SolSmart: Best Practices in Planning and Zoning for Colorado Communities

May 16, 2024
Agenda

- CO Energy Office Grant Program
- Introduction to SolSmart
- Planning & Zoning Best Practices
Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

● Acknowledgment: This material is based upon work supported by the Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE), under Award Numbers DE-EE0009950 & DE-EE0009951.

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Colorado Energy Office is offering $1 million in grant funding to help local governments adopt an automated online solar permitting platform, such as SolarAPP+ or Symbium. These platforms verify the code compliance of solar systems in real-time and can bring permit processing time down to less than 30 minutes.

**Eligible applicants:** Local and Tribal governments

**Reimbursable costs:**
- In-house staff time, IT time, and training
- Third-party consultant time
- Training of installers
- Installation, integration or licensing fees
- Maintenance fees for up to three years
# APPS Grant Details

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<th>Funding awards</th>
<th>Max of $40,000 - $100,000, based on jurisdiction population</th>
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| Application process  | • Open now until June 4, 2024  
|                      | • Grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis  
|                      | • until funding is expended  
|                      | • Simple check-box application & budget form |
| Questions?           | Email Ari Moledina at ari.moledina@state.co.us or visit  
|                      | https://energyoffice.colorado.gov/apps                     |
Benefits of Automated Solar Permitting

- **Reduces errors while ensuring code compliance** on permit applications by providing installers with real-time feedback.
- **Saves staff time** by instantly processing 80-90% of standard solar permits that government staff typically review manually.
- Allows Coloradans to **start benefiting from their solar systems as quickly as possible**.
What is SolSmart?

• SolSmart is a national designation and technical assistance program that has helped over 500 local governments make it faster, easier, and more affordable for residents and businesses to go solar.

• The 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.

• **Technical assistance is available at no cost.**
SolSmart in Colorado
Benefits of Solar

- Supports climate and sustainability goals
- Generates local, clean, reliable power
- Creates local jobs and economic development
- Reduces utility bills and provides price stability

Centre Region COG, PA
Summit County, CO
St. Louis Park, MN
Centre Region COG, PA
SolSmart Actions

- **Increase transparency**
  - Post a permitting checklist online
  - Develop a solar landing page

- **Increase understanding**
  - Provide training on solar PV to staff working in permitting and inspection
  - Train planning staff on planning and zoning best practices for solar PV

- **Reduce barriers**
  - Decrease permit turnaround time
  - Codify that solar PV is a by-right accessory use in the zoning ordinance
Designation Structure

There are four levels of designation: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. Communities achieve designation by meeting prerequisites as well as meeting other elective criteria.

- **Bronze**: Bronze designees have increased transparency with an online permitting checklist and zoning review.
- **Silver**: Silver designees have trained permitting and inspection staff on solar best practices.
- **Gold**: Gold designees have achieved a three-day solar permitting turnaround and codified zoning ordinances to remove obstacles to solar.
- **Platinum**: Platinum designees (new in 2023) will have adopted instant solar permitting, published metrics on local solar growth, and partnered with community organizations to achieve equity goals.
Access to Best Practices

The SolSmart Program Guides summarize best practices for local governments, counties and regional governments.

https://solsmart.org/resource/solsmart-program-guide
Customized Support

Technical Assistance is tailored around the goals and priorities of your community. It can include expert review of materials, webinars, trainings and 1:1 consultations.
Templates and Examples

Communities are provided with templates, checklists, community examples and guidance documents.
How to get started!

Go to SolSmart.org
Most local governments have oversight of planning & zoning policies and procedures within their jurisdiction.

Clear and consistent solar zoning codes can improve transparency and reduce barriers to solar developments.