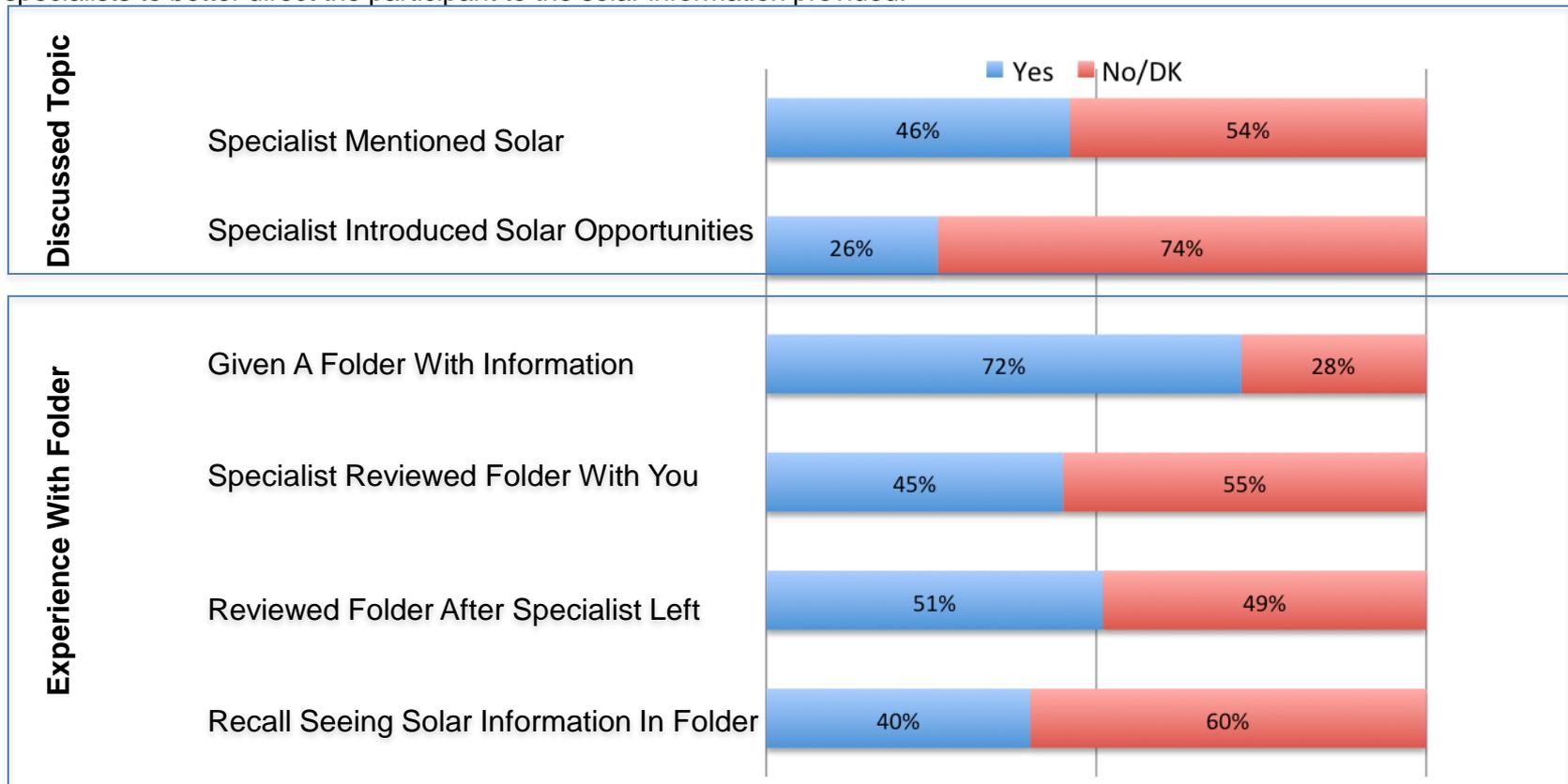
- Ratings on barriers to conversion are consistent with open ended reasons for not converting to solar.
- Cost, uncertainty about staying in the home, lack of return and aesthetics are top barriers.



Next I am going to read you] a list of reasons describing why some people have said they have not installed solar. For each reason, please tell me how much you agree or disagree. Please use a 10-point scale, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 10 means "strongly agree".  
\* Don't Knows Excluded From Base – Base Varies For Each Statement

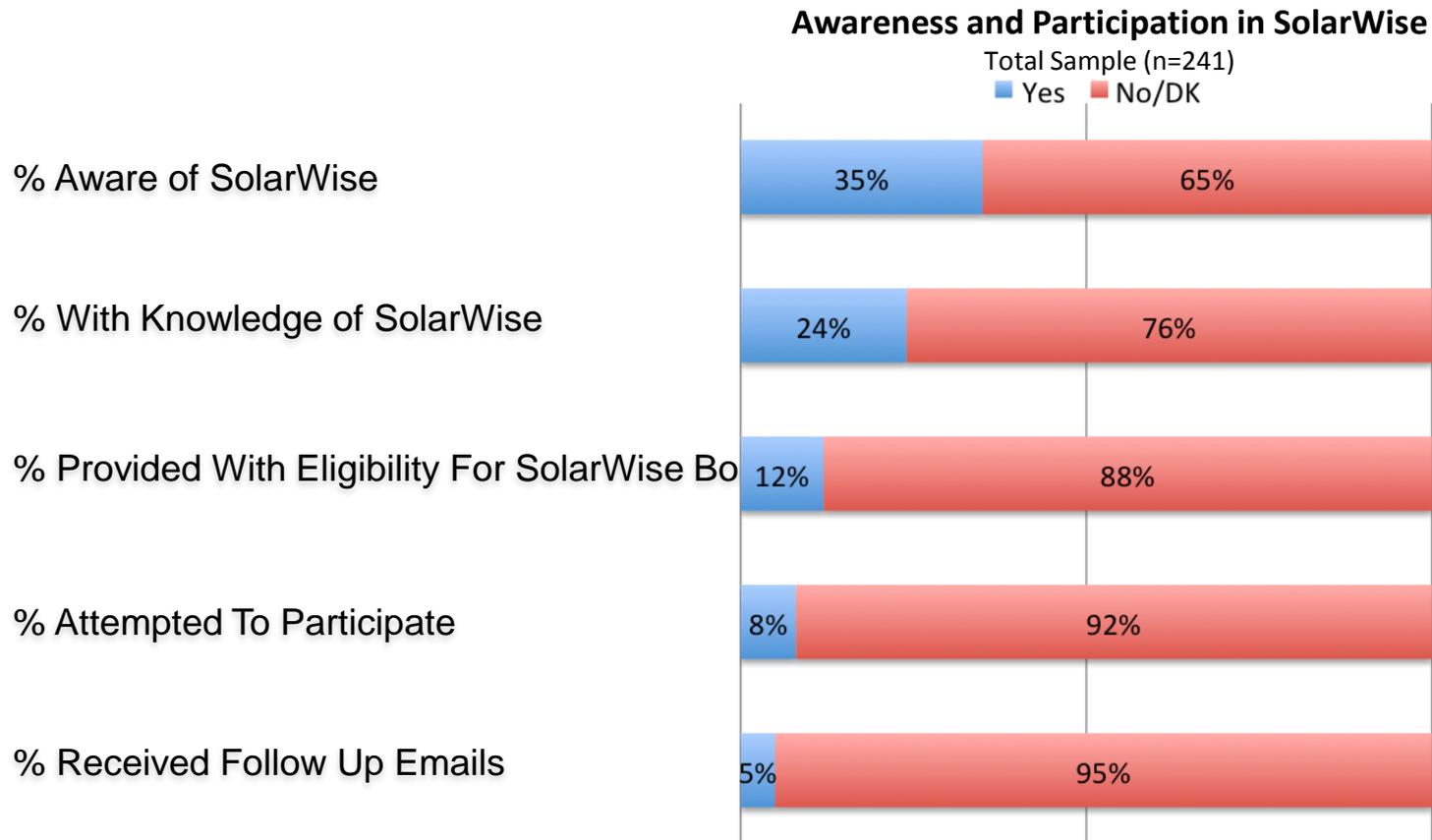
## Recall of Solar Conversations and Materials

- The research reveals that there is considerable opportunity to increase the amount of discussion around the topic of solar conversion with participants. Less than half recall the topic being mentioned by the specialist.
- Furthermore, while most recall being given a folder with energy efficiency information, there is clearly an opportunity for specialists to better direct the participant to the solar information provided.



## Awareness and Participation in SolarWise

- There is a clear opportunity to build awareness and understanding of the SolarWise program.
- Only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> indicate that they are aware of SolarWise – and only 8% indicate they have attempted to participate.



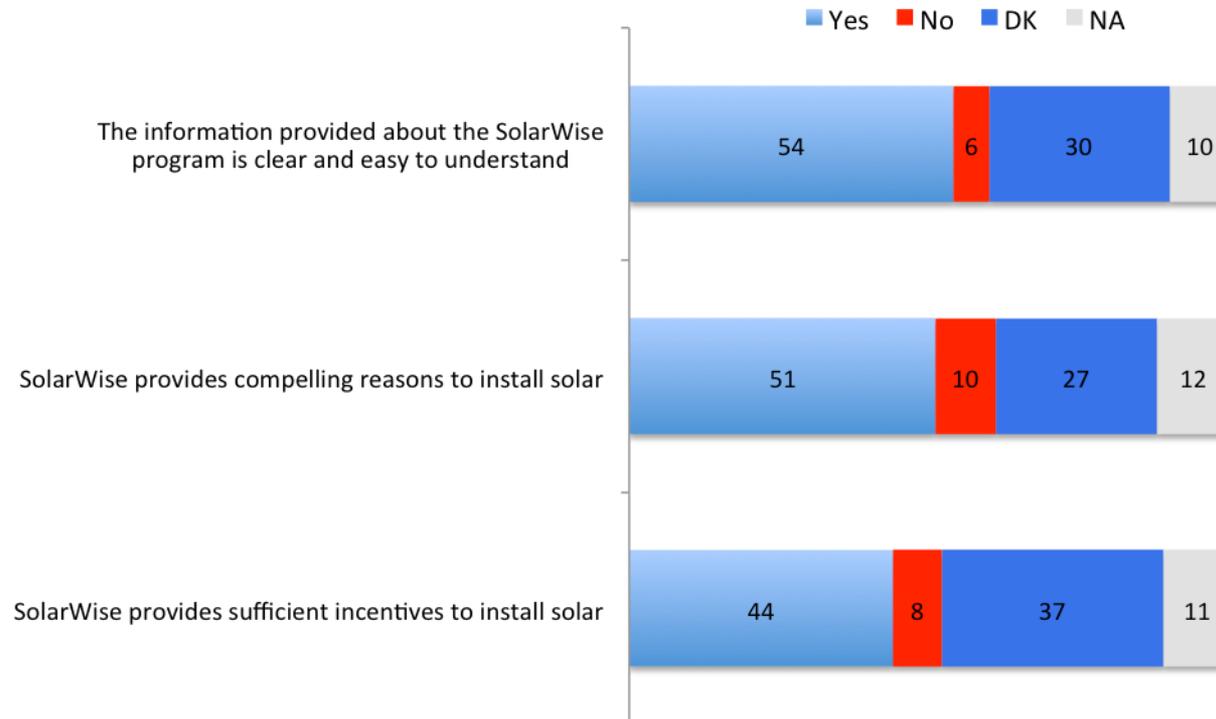
Note: All percentages shown are among total sample.

## Perceptions of SolarWise

- Many of those aware of SolarWise are not knowledgeable about the information, reasons to convert and incentives. This signals an opportunity to better educate individuals about the program.
- Among those with an opinion about SolarWise, most believe the information is provided in a clear and easy to understand manner and that SolarWise provides compelling reasons to install solar and sufficient incentives.

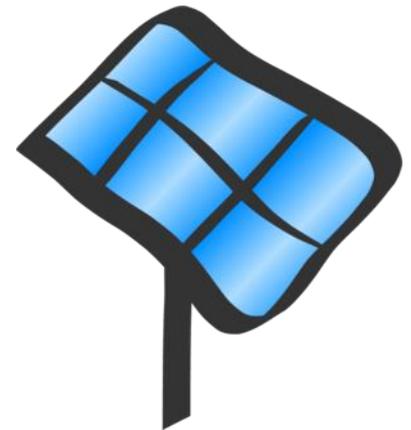
### SolarWise Perceptions

(Aware of SolarWise n=84)



# Recommendations FY18

- Simply, simplify, simplify
- Increase Solar Marketplace participation to help customers save money
- Drive EE and DG implementation on a voluntary basis



# Project Design Recommendations

**A simpler program would be more likely to overcome the Year 1 challenges and meet the goals in the original filing**

- Remove SolarWise “re-sizing” requirement, in lieu of existing size limit based on 3-year average – utilize current RI law
- Remove Bonus tiers, along with application materials, etc.
- Launch a strategic marketing campaign to all RI residential customers through a number of channels on EE and solar

# Benefits to 2018 Design: Customer/Installer

- Customer benefits
  - Simplified process that promotes cost effective EE as well as solar
  - Provides more customers with choices and lower costs through the EnergySage Marketplace
- Solar installer benefits
  - Reduced soft costs from participation of more customers in the Marketplace
  - Customer receives standard PBI options through RE Growth for less complexity

# Next Steps

- Finalize the redesign for submission to PUC
  - Incorporate feedback of Board and other stakeholders
- File petition to modify SolarWise and cease bonus and audit spending in July
- Re-launch new program design in mid-late Fall 2017, post approval