

What is SolSmart?

SolSmart is a new national designation program designed to recognize communities that have taken key steps to address local barriers to solar energy and otherwise foster the growth of strong local solar markets. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative through the Solar Powering America by Recognizing Communities (SPARC) funding opportunity.

The SolSmart program primarily seeks to address solar “soft costs,” or business process or administrative costs that can increase the time and money it takes to install a solar energy system – costs which are then passed on to solar customers. The SolSmart designation program will provide high-profile, national recognition for communities that have made it cheaper and easier for home and business owners to invest in solar energy. In addition, achieving designation will send a signal to solar companies that a community is “open for business.” Such efforts can help attract new business, providing jobs and other economic development benefits.

Communities committed to pursuing SolSmart designation will be eligible for no-cost technical assistance from a team of national solar and local government experts. This technical assistance is designed to help communities meet the criteria for designation.

What are solar "soft costs" and how do they relate to SolSmart?

Solar soft costs are the non-hardware, balance of system costs associated with solar energy systems. They are also referred to as “non-hardware costs” and include costs associated with:

- Planning and zoning
- Permitting, interconnection, and inspection
- Financing
- Customer acquisition
- Installation labor

Part of the aim of the SolSmart program is to reduce solar soft costs, which currently represent as much as 64% of the total installed residential system price. To learn more about the above categories and how they increase costs, please visit the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy’s [website](#).

US Dept of Energy SunShot initiative. Ann Arbor is an “early adopter” getting free technical assistance on multiple steps relevant to the Solar Ready Community resolution (10 steps developed by Clean Energy Coalition)

For additional information about SunShot and SolSmart, please see

<http://www.gosparc.org/faqs/#Q-20>