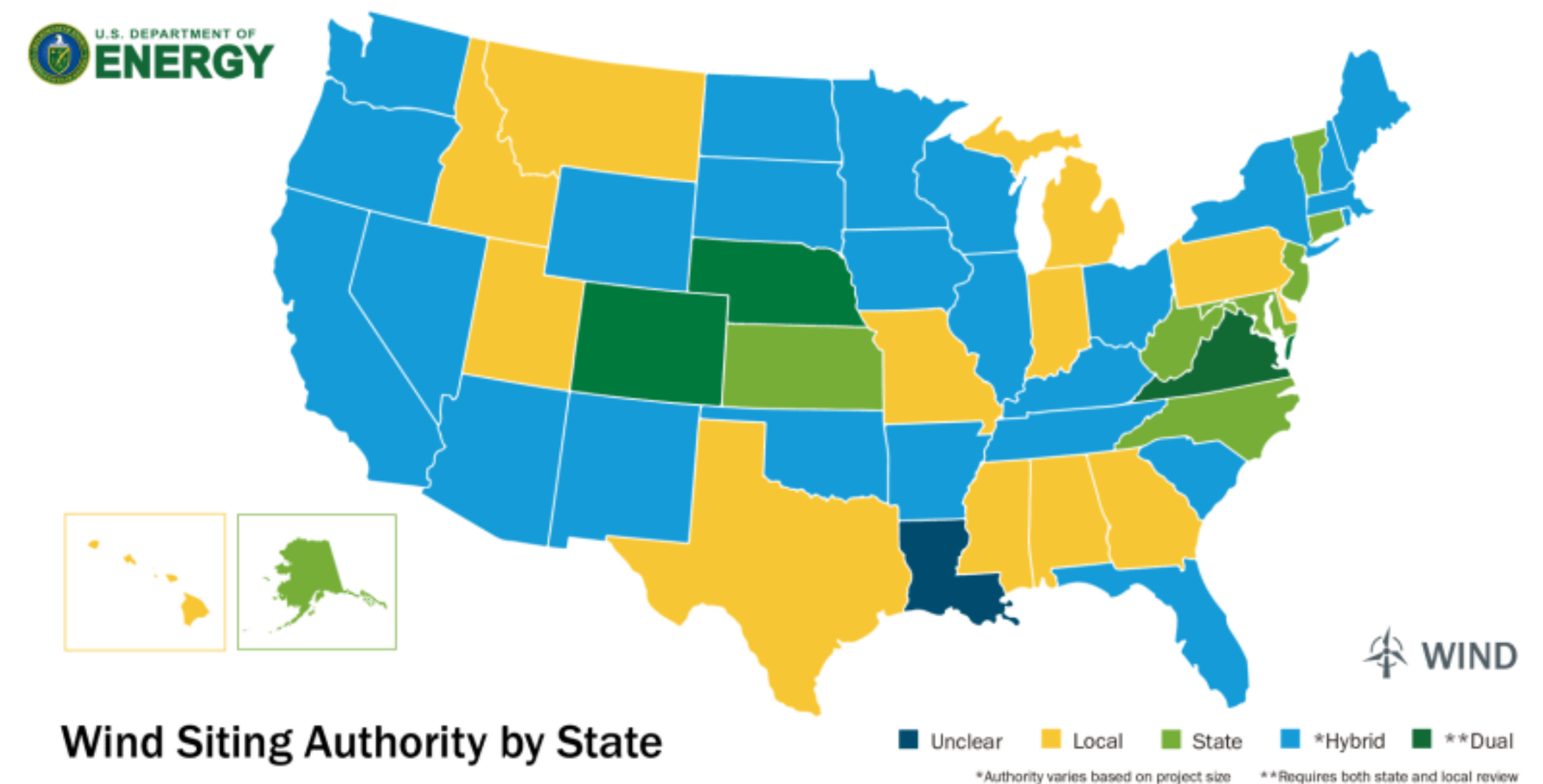
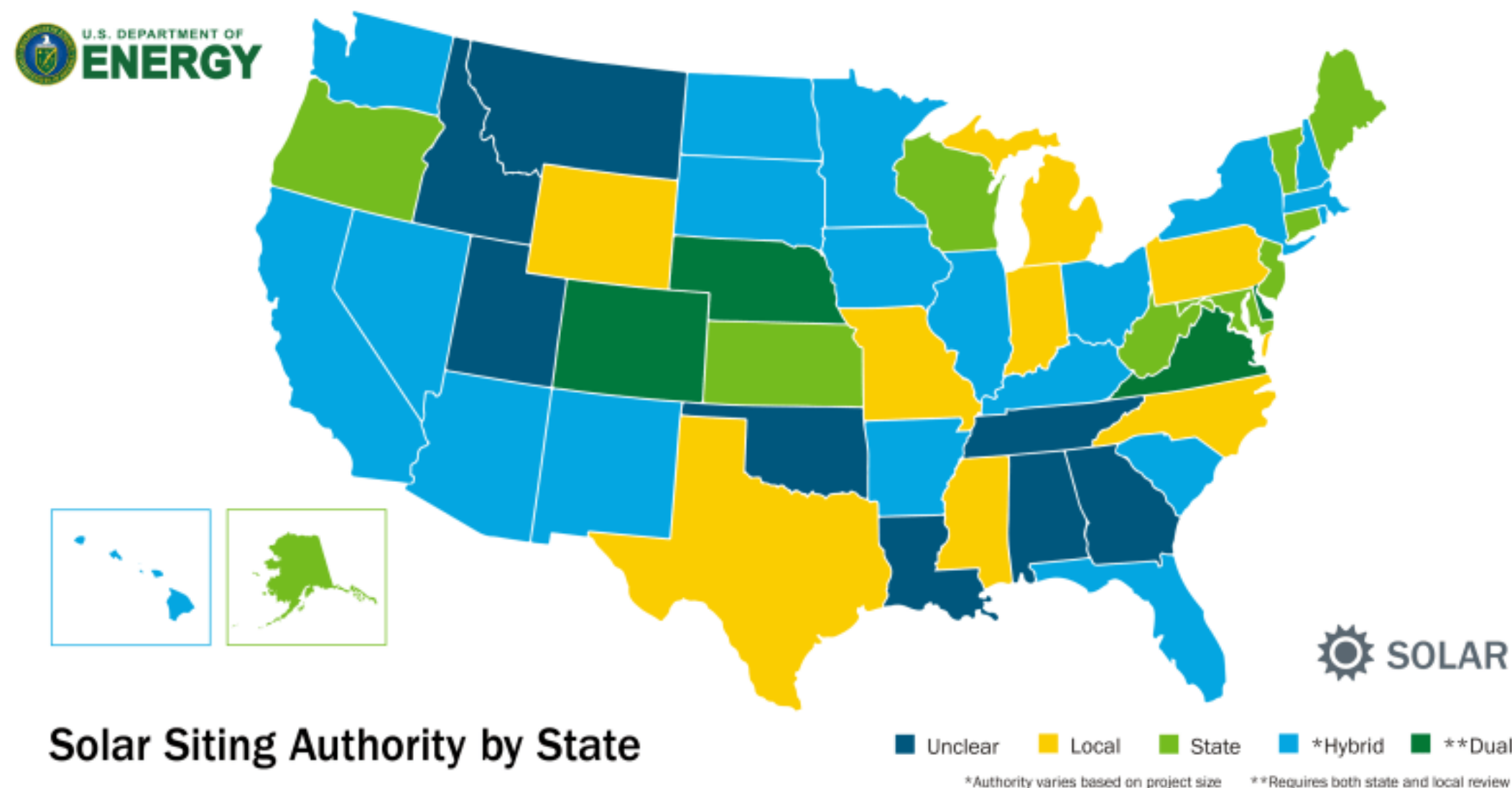


# Statewide versus local permitting: Which is better for getting projects approved?

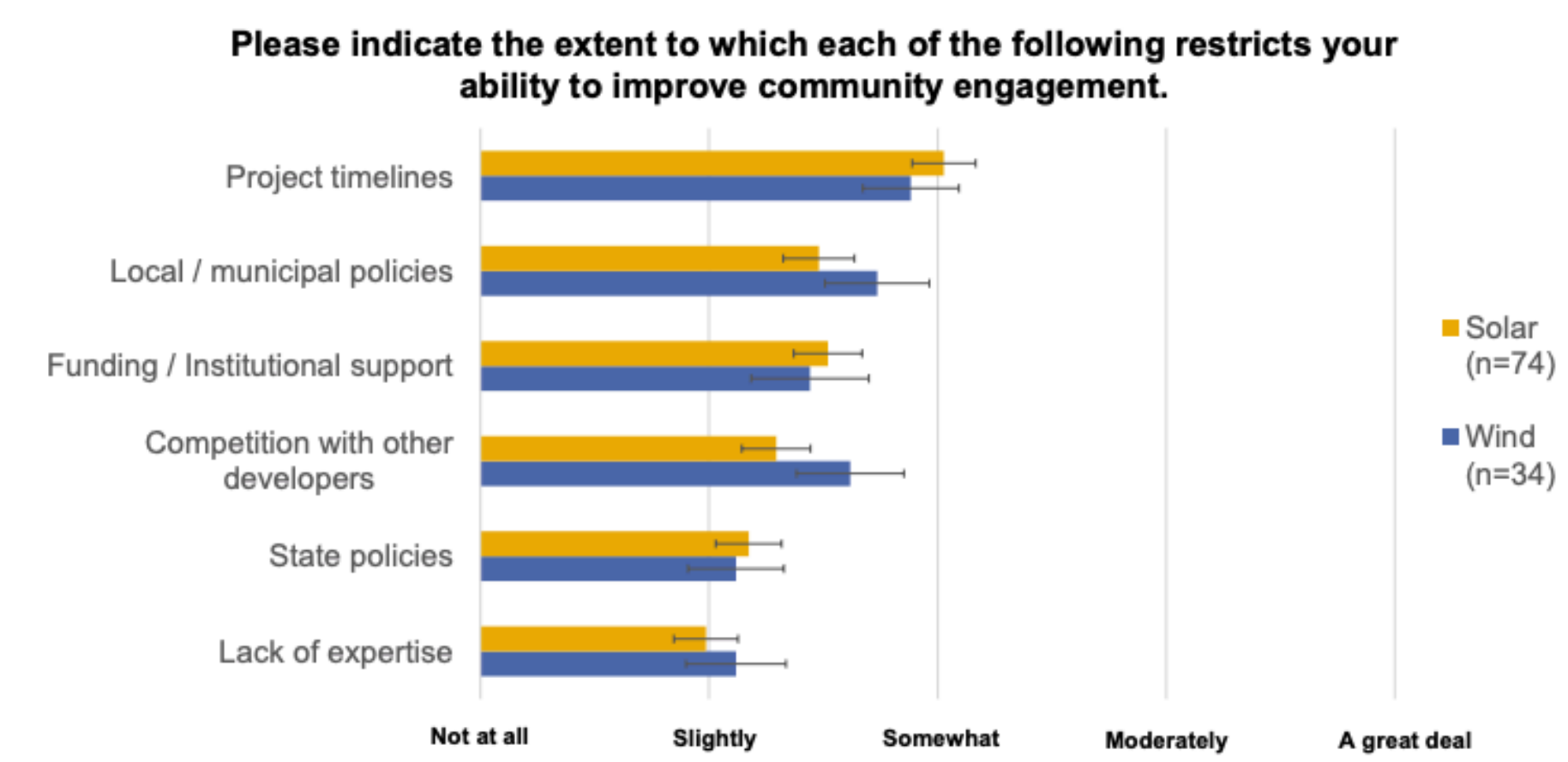
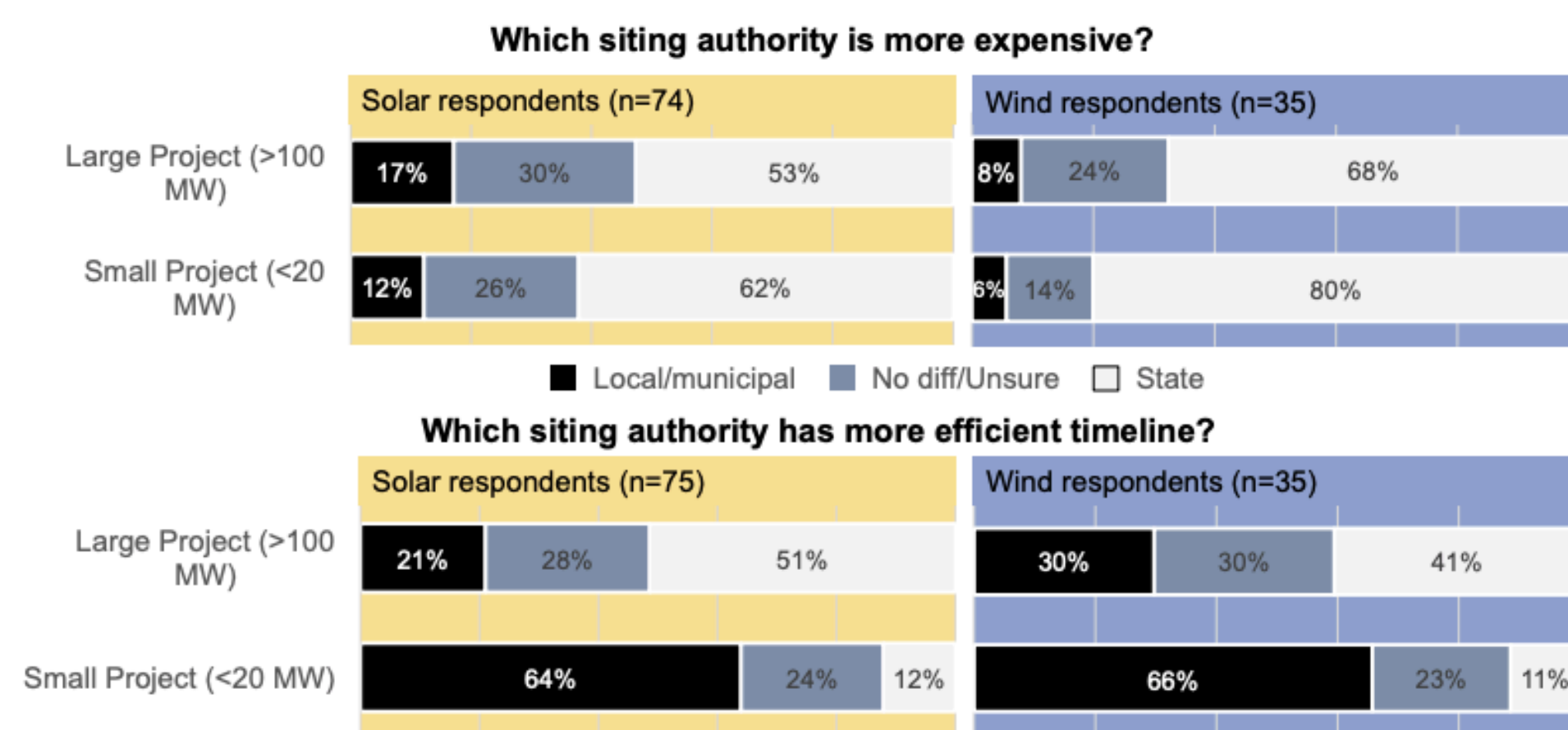
## BACKGROUND

Most states have chosen to permit utility-scale wind and solar projects on either a statewide basis or a local (typically township or county) basis. Below are maps showing which states permit renewable energy projects based on a state agency process and which states use a local process.



## PROJECT DEVELOPERS' OPINIONS ON LOCAL VS. STATE PERMITTING

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory conducted a survey of industry professionals with direct experience working in community engagement and permitting of land-based, utility-scale wind and solar energy facilities in the U.S. Here are some of the findings as it relates to local versus state permitting.



## DIFFERENCES IN THE PERMITTING PROCESS

Characteristic	Local	State
Formality	Wide variation; some have formal quasi-judicial procedures while others are very informal	More formal legal process using regulatory or judicial processes
Legal procedure	More discretion and variation	More certainty and adherence to standards
Audience	Less technical and generally more emotional reactions from both sides	More sophisticated experts to review documentation
Sophistication of decisionmakers	Inexperienced and less sophisticated	Experienced and sophisticated
Length of process	Wide variation. Could be as short as 4-6 months or as long as 2-3 years if moratoriums and changing ordinances are involved	Typically takes longer but some states have an expedited review process;
Length of Hearing	Could be as short as 1 hour or as long as hundreds of hours over 12-18 months	Typically 1-2 days
Documentation	Less documentation required	More documentation required
Ability to forecast outcomes	Less predictable	More predictable

## ANALYSIS

- Most developers don't get to choose the permitting process. They must follow the process for the state that the site is in.
- It is important for developers to adapt their development process to the permit process.
- The statewide process still gets plenty of local input, but it is "filtered."
- The statewide process has less variation, more standardized.
  - Developers can follow the process of successful projects through the state process.
  - They can avoid the pitfalls of unsuccessful projects.
- The local process has much more variation even in adjacent counties within the same state.
  - It is imperative to get to know local officials and interconnections between people.
  - Developers need to find local champions for projects that have local influence.
  - Developers need to present local benefits to the project early and often to local officials.
- This statewide versus local analysis matters greatly for policy purposes and a state's ability to fulfill its renewable portfolio standards.
  - Michigan recently moved from a township process to the state process.
  - Illinois retained a local process but imposed statewide standards.
  - lowa wind and solar projects have increasingly faced longer and tougher local processes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although industry professionals report state siting as more expensive and requiring more documentation, these hurdles are typically not restrictive to a project moving forward. State-level permitting provides predictability in terms of the timeline, ability to forecast the outcome, and the overall procedure of the permitting process though it may take more time.

Local permitting can result in unpredictable timelines if moratoriums and changing ordinances are involved. As more states realize that local permitting reduces the chances of being able to hit their renewable portfolio standard (RPS) targets, gradually these processes are becoming either more standardized or moving to a state process.

Perhaps the State of Illinois provides a road map for states with its "hybrid" solution by having statewide standards for local ordinances, an end to moratoriums but retains local control of the process.

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