

An Introduction to the SolSmart Program
WCA Leadership Meeting
April 29, 2024



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National Association of Counties (NACo)

About SolSmart

SolSmart is a national **designation** and **no cost technical assistance** program funded by the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) to help local governments, nationwide 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. It demonstrates that a community is **“open for solar business,”** making it attractive to solar companies and other business development.



SolSmart's Role in Solar Development

- SolSmart helps local governments take action to remove barriers to solar energy growth and make it easier for residents and businesses to go solar
- The program offers **no-cost technical assistance and resources** that help communities become national solar energy leaders
- SolSmart is committed to meeting the goals of the federal **Justice40** program to provide equitable opportunities for underserved communities
- SolSmart helps communities **reduce “soft costs”** — the costs of solar development that are unrelated to hardware
- While the solar energy market is growing nationwide, ensuring that it grows in your community requires a **proactive approach**.

“Soft costs” represent 65% of the total cost of a solar PV system and they arise from:

- Permitting and inspection processes;
- Zoning and design requirements
- Customer acquisition;
- Gaps in financing; and more!



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Technical Assistance

The SolSmart team is a robust technical assistance team composed of organizations with years of experience providing local governments with the solutions and expertise needed to remove barriers to solar deployment and implement best practices, including:

- Engineering
- Procurement
- Solar PV system design
- Feasibility assessments
- Policy and market expertise
- Dissemination of best practices through 1:1 consulting, issue briefs, webinars, trainings (virtual and in-person)

"The process of going solar can be intimidating for property owners and confusing for permitting staff. SolSmart allowed our City to think through our solar procedures and policies and helped us develop clear guidelines for homeowners and staff that have made everyone's life easier." – Kathryn Eklund, Sustainability Coordinator, Red Lodge, Montana

Criteria and Designation

- The SolSmart designation criteria are based on **established best practices**. These criteria are categorized, categories include:
 - Permitting and Inspection
 - Planning and Zoning
 - Community Engagement
 - Market Development and More!
- Some criteria are prerequisites, while others are elective, and all have assigned point values.
- Upon completing the prerequisites and meeting a threshold of points, you can qualify for SolSmart designation.
- This flexible process allows you to select a plan that is best tailored to your community.

"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



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Designation Structure

There are four levels of designation: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. Communities achieve designation by meeting prerequisites (listed below for each level) as well as meeting other elective criteria.



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Designation Pathways for Counties

- **Standard Pathway:** Pathway applicable to most local governments that have authority over permitting, planning, zoning and/or inspection processes.
- **Modified Pathway:** Pathway for local governments that do not control all the above processes.

Download the Program Guides:

<https://solsmart.org/resource/solsmart-program-guide>



SolSmart By the Numbers

Active in 43 states + DC,
Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin
Islands



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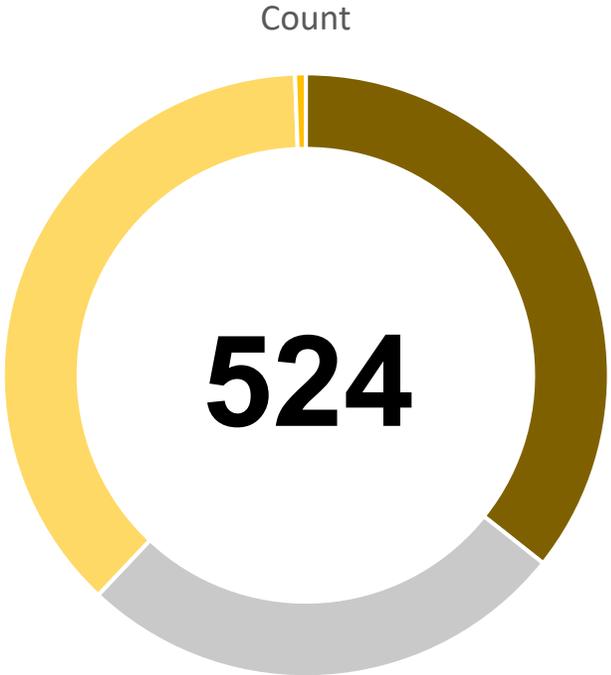
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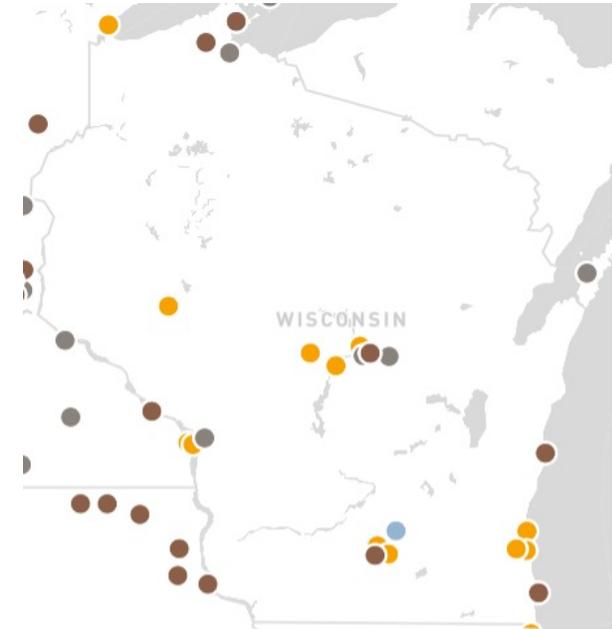
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■ SolSmart Bronze ■ SolSmart Silver ■ SolSmart Gold ■ SolSmart Platinum

Wisconsin SolSmart Designees

1. Amherst – Silver (2019)
2. Ashland – Silver (2017)
3. **Ashland County – Silver (2018)**
4. Bayfield – Bronze (2017)
5. **Bayfield County – Bronze (2017)**
6. Bayside – Gold (2022)
7. **Dane County – Platinum (2024)**
8. Eau Claire – Gold (2017)
9. Egg Harbor – Silver (2019)
10. Fitchburg – Bronze (2019)
11. La Crosse – Gold (2021)
12. **La Crosse County – Silver (2023)**
13. Madison – Gold (2017)
14. McFarland – Gold (2024)
15. Milwaukee – Gold (2016)
16. Plover – Silver (2019)
17. **Portage County – Bronze (2019)**
18. Racine – Bronze (2019)
19. Sheboygan – Bronze (2019)
20. Stevens Point – Gold (2019)
21. Sun Prairie – Platinum (2024)
22. Wauwatose – Gold (2021)
23. Wisconsin Rapids – Gold (2018)
24. Wood County – Gold (2019)



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SolSmart Resources

- Learn more about the SolSmart Program at www.SolSmart.org.
- Browse the SolSmart resource library for reports, webinars, case studies and much more at www.solsmart.org/resources/
- If your county is interested in the SolSmart Program, please contact solsmart@naco.org for a consultation call.

Thank you!