



SOLAR OUTREACH PARTNERSHIP

SOLAR PERMITTING, INSPECTION, &
INTERCONNECTION TOOLKIT

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TOOLKIT SUMMARY

Simplifying and streamlining solar permitting, inspection, and interconnection (PII) procedures is a key way municipal governments can make their communities more solar friendly. This toolkit provides clear, efficient, and cost effective ways to improve PII procedures. While it targets municipal permit review staff and inspectors, the toolkit should be useful to a diverse audience including other municipal staff, solar installers, and individuals and organizations interested in seeing changes to the PII processes in their communities. The toolkit is intended to provide readers with many of the key resources necessary to understand both the basics of PII practices and some of the important nuances that must be considered when promoting or pursuing associated policies or other related activities.

To find out more about this subject or receive complimentary technical assistance, contact the SunShot Solar Outreach Partnership by visiting <http://solaroutreach.org/ta> or emailing solar-usa@iclei.org with your request for assistance.

DISCLAIMER

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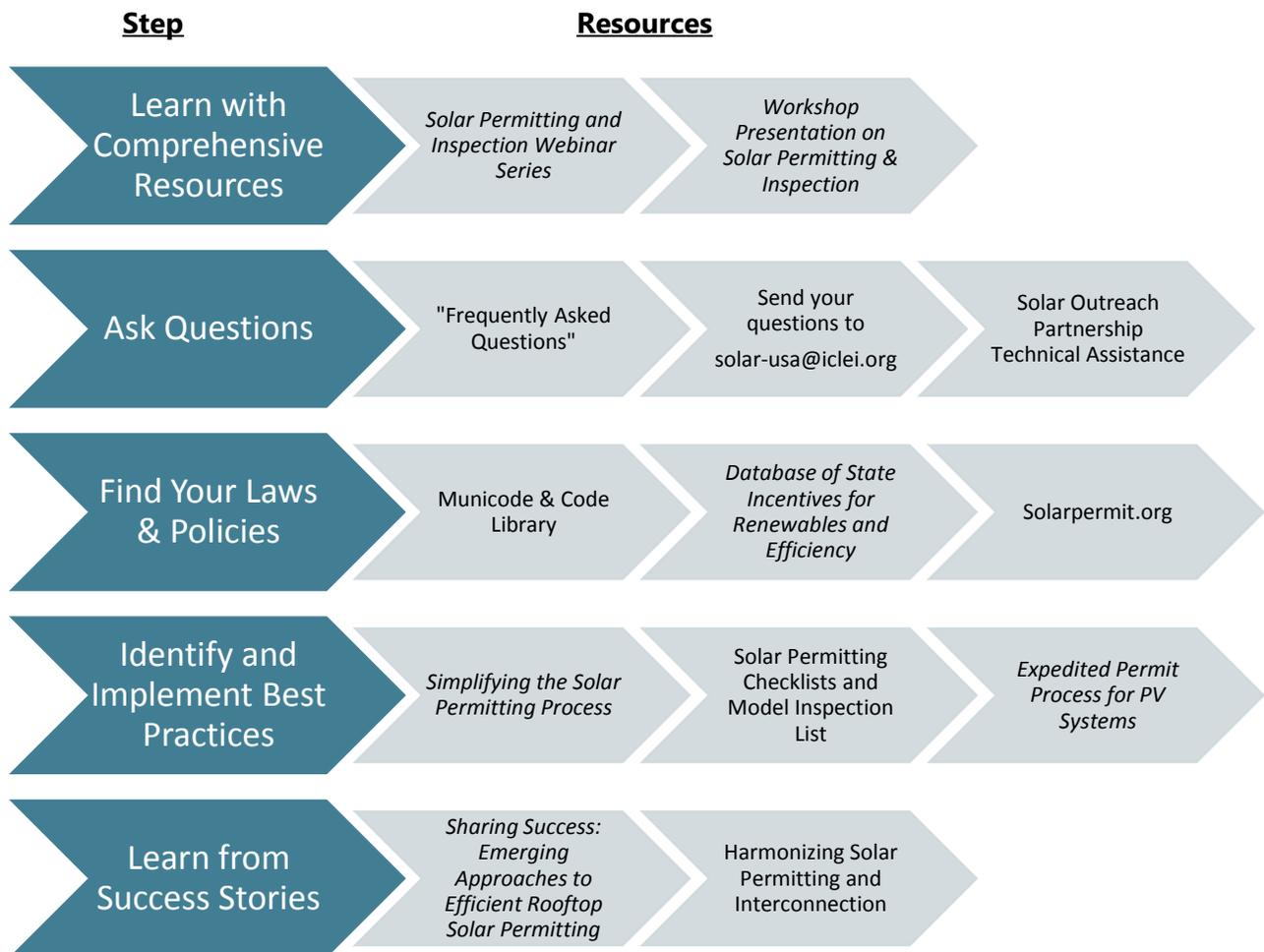
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COVER IMAGE CREDIT

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OVERVIEW OF PROCESS AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The general steps for learning about solar permitting, inspection, and interconnection (PII) are highlighted in the figure below, with relevant resources (described in greater detail below). Throughout these steps, local government staff may wish to engage internally with important decision-makers from various departments or agencies and externally with interested stakeholders, including the electric utility, solar industry, developers, homeowners associations, and environmental advocates.



For more free solar resources, visit solaroutreach.org

SOLAR PERMITTING

Why is permitting an important policy for solar energy?

The rules and requirements for obtaining the necessary permits could unintentionally prohibit or discourage solar energy projects. Local governments can promote solar energy adoption by reviewing and amending existing permitting procedures to add clarity and certainty for system owners, while still maintaining important health, safety, and aesthetic considerations.

Key Resource

- **Solar Permitting & Inspection Webinar Series** (ICLEI and IREC). Available at: <http://solaroutreach.org/resource/solar-permitting-inspection-webinar-series/#.VkOxJberRpg>

What are the components of the rooftop solar permitting process?

Key phases of the PII process are:

- *Pre-application* — Customers or installers collect the information required to apply for and receive the necessary permits to install rooftop solar
- *Application and Approval* — The customer or installer submits permit applications; the requisite agency reviews the applications, then issues or denies the permits
- *Inspection* — Rooftop systems may be subject to inspection to ensure safe and efficient operation

Key Resources

- **Workshop Presentation on Solar Permitting & Inspection** (Solar Outreach Partnership, August 2014). Available at: <http://solaroutreach.org/resource/solar-zoning-permitting-workshop-mooresville-nc/#.VkUH3HarRpi>

Where can I find information on solar PII requirements in my jurisdiction?

SolarPermit.org hosts the National Solar Permitting Database. It organizes and simplifies solar permitting processes by compiling the information in a single location. You may also check your local government website to see what information is available online, usually on the page for the building or planning department.

Key Resources

- **National Solar Permitting Database** (Clean Power Finance, Inc). Available at: <https://solarpermit.org>

What are the best practices for Solar PII?

There are several ways to improve Solar PII processes. These include:

- Make requirements easily accessible online
- Adopt an expedited permit process
- Allow for online permit submissions and processing
- Assign reasonable, cost-based fees
- Eliminate excessive inspections
- Set narrow inspection appointment windows
- Coordinate with other jurisdictions in the region

Key Resources

- **Simplifying the Solar Permitting Process: Residential Solar Permitting Best Practices Explained** (Interstate Renewable Energy Council - 2013). Available at: http://projectpermit.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Expanded-Best-Practices-7.23.13_VSI.pdf
- **Just the Basics: Solar Permitting Checklists** (Interstate Renewable Energy Council – 2014). Available at: <http://solaroutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/solar-permitting-handoutv6-1.pdf>
- **Model Inspection Checklist for Rooftop PV Systems** (Interstate Renewable Energy Council – 2014). Available at: <http://solaroutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Model-Inspection-Checklist.pdf>
- **Expedited Permit Process for PV Systems** (Solar America Board for Codes and Standards). Available at: <http://www.solarabcs.org/about/publications/reports/expedited-permit/>

Where can I find examples from other cities of efficient Solar PII practices?

Several cities have implemented efficient, expedited solar permitting processes, and case studies of their experiences are available through several sources. Check solaroutreach.org/resources to search for additional case studies.

Key Resources

- **Sharing success: Emerging Approaches to Efficient Rooftop Solar Permitting** (Interstate Renewable Energy Council - 2012). Available at: <http://www.irecusa.org/sharing-success/>
- **Harmonizing Solar Permitting and Interconnection** (North Carolina Solar Center - 2013). Available at: http://solaroutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/NCSC-City-of-Santa-Clara-CA-Permitting-Interconnection-Case-Study_FINAL.pdf

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