

SolSmart Program Evaluation: What We Found

SolSmart is a national designation and technical assistance program that aims to help local governments make it faster, easier, and more affordable to go solar. More than 400 municipalities, counties, and regional organizations in 41 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have achieved SolSmart designation.

First launched in 2016, SolSmart is led by The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association, and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office.

SolSmart commissioned a **third-party evaluation** led by four universities (Missouri University of Science & Technology, Florida State University, University of Miami, and University of Texas at Austin) to look at the impact of the program on local governments and make recommendations for improvement. *The data suggest that SolSmart has real and tangible impacts on solar adoption in designated communities.*

Key Findings

- SolSmart-designated communities **increased their solar capacity** by 69 kW per month on average — a 67% increase. The **number of installations** increased by 62%, or 3 systems per month on average.
- Across the country, SolSmart led to approximately **300-450 MW of additional solar capacity** and 12,800-19,200 new installations.
- SolSmart speeds up the permitting process for solar installations by 7.5 days on average — reducing delays for local governments, solar companies, and consumers.
- In surveys, local government and industry officials say the biggest impact of SolSmart is **increased local knowledge about solar energy**.
- SolSmart delivers for communities: \$10 million in taxpayer funds for SolSmart led to **\$1-2 billion in additional solar investment**.
- While it has a positive impact on the permitting process, data show that SolSmart does not speed up the process for inspection and interconnection or the overall installation process.

How We'll Follow Up

The research also provided useful information on why communities become involved with SolSmart and possible barriers to success. To follow up, the SolSmart program is:

- Increasing outreach to encourage new communities to participate in SolSmart, particularly communities that are **under-resourced** or have difficulty meeting staff needs.
- Working to ensure that SolSmart encourages **equitable outcomes** and improves access to solar for all populations.
- Evaluating and improving the **SolSmart criteria** to focus on actions that achieve the greatest impact.
- Considering new strategies to improve **inspection times** to create a faster installation process overall.

More details on the research are available at [SolSmart.org](https://www.solsmart.org).

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