Tool #7:
Streamline Permitting and Inspection Processes

What is it?

Streamlining a region's permitting and processes for solar installations can reduce costs and confusion by providing clearly defined requirements, expedited processing for solar installations and the option to submit paperwork online.

Standardizing permitting requirements within a region can help communities to pool resources by sharing permit inspection staff.

Implementing streamlined permitting also showcases the region's commitment to solar within their communities and creates opportunities for growth in the region's solar market.

How do you do it?

- Understand each community's solar permitting and inspection process.
- Create an easy to understand outline of the solar permitting and inspection process in your region.
- Simplify permit application forms and the review process. Consider allowing for online submissions.
- Standardize permitting procedures in all communities in your region. Consider working with local utilities to provide incentives to encourage communities to adopt the permitting procedures.
- Consider allowing over-the-counter building permits for standard residential solar energy systems.
- Allow document exchanges to be conducted by company representatives. Some jurisdictions require licensed electricians pick up permits; this can place an unnecessary burden on installation firms.
- Host a workshop to educate building and electrical inspectors about solar technologies and installations.
- Publicize an easy to understand, step-by-step explanation of the permitting and inspection process.
- Establish a clear communications path between code enforcement offices and the local utility provider to expedite the interconnection and inspection processes.

Who else is doing it?

- The Mid-America Regional Council's (MARC) *Solar Ready KC Initiative* identified best management practices for permitting process and planning improvements. For more information, see MARC's case study on page 38 or visit www.marc.org\environment\energy\solar_ready_kc.html
- Boston, MA recently released the *Solar Boston Permitting Guide* as a resource for business and residences interested in installing solar and describes the city's new streamlined permitting rules for solar PV installations. For more information, visit http://www.cityofboston.gov/images_documents/Solar%20Boston%20Permitting%20Guide%20NEW%20Sept%20202011_tcm3-27989.pdf
- The Long Island Unified Solar Permitting Initiative (LIUSPI) created standardized and expedited permitting for solar rooftop and solar hot water systems in Long Island. For more information, see the LIUSPI case study on page 23 of this *Guide*.

Where can I get more information?

- The Solar America Board for Codes and Standards addresses solar codes and standards issues. http://www.solarabcs.org
- SolarTech released a revised electrical diagram and guidelines for residential PV to help expedite the solar permitting process. http://irecusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/TUCC_Policy_11_Standardized_PV_guide_revised_070810-1.pdf
- SolarTech also released a "Top 10 List" for expedited permitting, available here http://solartech.org/permitting/56-top-10.
- The Vote Solar Initiative houses resources on solar permitting. http://votesolar.org/city-initiatives/project-permit/
- SunRun produced a report exploring how streamlined permitting can make solar more affordable. http://www.sunrunhome.com/solar-lease/cost-of-solar/local-permitting/
- Brook's Engineering's *The Expedited Permit Process for PV Systems: A Standardized Process for the Review of Small-Scale PV Systems* report provides a detailed overview of the standardization process for small-scale PV systems. http://www.brooksolar.com/files/Expermitprocess.pdf
- The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) *Solar Powering Your Community: A Guide for Local Governments* is a comprehensive resource created to assist local governments and stakeholders in designing and implementing a strategic local solar plan. The guidebook includes a section on streamlined permitting on page 67-71. http://www4.eere.energy.gov/solar/sunshot/resource_center/sites/default/files/solar-powering-your-community-guide-for-local-governments.pdf
- The National Renewable Energy Laboratory released *Updating Interconnection Screens for PV System Integration*, which provides short and long-term solutions that allow for increasing solar deployment levels in a safe and reliable manner. http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy12osti/54063.pdf

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