

SolSmart Program Overview

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Acknowledgment and Disclaimer

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What is SolSmart?

SolSmart is a national designation and technical assistance program that helps local governments make it faster, easier, and more affordable for residents and businesses to go solar.

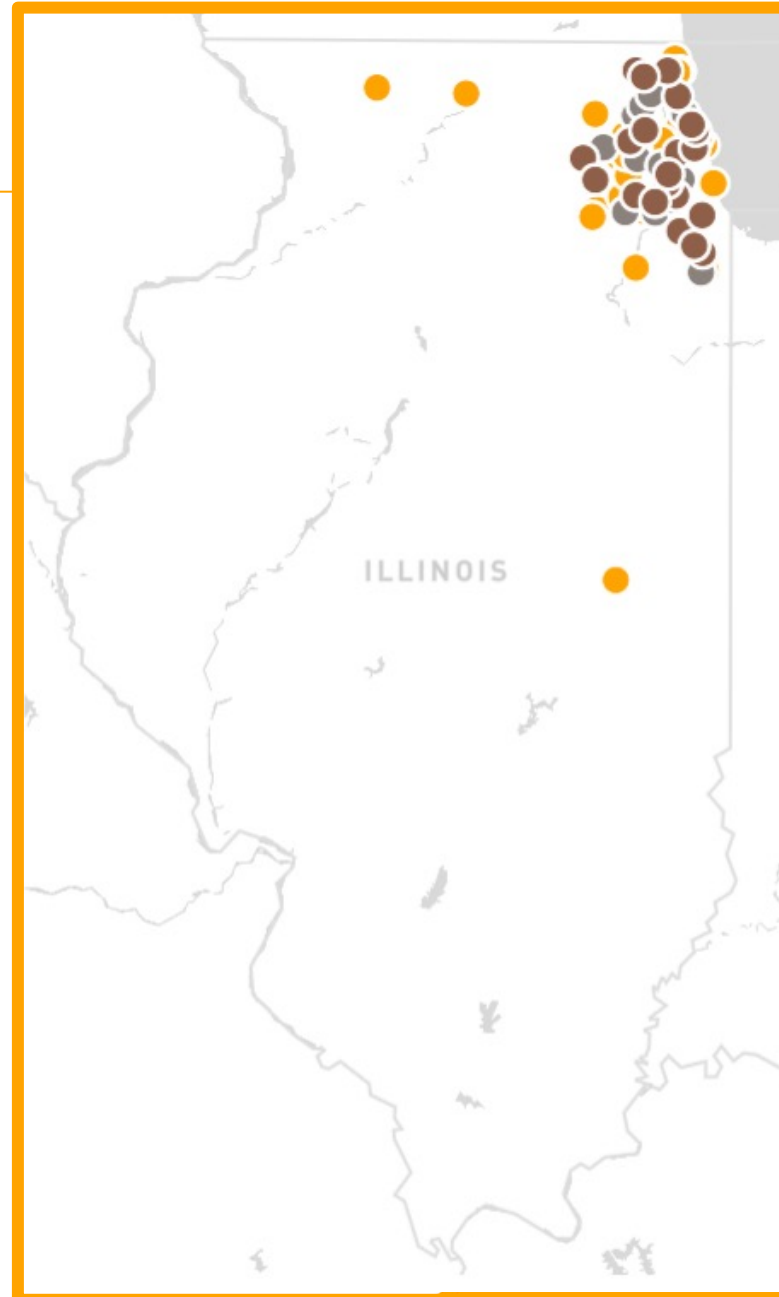
A SolSmart designation:

- Recognizes communities that have taken key steps to address local barriers to solar energy and foster the growth of mature local solar markets.
- Demonstrates that a community is “**open for solar business**,” making it attractive to solar companies and other business development.

SolSmart provides **targeted, no-cost technical assistance** to help communities reduce soft costs and earn SolSmart designation.

SolSmart Impacts

- Illinois has 59 SolSmart designees, more than any other state in the nation.
 - 21 Bronze Communities
 - 16 Silver Communities
 - 22 Gold Communities



Designation Pathways

Standard Pathway

- 2 foundational categories plus 3 special focus categories
- 8 prerequisite credits

Modified Pathway

- For communities that do not control permitting, planning and zoning, and/or inspection processes
- 8 prerequisite credits

Regional Organization Pathway

- 9 prerequisite credits

Designation Structure

Communities can choose from four designation levels:



Each designation level builds on the previous level with additional action items.

Complete 3 prerequisites

20 points in Permitting & Inspection
 20 points in Planning & Zoning
 60 total points

Attain SolSmart Bronze and complete 4 additional prereqs

100 total points

Attain SolSmart Silver and complete 3 additional prereqs

200 total points

Attain SolSmart Gold and complete 4 additional prereqs

350 total points

The SolSmart Designation Process



Overall Revisions

1. Addition of 18 new criteria in Standard Pathway
2. Revised and new criteria focus on incorporating DOE priority topics including:
 - SolarAPP+
 - Solar plus technologies
 - Codes and Standards
 - Financing
 - Metrics/data collection
 - Diversity, equity, inclusion considerations
3. Addition of a Platinum Tier for all three Pathways
4. All training criteria have been revised to “*must have occurred in the past two years*” rather than the past five years, as the criteria currently read.
5. Details and examples added to the [program guide](#).

"The SolSmart program created a national benchmark for communities to reach and provided the guidance and resources to support adoption of best practices in solar policy."– Maurice Jones, City Manager, Charlottesville, Virginia

Criteria



Bronze	60 Total Points	3 Prerequisite Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 20 Points in Permitting & Inspection <input type="checkbox"/> 20 Points in Planning & Zoning <input type="checkbox"/> 20 Points from any other category 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Solar Statement (PR-1) <input type="checkbox"/> Solar permitting checklist (PI-1) <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning review (PZ-1)
Silver	100 Total Points	4 Prerequisite Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete bronze designation requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Permit staff training (PI-2) <input type="checkbox"/> Inspection staff training (PI-3) <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning clarification (PZ-4) <input type="checkbox"/> Solar landing page (CE-1)
Gold	200 Total Points	3 Prerequisite Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete silver designation requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Permit turnaround time (PI-4) <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning accessory use (PZ-5) <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning barrier removal (PZ-6)
Platinum	350 Total Points	4 Prerequisite Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete gold designation requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Instant permitting (PI-5) <input type="checkbox"/> Post metrics (PI-6) <input type="checkbox"/> Install solar (GO-1) <input type="checkbox"/> Community partnerships (CE-2)

Criteria		
Category	Criteria	Points
Permitting & Inspection	28	275
Planning & Zoning	26	215
Governmental Operations	14	185
Community Engagement	13	90
Market Development	10	155
Total	92	920

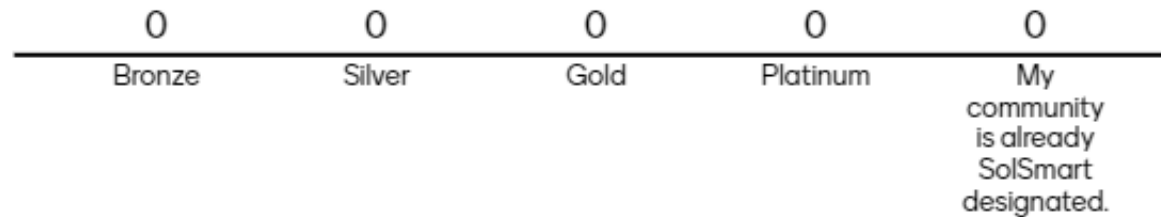


Prerequisite Examples

Criteria Identifier	Criteria Points	Program Participation Prerequisite Criteria
PR-1	Req'd	Provide a document that demonstrates your local government's commitment to pursue SolSmart designation.
PI-1	Req'd	Post an online checklist detailing the required permit(s), submittals, and steps of your community's permitting process for residential rooftop solar PV. (Required for Bronze)
PI-2	10	Train permitting staff on best practices for permitting solar PV and/or solar and storage systems. Training must have occurred in the past two years. (Required for Silver)
PI-3	10	Train inspection staff on best practices for inspecting solar PV and/or solar and storage systems. Training must have occurred within the past two years. (Required for Silver)
Criteria Identifier	Criteria Points	Planning and Zoning Criteria
PZ-1	Req'd	Review zoning requirements and identify restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibit solar PV development. Compile findings in a memo. (Required for Bronze). Examples include: height restrictions, set-back requirements, screening requirements, visibility restrictions, etc.
PZ-5	10	Codify in the zoning ordinance that accessory use rooftop solar PV is explicitly allowed by-right in all major zones. (Required for Gold, PZ-4 is optional)



Would you be interested in achieving SS designation? What level?



Permitting & Inspection

- NEW criteria examples
- Exempt or waive fees for residential solar PV permit applications for **LMI customers**.
- Clearly identify all local amendments to model codes where local code deviates from model code for solar and solar plus storage. Summarize those local amendments on a public webpage.
- Show that the community has implemented virtual, photo, or another **innovative inspection** practice with solar and/or solar plus storage.
- Post an **online checklist** detailing the required permit(s), submittals, and steps of your community's permitting process for primary use ground mount solar and include any additional state required permits.
- Receive a demonstration of an **instant or automated platform** (e.g., SolarAPP+) and discuss how it might be implemented in the permitting process. Compile findings in a memo.

Planning & Zoning

- NEW criteria examples
 - **Share solar PV progress** towards achieving targets or metrics from PZ-20 on the solar landing page.
 - Include specific **large-scale solar PV goals, metrics, and strategies** in the most current published version of relevant local plans (e.g., energy plan, climate plan, comprehensive plan).
 - Require new construction affordable housing and multifamily housing to be **solar-ready**.
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- PZ-20/ 10 points/ Include specific solar PV goals, metrics, and/or strategies in the most current version of relevant local plans (e.g., energy plan, climate plan, comprehensive plan).

Government Operations

- NEW criteria examples
- **Post metrics** related to the number of municipal solar PV or solar PV plus storage/EV installations and installed capacity, municipal solar PV energy procured (ownership, PPAs, community solar offtake), and percent (%) of municipal energy usage offset by renewable energy.
- **Directly install or provide technical or financial support** for the installation of solar PV on **affordable housing, multifamily housing, community-based organizations, and/or resilience hubs.**
- Obtain a **Community Benefits Agreement** with solar developer for solar installation.
- Train local government staff on regulatory and (where applicable) **wholesale market barriers** to solar deployment and potential engagement pathways to address these barriers. Training must have occurred in the past two years.

Community Engagement Criteria



- NEW criteria examples
- **Establish partnerships with local community-based organizations or other organizations focused on serving disadvantaged communities** within your community to define your community's solar equity goals, develop implementation strategies, and establish a plan for tracking and reporting on progress. (Required for Platinum)
- Post an **online dashboard or summary of solar PV metrics** for your community, including total installed solar PV capacity, solar PV + storage installations, and community solar and/or solarize subscribers (if applicable). Metrics should identify solar PV adoption in disadvantaged communities as well.
- Support a **solar informational session and/or solar tour** explaining solar PV opportunities and policies. Show that session/tour was made accessible to all members of the community including those in disadvantaged communities. Session/Tour must have occurred within the last 2 years.



Market Development Criteria



- NEW criteria examples
- Define and implement a **pathway specifically for low-to-moderate income (LMI) residents to participate in a community-wide group purchase program** through program design and/or financing support options. (Formerly "encourage.")





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