

SolSmart Application



There are three levels of SolSmart designation for communities – below are the requirements for each:

BRONZE:

- Provide a Solar Statement outlining your community’s solar goals and commit to tracking key metrics such as number and capacity of installed Photovoltaic (PV) systems.
- Fulfill required actions in both of the Foundational Categories:
 - Permitting
 - Planning, Zoning, and Development Regulations
- Earn at least 20 points in each of the two Foundational Categories (above).
- Earn a total of 20 points from actions across the six Special Focus Categories: Inspection; Construction Codes; Solar Rights; Utility Engagement; Community Engagement; and Market Development and Finance.

Note: Actions in any of the Special Focus Categories count toward the 20-point target.

SILVER:

- Fulfill the requirements to become a SolSmart Bronze Community.
- Complete the two Silver-required actions in the Planning, Zoning, and Development Regulations and Inspection categories.
- Earn 100 points overall from actions taken in any combination of categories.

GOLD:

- Fulfill the requirements to become a SolSmart Silver Community.
- Complete the two Gold-required actions in Permitting and Planning, Zoning, and Development Regulations.
- Earn 200 points overall from actions taken in any combination of categories.

SPECIAL AWARDS:

- Communities that earn 60% of the points in a given category are eligible for special recognition.

Community applying:

State:

Community website:

Population:

Other solar awards/recognition earned by community:

kW of installed solar or number of installations:

Local contact:

Contact title:

Organization:

Department:

Contact email:

Contact phone:

- I am authorized to apply for and seek recognition for my community. I understand that community data submitted through this application will be shared online.



STEP 1: SOLAR STATEMENT

PR-1: Solar Statement – Required for Designation

Our Solar Statement: *(Cut and paste your Solar Statement in the box below)*

Communities interested in pursuing SolSmart designation must indicate their commitment to supporting solar development in their community. These letters should include:

- A commitment to participate in the SolSmart designation process*
- A statement of solar goals, areas of focus or community priorities (e.g. Encouraging solar PV development on vacant lots or supporting non-profit led initiatives)*
- Past achievements or programs related to solar PV and/or renewable energy*
- Commitment to tracking metrics related to solar PV and/or provide benchmark of available solar metrics (i.e. number of installed municipal systems or growth in residential installations)*
- A commitment of staff time and resources to improve the local environment for solar PV*

These letters do not need to be more than a page in length. An editable example can be found here: (<http://www.solsmart.org/resources/sample-solar-statement/>) The SolSmart team can assist communities in prioritizing and establishing goals.

Documentation: *(Please share a link to a public webpage where your Solar Statement is displayed or attach it as a document.)*





STEP 2: FOUNDATIONAL CATEGORIES: PERMITTING AND PLANNING, ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT

To earn SolSmart Bronze designation, communities must:

- Complete the required actions in both Foundational Categories – i.e., Permitting and Planning, Zoning and Development Regulations.
- Earn at least 20 points in each of the Foundational Categories.



Permitting

P-1: Post an online checklist detailing the required permit(s), submittals, and steps of your community's permitting process for small rooftop solar PV (Required).	0
P-2: Post an online statement confirming a three-business day turnaround time for small rooftop solar PV (Required for Gold).	20
P-3: Distinguish between solar PV systems qualifying for streamlined and standard permit review.	5
P-4: Require no more than one permit application form for a small rooftop solar PV.	5
P-5a: Review permit fees for residential and commercial solar PV. Compile findings in a memo.	5
 Earn additional points: P-5b: Demonstrate that residential permit fees for solar PV are \$400 or less.	5
 Earn additional points: P-5c: Demonstrate that commercial permit fees for solar PV are based on cost-recovery and capped at a reasonable level so fees do not become a net revenue source. (e.g. fees cover the cost of the staff time required to review and process the permit application).	5
P-6: Process small rooftop solar PV permits in 10 business days or fewer.	10
P-7: Adopt a standard solar PV permit application form aligned with best practices (e.g. Solar ABCs).	10
P-8: Train permitting staff on best practices for permitting solar PV and/or solar and storage systems. Training must have occurred in the past five years.	10
P-9: Train fire and safety staff on solar PV and/or solar and storage systems. Training must have occurred in the past five years.	10
P-10: Develop a regular communication schedule to solicit recommendations from solar PV installers regarding procedural changes.	10
P-11: Provide an online process for solar PV permit submission and approval.	20



P-12a: Share site specific solar PV and/or solar and storage permit data, including addresses, with first responders and their departments. (e.g. Through software that allows users to view searchable, filterable data about a specific site and system).	10
P-12b: Share site specific solar PV and/or solar and storage system permit data, including addresses, with other local government departments (Not including first responders and their departments). (e.g. Through software that allows users to view searchable, filterable data about a specific site and system).	10

Planning, Zoning and Development Regulations

<p>PZD-1a: Review zoning requirements and identify restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibit solar PV development. Compile findings in a memo. (Required). Examples include: height restrictions; set-back requirements; allowing solar PV “by-right” in residential and commercial zones without requiring a conditional use permit.</p>	0
<p> Earn additional points: PZD-1b: Present PZD-1a memo findings to planning commission or relevant zoning body.</p>	5
<p> Earn additional points: PZD-1c: Draft proposed language for changes to zoning code based on PZD-1a memo and PZD-1b dialogue. Involve planners and/or local zoning experts in the creation of the draft language.</p>	5
<p>PZD-2a: Post an online document from the Planning/Zoning Department that states accessory use solar PV is allowed by-right in all major zones (e.g. via a zoning determination letter). (Required for Silver, if PZD-2b isn’t achieved)</p>	0
<p>PZD-2b: Codify in the zoning ordinance that accessory use solar PV is explicitly allowed by-right in all major zones. Zoning ordinance language should not include intentional or unintentional barriers to accessory use solar, such as limits to visibility from public rights-of-way, excessive restrictions to system size, glare studies, subjective design reviews, and neighbor consent requirements. (Required for Gold, PZD-2a is optional)</p>	20
<p>PZD-3a: Review existing planning documents and identify new opportunities (not already included) to integrate solar PV into planning goals. Compile findings in a memo.</p>	5
<p> Earn additional points: PZD-3b: Draft proposed language and a timeline for the inclusion of solar PV in existing and/or future plans. Involved planners in the creation of draft language.</p>	5
<p>PZD-4: Provide clear guidance for the installation of solar PV on historic properties and in special overlay districts.</p>	10
<p>PZD-5a: Include quantifiable metrics and/or specific actions for solar PV development in the most current version of relevant local plans (e.g. energy plan, climate plan, comprehensive plan).</p>	10
<p>PZD-5b: Develop a primary use solar PV assessment that identifies all feasible sites for large-scale solar PV development within a jurisdiction.</p>	10
<p>PZD-6: Include guidelines for active and passive solar in development regulations (e.g. providing guidance for orientation of structures in subdivision regulations).</p>	10
<p>PZD-7: Provide development incentives for solar PV within the subdivision or zoning process, or as part of other development incentives (e.g., density or height bonuses for buildings that plan to install solar or tax-increment financing).</p>	20
<p>PZD-8: Incentivize solar PV development on parking lots, vacant lots, buffer lands around uses with nuisances (e.g. refineries, wastewater plants), brownfields, airport safety zones (with FAA approval), and non-building structures.</p>	20



PZD-9: Train planning staff on best practices in planning and zoning for solar PV. Training must have occurred in the past five years.	10
PZD-10: Ensure that the zoning ordinance does one or more of the following for accessory use solar:	
↳ PZD-10a Permits small ground-mounted solar PV as an accessory use in at least one zoning district.	5
↳ PZD-10b Exempts rooftop solar PV from certain restrictions on accessory uses (e.g. height limits, rooftop equipment screening requirements, or other restrictions).	5
↳ PZD-10c Exempts small ground-mounted solar PV from certain restrictions on accessory uses (e.g. setbacks, coverage or impervious surface calculations, or other restrictions).	5
PZD-11: Post an online factsheet that provides an overview of what zoning allows for solar PV under what conditions (e.g. types and sizes of solar arrays permitted, the processes required, and other relevant information).	5
PZD-12: Ensure that the zoning ordinance does one or more of the following for primary use solar:	
↳ PZD-12a Establishes a clear regulatory pathway for primary use solar PV (e.g. through a special use permit or through inclusion among allowed conditional uses).	5
↳ PZD-12b Establishes solar energy zones and/or solar overlays for primary use solar PV.	5



STEP 3: SPECIAL FOCUS CATEGORIES


To earn SolSmart Bronze designation, communities must:

- Earn 20 points (total) from actions taken across the 6 Special Focus Categories: Inspection; Construction Codes; Solar Rights; Utility Engagement; Community Engagement; or Market Development and Finance. Any action in any Special Focus Category counts toward the goal of earning 20 points.

Special Focus: Inspection



I-1: Train inspection staff on best practices for permitting and inspecting solar PV and/or solar and storage systems. Training must have occurred within the past five years. (Required for Silver and Gold).	20
I-2: Require no more than two inspections for accessory use solar PV.	10
I-3: Offer inspection appointment times in lieu of appointment windows for solar PV.	10
I-4: Post solar PV inspection requirements online, including the inspection process and what details inspectors will review.	10
I-5: Complete solar PV inspections within 5 business days after inspection request.	10
I-6: Provide an online process for solar PV inspection scheduling.	20

Special Focus: Construction Codes



CC-1a: Provide Solar Ready Construction Guidelines for property/real estate developers to enable lower cost installation of future solar PV installations on buildings. Provide these resources at the permitting office and online.	5
 Earn additional points: CC-1b: Include guidance for solar PV on parking lots and other types of non-traditional structures.	5
CC-2: Incentivize new construction to be solar ready in at least one zoning district.	10
CC-3: Post online design guidelines for solar PV aligned with National Electrical Code and fire code.	5
CC-4: Require new construction to be solar ready in at least one zoning district by adopting Appendix U (International Code Council), Appendix RB (International Energy Conservation Code), or another mechanism.	10
CC-5: Codify a solar requirement for new construction and/or retrofits meeting a specific threshold, in at least one zoning district.	20



Special Focus: Solar Rights



SR-1: Post an online summary of state policies related to a property owner's solar access and solar rights, including links to state-level policy.	5
SR-2: Post consumer protection resources on solar PV online.	5
SR-3: Enable solar rights through a local solar access ordinance.	10
SR-4: Post an online checklist detailing the steps for recording solar easements for property owners.	10
SR-5a: Engage homeowners and neighborhood associations to discuss restrictive requirements for solar PV with the goal of reducing or eliminating them. Compile summary and next steps in a memo.	10
 Earn additional points: SR-5b: Encourage subdivisions to consider shared solar allowances.	5
 Earn additional points: SR-5c: Develop design guidelines for solar PV in partnership with homeowner associations.	5

Special Focus: Utility Engagement


U-1: Inform staff of best practices for integrating interconnection with electrical inspections.	5
U-2: Discuss community solar programs with the local utility. Compile summary and next steps in a memo.	10
U-3a: Discuss community goals for solar PV, net metering, and/or interconnection processes with the local utility and explore areas for future collaboration. Compile summary and next steps in a memo.	10
 Earn additional points: U-3b: Coordinate with regional organizations or other local governments to engage utilities.	5
U-4: Demonstrate coordination between local government inspectors and utility staff to reduce Permission to Operate timeline.	20
U-5: Launch or support a utility-provided community solar program.	20
 Earn additional points: U-5b: Encourage low-to-moderate income (LMI) participation in utility-provided community solar program through program design and/or financing support options.	10
U6: Provide residents with Community Choice Aggregation/Energy that includes solar PV as a power generation source.	20



Special Focus: Community Engagement

CE-1: Convene an active energy task force or solar working group that meets at least three times per year.	10
CE-2: Post a solar landing page on local government's website with information on the community's solar goals and local resources for solar development.	10
CE-3: Provide technical assistance and/or programs or processes to support solar PV development on non-profit and/or community-service orientated facilities.	10
CE-4a: Support or host a community-wide group purchase program (e.g., Solarize). Program must have occurred within the last 5 years.	20
 Earn additional points: CE-4b: Encourage low-to-moderate income (LMI) participation in community-wide group purchase program through program design and/or financing support options.	10
CE-5a: Host a solar workshop open to the general public and/or local government staff explaining solar PV opportunities and policies. Workshop must have occurred within the last 5 years.	5
CE-5b: Distribute educational materials at relevant community events and/or through local government channels.	5
CE-5c: Establish partnerships with local organizations within your community on solar PV multi-year goals and/or planned initiatives.	5
CE-5d: Demonstrate local government support for local solar projects through speeches, press releases, blog posts, opinion articles, etc.	5
CE-5e: Engage the community through recurring public meetings, focus groups, or other similar events around climate, energy, or sustainability plans and/or goals.	5
CE-6: Distribute solar job training and career opportunities in coordination with local colleges and/or workforce development organizations.	20
CE-7: Conduct feasibility analysis for solar PV on brownfields and/or other under-utilized properties.	10
CE-8: Install or lease land for solar PV development on brownfields and/or other under-utilized properties.	20
CE-9: Engage with regional organizations on advancing solar policies in the region such as unified permitting processes and group procurement opportunities.	20
CE-10: Demonstrate activity in state-level conversations regarding solar PV.	20
CE-11: Post an online solar map for your community.	20
CE-12a: Support a third party-provided community solar program. Note: this cannot be the same community solar program for which credit was received under Utility Engagement.	20
 Earn additional points: CE-12b: Encourage low-to-moderate income (LMI) participation in third party-provided community solar program through program design and/or financing support options.	10

Special Focus: Market Development and Finance

MDF-1: Provide online resources on active solar installers and/or local incentives for solar PV.	5
MDF-2: Make solar PV metrics publicly available.	5
MDF-3: Provide information to consumers about residential and commercial solar PV financing options.	5
MDF-4: Conduct feasibility analysis for solar PV installations on/at local government facilities.	10
MDF-5: Install solar PV on/at local government facilities.	20
MDF-6a: Provide PACE financing in your community.	10
 Earn additional points: MDF-6b: Demonstrate that PACE financing has been used to finance solar PV in your community.	10
MDF-7a: Provide local incentives (e.g. permit fee waivers or rebates) or locally-enabled finance (e.g., a revolving loan fund) for solar PV.	20
MDF-7b: Provide local incentives for solar PV to low-to-moderate income (LMI) households, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), and/or non-profit organizations that provide community services.	5
MDF-8: Engage local banks, credit unions, foundations and/or community funds about lending for solar PV projects through in-person meetings, discussions, and/or workshops. Compile summary and next steps in a memo.	20
MDF-9: Demonstrate that the community's installed per capita capacity is above top 20% of states (>99 watts/person).	20
MDF-10a: Conduct feasibility analysis for solar PV integrated with other technologies such as combined heat and power or electric vehicle charging on/at a local government facility.	10
Earn additional points: MDF-10b: Install solar PV integrated with other technologies such as combined heat and power or electric vehicle charging on/at a local government facility.	20
MDF-11a: Conduct feasibility analysis for solar PV plus storage on/at a critical local government facility.	10
Earn additional points: MDF-11b: Install solar PV plus storage on/at a critical local government facility.	20



INNOVATIVE ACTIONS

The actions identified in the categories above represent many of the most common and impactful efforts communities are taking to reduce soft costs and make going solar easier and more affordable for residents. However, we know that communities across the country are developing innovative ways to help reduce soft costs. If your community has taken action to reduce soft costs that wasn't captured in the above application, please share it with us in the table below. Innovative actions will be reviewed by a team of solar experts and each action may be worth up to 20 points.

Innovative Actions

Category	Action(s)	Documentation
Permitting		Share link:
Planning, Zoning and Development Regulations		Share link:
Inspection		Share link:
Construction Codes		Share link:
Solar Rights		Share link:
Utility Engagement		Share link:
Community Engagement		Share link:
Market Development and Finance		Share link:



Designation Checklist

Step
Completed

STEP 1: SOLAR STATEMENT

Solar Statement	Statement Submitted	<input type="checkbox"/>
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STEP 2: FOUNDATIONAL CATEGORIES

Permitting	Required Action(s)	Points: 20+ required for Bronze	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Planning, Zoning, & Development Regulations	Required Action(s)	Points: 20+ required for Bronze	<input type="checkbox"/>
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STEP 3: SPECIAL FOCUS CATEGORY POINTS

Inspection	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Construction Codes	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Solar Rights	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Utility Engagement	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Community Engagement	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Market Development and Finance	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Special Focus Points Must be 20 or greater for Bronze	0
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TOTAL POINTS including foundational Must be at least 100 for Silver and 200 for Gold	0
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