



Moving from Silver to Gold Designation with SolarAPP+

A local government's decision to utilize [SolarAPP+](#) to reduce permitting times for solar PV and storage can be an excellent springboard to further reduce the other [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 the barriers to solar development. Utilization of the SolarAPP+ tool can streamline the SolSmart designation process and provide 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. However, it is important to note that communities may have to spend additional time on other categories in order to achieve designation.

For communities that are already designated at the Silver level and are now utilizing the SolarAPP+ tool, Gold designation is just a few steps away. Just like Bronze and Silver designation, Gold designation includes two prerequisite credits and the completion of a total of 200 points. While SolarAPP+ completes one of the prerequisites, the remaining prerequisite and additional points can be challenging for communities to complete. Fortunately, the technical assistance team at SolSmart is here to help any interested communities achieve Gold designation.

Three Business Day Permit Turnaround

The first prerequisite for Gold designation is for the community to post an online statement confirming a three business day turnaround time for small rooftop solar PV (PI-4). **Because SolarAPP+ automates the permitting process, this requirement is met if the SolarAPP+ community simply provides additional information**, such as citing in a permitting checklist that SolarAPP+ eligible projects are approved instantaneously and those that don't qualify have a turnaround of X days. Note that fulfilling PI-4 is also worth 20 points. This prerequisite can often be difficult to complete for communities that do not utilize automated permitting tools.

Accessory Use Solar PV By-Right Statement

Within the Planning and Zoning category, the second Gold prerequisite is for communities to codify in the zoning ordinance that accessory use solar PV is explicitly allowed by-right in all major zones (PZ-5). This is a key action for communities to increase transparency and reduce barriers for solar PV development, but making changes to the zoning ordinance can sometimes be a barrier for communities.

200 Additional Points

When moving from Silver designation, communities will have already completed 100 points. The remaining 100 points can be completed in any category and a community's pathway can be tailored to the needs and interests of the community. If the community has not already received credit for the use of SolarAPP+, they will receive 10 Innovative Action (IA) points to begin. Additionally, the two prerequisites for Gold designation result in an additional 40 points (PI-4, PZ-5).



Beyond the IA and prerequisite points, communities have an opportunity to pursue the points that are most relevant to them. For example, if expanding access to solar within the community is a priority, local governments can support a community-wide group purchase program (MD-2) or a community solar program (MD-4) and receive 20 points for either in the Market Development category.

Local governments looking to reduce energy costs and act as a leader on renewable energy deployment can pursue Government Operations credits. By installing solar PV on local government-owned facilities/land (GO-5) or brownfields (GO-6), a community will earn 20 points each toward designation.

Finally, communities can improve upon already existing policies or documents to earn more points. In addition to allowing solar PV by-right, communities can codify in the zoning ordinance that accessory use energy storage systems are explicitly allowed by-right in all major zones for an additional 20 points (PZ-23).

SolSmart offers a variety of credits and technical expertise to ensure that communities that pursue Gold designation are able 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.

Requirements for SolSmart Gold	How SolarAPP+ Helps
PI-4	Automatically completed
PZ-5	N/A
200 points	Over 70 points can be earned