

# Just the Basics

## Solar Permitting Checklists

Checklists are an integral part of the permitting process. They provide a simple list of required information for either the permit application or the inspection that follows. As such, they can serve as guides for solar installers as well as permit review staff and inspectors. Checklists can save staff time for the jurisdiction by reducing the number of inquiries received from installers, and can also save time and money for the solar installer by making requirements clear and transparent. They can also help to ensure that application and inspection requirements are applied consistently across the board to all installers. In some cases, jurisdictions require applicants to turn in the completed checklist as part of the application to help to verify that the application is complete. Some jurisdictions choose to provide even more information in other guidance documents, as discussed on the reverse side of this sheet.

### Tips for Application Checklists

- ✓ List required forms, such as building permit application form, and where they can be located
- ✓ List and describe required diagrams or plans, including the number of copies needed
- ✓ List any other required documentation, signatures or approvals
- ✓ Describe the fee structure and options for payment
- ✓ Provide online or in-person application submittal instructions
- ✓ Provide information about office locations, hours, and appropriate staff contacts
- ✓ Include citations to relevant code or other sources as much as possible for the applicant to reference

### Tips for Inspection Checklists

- ✓ List the information required in advance of the inspection
- ✓ List what the inspector will look at on-site and what requirements are expected to be met
- ✓ Consider dividing checklist into appropriate sections, such as utility service/AC power source, inverter, arrays/modules, and grounding/bonding
- ✓ Explain who needs to be there and what applicant can expect during the inspection
- ✓ Provide information about office locations, hours, and appropriate staff contacts
- ✓ Include citations to relevant code or other sources as much as possible for the applicant to reference



### Examples to check out

These jurisdictions have published checklists for solar permitting:

- Boulder County, Colorado
- San Jose, California
- Miami-Dade County, Florida
- Berkeley, California
- Tucson, Arizona
- Maui County, Hawaii



For more examples and discussion of permitting checklists and other guidance documents, see IREC's report, *Sharing Success: Emerging Approaches to Efficient Rooftop Solar Permitting*, available at: [www.irecusa.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Sharing-Success-w-cover-revised-final052012.pdf](http://www.irecusa.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Sharing-Success-w-cover-revised-final052012.pdf).



Interstate Renewable Energy Council

[www.irecusa.org](http://www.irecusa.org)

# Going Above and Beyond Solar Permitting Guidance Documents

Checklists provide the essential information on the permit application and inspection process, and are a great place to start. But sometimes it can be even better to provide more detailed information to solar permitting applicants in more comprehensive guidance documents. In addition to information on permit application and processing, these documents may provide background on solar technologies, available incentives, information on finding installers, roles for different departments and entities in facilitating a solar installation, and more. At a minimum, guidance documents should include information about your jurisdiction's processes, including any unique or unusual requirements. All of the information for checklists described on the reverse side of this sheet would be appropriate for guidance documents, as well. Beyond that, there are a variety of topics jurisdictions have included in guidance documents.



## Tips for Writing

- ✓ Work with nearby communities to streamline procedures and forms and to share the task of creating them.
- ✓ Try to coordinate with other relevant agencies, departments and entities, such as the local utility, to offer guidance that is as comprehensive as possible.
- ✓ Approach the document from an outsider's perspective: what information would a complete novice need to successfully complete the process?
- ✓ Review existing guidance documents from other jurisdictions. The following cities provide good examples: Portland, OR; Philadelphia, PA; San Diego, CA; San Jose, CA; Boston, MA and Scottsdale, AZ.
- ✓ Solicit feedback from a wide audience, including developers, homeowners and fellow staff.

## Topics for Consideration

1. Solar Installation Process Overview
2. Licensing and Code Requirements
3. The Interconnection Process
4. Electrical Permit Requirements
5. Building Permit Requirements
6. System Inspection Process
7. Information on Incentives
8. Definitions of Uncommon Terms and Acronyms

**Gold Star for Good Work**  
Solar Permitting Guidance in Boston, MA

The City of Boston offers one of the most thorough solar permitting guides in the United States. Its "Solar Boston Permitting Guide" was developed as part of the City's involvement in the U.S. DOE's Solar America Cities program. The Guide serves as a resource for Boston residents, businesses and solar installers to help them navigate the solar development process.

Boston also provides an interactive GIS map to help assess locations for solar on the same web site. Even for jurisdictions not interested in going as far as Boston, its permitting guidance materials offer a great model to start from. This guide is available at [www.cityofboston.gov/climate/solar.asp](http://www.cityofboston.gov/climate/solar.asp).