



Moving from Gold to Platinum Designation with SolarAPP+

The decision by a local government to use [SolarAPP+](#) for reducing solar PV and storage permitting times is an excellent springboard to further reductions of [soft costs](#) that often limit the installation of solar PV in a community. The SolSmart program offers resources and technical assistance for local governments to increase transparency and reduce barriers to solar development. Utilization of the SolarAPP+ tool adds to the SolSmart designation process and provides a significant number of required credits, particularly in the Permitting and Inspection (PI) category. Along with Planning and Zoning (PZ), Permitting and Inspection is one of the key areas where soft costs can be reduced. Communities will work in other categories to achieve designation that will move them toward their clean energy goals.

For communities that are already designated at the Gold level and either interested in or already utilizing the SolarAPP+ tool, Platinum designation is closer than ever. Like Bronze, Silver, and Gold designations, the Platinum designation standard pathway includes prerequisite credits (four, in this case) and a completion total of 350 points. (Modified and regional organization designation pathways differ somewhat.)

SolarAPP+ may be used for the following SolSmart credits in Platinum designation:

- **PI-5:** Demonstrate pathway for instant/automatic approval of residential rooftop solar PV systems (e.g., using SolarAPP+). (20 points, required for Platinum) Adoption of SolarAPP+ meets the requirements of PI-5, which specifies that a local community demonstrates a way of achieving instant approval for residential PV systems. SolarAPP+ is a powerful free tool to achieve this aspect of Platinum designation, as it can facilitate this process and provide a nationally recognized and well-tested platform for PV approval. This credit is highly difficult to complete for communities that do not utilize automated permitting tools.
- **PI-11:** 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.
As a precursor to achieving PI-5 (above), communities can receive a demonstration of SolarAPP+ or a similar automated permitting platform, compiling the findings in a signed memo. PI-11 is worth 5 points and is not required for Platinum designation.

Other Avenues to Platinum Designation

A total of 350 points is needed to achieve Platinum designation under the standard designation pathway, up from the 200 necessary to earn SolSmart Gold. Adopting SolarAPP+ can make it easier to achieve various other criteria within the SolSmart program. That includes the credits in following table:

Credit Identifier	Credit Points	Credit Language	Additional Notes
PI-4	20, Required for Gold	Post an online statement confirming a three-business day turnaround time for residential rooftop solar PV.	SolarAPP+ allows communities to easily confirm that they will turn around most small rooftop PV systems instantly. To achieve this criteria, the online statement should state that SolarAPP+-qualified projects are approved instantaneously and include the expected review time for non-automated reviews (which does not have to be less than 3 days to earn the points).
PI-6	10 points, required for Platinum	Post community metrics related to the number of solar PV and solar-plus-storage permits and inspections processed by the community annually, and average annual permitting and inspection timelines.	SolarAPP+ can help with data tracking and is a tool for shortening approval, permitting, and inspection timelines.
PI-7	5	Adopt a standard solar PV permit application form aligned with best practices.	The permit application form associated with SolarAPP+ is aligned with all best practices.
PI-8	5	Distinguish between solar PV systems qualifying for streamlined and standard permit review.	SolarAPP+ has criteria to determine which systems qualify for the automated process and which don't. To achieve this criteria, the community's public solar permitting checklist should include a link to, or details about, which projects are eligible for the SolarAPP+.
PI-9	5	Require no more than one permit application form for a small rooftop solar PV system.	Most communities using SolarAPP+ require only one permit application. This can combine other work that needs to be done on a project such as Main Panel Upgrades or Energy Storage Systems.
PI-14	5	Demonstrate that residential permit fees	SolarAPP+ helps reduce the effort and staff time needed to issue permits, thereby



Credit Identifier	Credit Points	Credit Language	Additional Notes
		for solar PV are \$500 or less.	reducing the cost to communities and enabling lower permit costs on the part of the local government.
PI-18	10	Post solar PV inspection requirements online, including the inspection process and what details inspectors will review.	SolarAPP+ automatically populates an inspection checklist that details what is needed to be reviewed, but to earn this criteria additional details about the inspection process, such as how to schedule an inspection, will need to be posted online.

Note that SolarAPP+ may also be considered as part of efforts to achieve Innovative Action credit(s), if your community pilots new SolarAPP+ features:

- **IA-1 (Points Vary):** The actions identified in the categories above represent many of the most common and impactful efforts communities are taking to make going solar easier and more affordable for residents and businesses. However, we know that communities across the country are developing innovative ways to promote and deploy solar energy. If your community has taken action that was not captured in any of the criteria above, please share it with us.

For further information on how SolarAPP+ can support your path to a SolSmart Platinum designation, we recommend discussing with your technical assistance provider.

Beyond the SolarAPP+-related credits, there are two more prerequisites that are **essential to earning a SolSmart Platinum designation**. Those prerequisites include:

- **GO-1 Install solar PV on local government facilities and/or local government-controlled land. (Required for Platinum)**
- **CE-2:** Establish partnerships with local community-based organizations or other organizations focused on serving disadvantaged communities within your community on strategies for solar PV deployment and/or planned programs or initiatives. Compile summary, outcomes, and next steps in a memo.

SolSmart offers a variety of credits and technical expertise providing communities pursuing Platinum designation flexibility to achieve the goals that are most important to them. For additional information about any of the credits mentioned, please see [SolSmart's Program Guide](#). Local governments can work with SolSmart's technical assistance providers to find the right path for their communities.