



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

D.P.U. 19-55

May 22, 2019

Inquiry by the Department of Public Utilities on its own Motion into Distributed Generation Interconnection.

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VOTE AND ORDER OPENING INQUIRY

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Public Utilities (“Department”) opens this inquiry to investigate the interconnection of distributed generation (“DG”) in Massachusetts,<sup>1</sup> pursuant to the Standards for Interconnection of Distributed Generation tariff (“DG Interconnection Tariff”)<sup>2</sup> and Distributed Generation Interconnection, D.P.U. 11-75-E (2013). This investigation will review the current standards and procedures by which DG facilities are interconnected to the electric power system.

During the past year, the Department received numerous inquiries from DG interconnection stakeholders seeking clarification of certain aspects of the DG interconnection process. Further, changes to the Commonwealth’s energy-related policies have created a favorable setting for the development of DG projects based on renewable technologies. As a result, the Department understands that there has been an increase in DG interconnection applications submitted to the electric distribution companies in certain regions within the Commonwealth.

As such, the Department finds it necessary to revisit our current interconnection standards and procedures to determine what changes, if any, should be implemented to

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<sup>1</sup> Distributed generation refers to a variety of small-scale technologies that generate electricity at or near the end users of power, such as solar panels. Distributed generation may serve a single structure, such as a home or business, or it may be part of a microgrid (a smaller grid that also is tied to the larger electric power system), such as at a major industrial facility, a military base, or a large college campus.

<sup>2</sup> The electric distribution companies’ DG Interconnection Tariffs are as follows: (1) Fitchburg Gas and Electric Light Company d/b/a Uniti - M.D.P.U. No. 269; (2) Massachusetts Electric Company and Nantucket Electric Company, each d/b/a National Grid - M.D.P.U. No. 1320; and (3) NSTAR Electric Company d/b/a Eversource Energy - M.D.P.U. No. 55.

ensure an efficient and effective interconnection process that will foster continued growth of DG in the Commonwealth consistent with ensuring the safety and reliability of the electric power system. To this end, the Department intends to engage all interested persons in a broadly represented stakeholder process to address DG interconnection issues.

## II. BACKGROUND

In 2002, the Department opened an investigation into interconnection standards and practices that reduce barriers to the installation of DG. Distributed Generation, D.T.E. 02-38, at 2 (2002). The Department worked with interested participants through the Massachusetts DG Interconnection Collaborative, resulting in implementation of a model interconnection tariff used by each electric distribution company for interconnecting DG. See Distributed Generation, D.T.E. 02-38-A (2002); Distributed Generation, D.T.E. 02-38-B (2004); Distributed Generation, D.T.E. 02-38-C (2005); Distributed Generation, D.T.E. 02-38-D (2007).

On August 18, 2011, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (“DOER”) filed a petition with the Department requesting that the Department open a proceeding on interconnection of DG. DOER’s petition was accompanied by the Massachusetts DG Interconnection Report (“DG Report”) prepared by KEMA, Inc. on behalf of DOER and the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. The DG Report identified various issues associated with the current DG interconnection standards and application procedure (DG Report at viii). The DG Report proposed a redesign of the interconnection process in order to facilitate the growth of DG in Massachusetts (DG Report at ix).

In response, on September 28, 2011, the Department opened an investigation into the interconnection of DG in Massachusetts. Interconnection of Distributed Generation, D.P.U. 11-75 (2011). This investigation reviewed the existing DG interconnection standards and application procedures to determine what changes should be implemented to ensure an efficient and effective interconnection process. D.P.U. 11-75, at 2-3. On January 23, 2012, the Department convened a DG working group (“Working Group”) tasked with (1) determining what issues should be resolved regarding the current distributed generation interconnection standards and application procedure to ensure an efficient and effective interconnection process, and (2) deliberating with the goal of reaching a consensus on a resolution of such issues for Department review and approval. Order Establishing Distributed Generation Working Group, D.P.U. 11-75-A at 4, 7. On September 14, 2012, the Working Group issued its final report, “Proposed Changes to the Uniform Standards for Interconnecting Distributed Generation in Massachusetts” (“Report”), and submitted it to the Department. The Report contained many recommendations for changes to the DG Interconnection Tariff and additional recommendations that did not fall squarely within the Tariff. Following a technical conference and comment period, the Department approved many of the Working Group’s proposed recommendations and directed certain DG Interconnection Tariff revisions. D.P.U. 11-75-E (2013); Order on Timeline Enforcement Mechanism, D.P.U. 11-75-F (2014).

The Department opens this investigation, following requests from stakeholders for Department clarification or modification of the existing process for DG interconnection to the

electric power system. In this investigation, the Department intends to build on the work of the DG Collaborative and the Working Group and update the model DG Interconnection Tariff if necessary.

### III. SCOPE AND FORMAT

Through this investigation, the Department will coordinate with other state agencies and engage with interested stakeholders to address key issues related to DG interconnection in the Commonwealth. In the initial phase of this investigation, the Department intends to hold several technical conferences to address critical issues related to DG interconnection that have been raised to the Department over the past year. The initial scope of this investigation will be limited to the following topics:

- Interconnection of energy storage systems;
- Methods to manage high volume queues for DG interconnection;
- Process related to affected system operator studies conducted during DG interconnection;
- Timeline Enforcement Mechanism; and
- Interconnection process for DG facilities interconnecting to the transmission system.

### IV. NOTICE OF TECHNICAL CONFERENCE

To provide further opportunity for comment and discussion, the Department will hold a technical conference on **July 18, 2019, at 10:00 a.m.**, at the Department's offices, One South Station, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston, Massachusetts. The Department will provide additional information, including a detailed agenda, in advance of **July 18, 2019**. Please register for the technical conference online [here](#), on or before July 1, 2019.

