



Residential Solar Rebate Program Participating Solar Contractor Guide



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Overview

Fort Collins Utilities seeks to provide residential electric customers high confidence and positive experiences participating in the Solar Rebate Program. Customers choosing to work with Participating Solar Contractors are eligible to obtain financial incentives from Utilities' Residential Solar Rebate Program (Program) for new solar photovoltaic (PV) systems.

Establishing a Participating Solar Contractor Network (Network) for the Program provides benefits to prospective customers, solar contractors and Utilities by setting an expectation of quality and professional services within the local industry.

Contractors or businesses operating in Fort Collins that offer or perform any of the following services for Utilities' residential customers may become Participating Solar Contractors:

- Solar PV systems sales
- Solar PV system design
- Solar PV system installation

This guide outlines the standards, requirements, processes and rules for contractors to participate in the Fort Collins Utilities Residential Solar Rebate Program as a Participating Solar Contractor.

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Program site: fcgov.com/utilities/residential/renewables/solar-rebates

Contractor Resources site: fcgov.com/utilities/solar-contractor-resources

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Role of Solar Contractors in Fort Collins

Utilities' Program offers financial incentives to electric utility customers in Fort Collins who install solar PV systems. Solar contractors are an integral part of the program, providing design, installation and support services to our customers. Utilities seeks to assist customers by ensuring that Participating Solar Contractors operate according to high standards of customer service, integrity, quality design and installation services.

Network Goals

The Participating Solar Contractor distinction was developed to achieve the following goals:

- Ensure that Utilities' electric customers have consistent positive interactions with solar professionals when seeking proposals for or installation of solar PV
- Ensure customers receive accurate, complete proposal details in a consistent, industry accepted format to help them evaluate the costs and benefits of installing solar PV
- Reduce delays in project approval and the final Utilities inspection

Eligibility and Participation

Residential solar PV contractors qualify to join the Participating Solar Contractors Network (Network) by agreeing to conduct their business in accordance with best practice ethics guidelines outlined in the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) Code of Business and provided in this guide, additional Utilities requirements outlined in this guide and by adopting the use of standardized proposal disclosures.

The Network applies only to businesses working in the residential sector in Fort Collins. The Network does not apply to participation in any other Utilities program, including Solar Power Purchase Program and the Commercial Solar Rebate Program, or for installations outside the Fort Collins Utilities electric service territory.

Contractors shall identify their business role(s) to Utilities in applying to participate in this Network as one or more of the following:

- Solar PV systems sales
- Solar PV system design
- Solar PV system installation

Network Benefits

Active Participating Solar Contractors enjoy the following benefits:

- Projects which are designed, sold and installed by Participating Solar Contractors are eligible for residential solar rebates as well as Epic Loans (fcgov.com/utilities/epicloan)
- Company directory listing on Utilities solar website with company name, website, telephone number and email
- An extra degree of respect and visibility by virtue of maintaining Active status in the Network
- Referrals of customers to the Network

- Ability to use the Program name and “Participating Solar Contractor” status in print and digital marketing materials
- Invitation-only events sponsored by Utilities

Utilities may use printed materials, newsletters, display booths and other effective media to educate the general public about the Program and Network.

Network Requirements

Code of Ethics

Contractor agrees to abide by the following Code of Ethics and shall:

- Ensure that quality, honesty, integrity and good faith are the hallmarks of their business practices, including individual contractor sales, advertising, installations and service
- Communicate clearly and accurately with customers regarding the Program, Contractor’s professional qualifications, the work or improvements to be completed by Contractor, Contractor’s obligations hereunder, and the terms and conditions of Contractor’s work for such customers
- Protect the confidentiality of customer information
- Maintain the highest ethical standards of advertising and selling, including maintaining Do Not Call or Contact lists
- Hold paramount the interests of the customer and act in a professional manner as a trusted agent
- Maintain strict compliance with all federal, state, county, and municipal government laws, regulations, and ordinances pertaining to the industry and business operation
- Design, install, service, and repair equipment in accordance with applicable code and professional standards
- Develop and maintain an understanding of proper equipment selection to assure customers of safe, dependable PV system performance
- Observe and foster the highest standards of safety and working conditions for their employees
- Develop the highest quality standards of customer service and nurture long-term relationships with customers
- Instill the highest respect and professional working relationships among other participating contractors and within their respective communities, avoiding unfair criticism of other solar contractors and any practice that would deceive the public or discredit the profession
- Represent Utilities and the Solar Rebate Program in a respectful manner that does not adversely affect Utilities’ business, operations, reputation, or goodwill. This includes:
 - Respectful treatment of customer’s home and property, including communication with the customer or Utilities staff when inadvertent damage to the home or property has occurred as a result of the Contractor’s presence
 - Truthfulness in all aspects of engagement with customers and Utilities staff, including accuracy on the completion of customer submitted proposals and applications

Subcontracting of any elements of sales, design, or installation of a project to one or more contractors that are not active in the Participating Solar Contractor Network is not consistent with Solar Rebate

Program guidelines and makes a project ineligible for incentives. Misrepresentation of project work or customer authorization will not be tolerated and may be grounds for suspension from the Participating Solar Contractor Network.

Solar Business Code

Participating Solar Contractors must conduct their business and all interactions with consumers according to the current SEIA Solar Business Code (see seia.org/initiatives/seia-solar-business-code). In areas of the Solar Business Code which express best practices using the word “should”, the Contractor shall interpret this guidance as a requirement. Contact Program staff to clarify or interpret as needed.

Professional Obligations

Provide Standard Disclosures to Customers

In the initial and the final solar PV proposal provided to a residential customer in the Fort Collins electric utility service territory, Participating Solar Contractors must include the following:

- **Fort Collins Utilities Residential Solar Fact Sheet**
- Either as appropriate:
 - **SEIA Solar Purchase Disclosure**
 - **SEIA Solar Lease Disclosure**

The SEIA disclosure and Solar Fact Sheet **must be provided at the same time, in the same format (electronic or paper), and be accessible or retrievable by the customer together as a complete proposal packet.**

See the Instructions page of the Interconnection and Rebate Application for a full list of required documentation for a complete application packet.

System Design Assumptions

When designing the PV system, Participating Solar Contractors are advised to use actual customer energy consumption data for at least the previous 12-24 months when available. Utilities limits the maximum size of solar PV systems to a production no greater than 120 percent of the customer’s average annual energy consumption over a 24-month period. Other estimation methods are employed for situations where this data is not available. Allowances are provided for a recently purchased electric vehicle or other major electric loads, based on proof of purchase.

Modeling Proposed System Economic Impacts

When estimating the economic impact of a proposed solar PV system, Participating Solar Contractors must:

- Use the current Utilities residential rates
- Use actual customer energy consumption data for the previous 12 to 24 months if available
- Use models such as NREL PVWatts or System Advisor Model (SAM) which produce generation estimates correlated to hours of the day in order to estimate the share of energy generated by rate period

When a customer's monthly on-peak energy use is not available, the following assumptions may be used based on the average Fort Collins residential customer profile:

	% of annual kWh total	% On-Peak Load
January	10%	15.0%
February	8%	15.9%
March	8%	16.3%
April	7%	14.7%
May	7%	17.9%
June	9%	22.0%
July	11%	20.7%
August	9%	23.7%
September	7%	19.0%
October	7%	16.7%
November	7%	15.0%
December	10%	13.5%

Representation of System Performance and Impacts

During consultations, Participating Solar Contractors must advise customers of the following points by providing the most current **Fort Collins Utilities Residential Solar Fact Sheet** along with other company marketing or proposal documents:

- Customers will continue to receive energy bills from Utilities after the solar system is energized.
- Energy produced by the solar PV system is consumed by the home first; excess energy is returned to the grid. Utilities does not track 'solar self-consumption' in the home.
- There is no 'banking' of energy generated by solar PV systems unless battery storage is included in the system installed. All energy purchased from and returned to the grid is itemized on the customer's monthly utility bill with other utility charges which may include potable water, wastewater and stormwater. Bill credits carry over to future months.
- Customers will be billed for all energy consumed from the grid and credited for energy returned to the grid according to the rates in place at the time of such consumption and/or generation.
- Solar energy generated by the system will vary on a monthly basis due to natural cycles, with highest production around the summer solstice and lowest production around the winter solstice.
- The rates and rate structures which govern the price for energy consumed from the grid and energy returned to the grid are subject to change at the sole discretion of Utilities as defined by City Code. There is no provision for customers to lock in a rate or rate structure.
- The economic performance or payback for the proposed PV system is not guaranteed and may vary over time based on system performance and energy rates, among other variables. This provision is waived only if the Participating Solar Contractor providing the system chooses to offer this guarantee at their own risk. Such representations shall not bind or otherwise create obligations of Utilities.

- Renewable Energy Credits generated by the solar PV system are assigned to Utilities for customers who accept the Solar Rebate.
- There will be two inspections of the solar PV system prior to issuance of a Permit to Operate: one by Fort Collins Building Services, and a second by Utilities for testing inverter functions.
- Limits apply to customer eligibility for refund of accumulated bill credits: Only customers who do not receive all water services (potable water, wastewater and stormwater) are eligible to receive a refund of accumulated credits. The customer must have been on a net metering rate for at least 12 billing cycles as of the refund consideration date, which is March 1 of each year.
- Customers with solar PV systems **will not** have City-supplied electric power during a distribution grid outage affecting their service transformer. Customers may install a battery storage system designed to isolate from the grid during an outage to serve the home's energy loads.

Participating Solar Contractors may not represent the output of a solar PV system as covering the customer's entire electric consumption or having the ability to completely offset a customer's electric bill unless this is offered in writing with the explanation that this projection is made based on a total annual load projection or prior annual load analysis.

Project Design Documents and Submission, Modifications

The solar PV system design plans submitted to Utilities (for interconnection application) and Building Services (for building permit application) shall be identical. Contractors shall not seek to profit from charging customers to upgrade components or through change orders to modify the original design used as the basis for the final project bid. If modifications are required, Contractors shall provide identical updated plans simultaneously to Building Services and Utilities. **Both departments must approve the plan modifications before contractor can proceed with the installation.**

Interconnection and Rebate Application Submissions

Participating Solar Contractors must prepare, complete and submit the Interconnection and Rebate Application on behalf of customers participating in the Program to Utilities in the format and in the manner required. At this time, rebate application forms are provided in Microsoft Excel 2010 format, and must be completed to Utilities' reasonable satisfaction and submitted in that format (as *.xls file). Contractors must include all supplemental documentation as specified in application when submitting the application.

Building Department and Utility Coordination

In parallel to submitting the Interconnection Application to Utilities, contractors must submit a building permit application to Building Services for any solar or storage project. See guidelines at fcgov.com/building/res-requirements.

All installations of solar PV or energy storage equipment in Fort Collins electric service territory shall be installed according to plans approved in a building permit for the work, subject to all applicable codes. Failure to install systems as approved, or failure to obtain a building permit may result in a contractor's immediate suspension from the Network and a fine from Building Services.

After the PV system is installed, commissioned and ready for inspection, Participating Solar Contractors must **ensure the PV system is left in a de-energized condition**. Thereafter, a Contractor must notify the Building Department to request inspection by one of the following methods:

- Call: 970-221-6769
- Text: 888-406-6394
- Online: accela-aca.fcgov.com/CitizenAccess/Default.aspx

Building Services will notify Utilities of successful inspections. Utilities will conduct a second inspection to verify equipment installed, record serial numbers, and test the inverter functionality. Upon successful completion of this inspection, a Permission to Operate certificate will be sent to the homeowner and solar installer.

Systems Remain De-Energized Until Final Inspection

Contractors may energize solar systems during phases of construction, including commissioning, but must leave the system **de-energized** after successful commissioning. Utilities may suspend installation contractors from the Network for systems found to be left energized prior to final inspection by Utilities.

Proactively Managing Customer Complaints

Contractors may be suspended from the network for repeated customer complaints related to customer service and professionalism or failure to address customer complaints. Contractors should respond within 2 business days to requests from customers or Program staff.

Contractor Status

After application to the Network, an approved Participating Solar Contractor will be listed at one of the following statuses:

- **Active** – Contractor returned a fully executed Participating Solar Contractor Agreement and completed orientation, sales tax license and if applicable, solicitor license and solar installation contractor license. Contractor is in good standing and has met the requirements stated or referenced in this Guide.
- **Inactive** – Contractor paperwork (agreement, licenses, certifications, etc.) is not up-to-date or contractor requested the Inactive status. Inactive contractors cannot submit a rebate application for a new solar PV project until they have returned to Active status.
- **Suspended** – Contractor was suspended from the network for cause through an official notification.

Utilities pays rebates for projects designed, sold and installed by contractors approved as Active Participating Solar Contractors at the time of rebate application submittal. Customers of Inactive and Suspended contractors may still access rebates for solar PV projects which were granted a solar rebate reservation letter by Utilities while the contractor(s) on the project were Active. Utilities reserves the right to approve or deny rebates at its sole discretion in cases of contractor suspension from the Network.

Maintaining Participating Solar Contractor Status

Participating Solar Contractors must respond to annual requests from Utilities to confirm or update contact information and renew their Participating Solar Contractor status.

Participating Solar Contractors agree to abide by future requirements which may be established by Utilities in connection with participation in the Solar Rebate Program. Participating Solar Contractor shall send at least one appropriate staff member to participate in trainings/meetings as required by Utilities to maintain Active status in the Program.

Contractor Suspension

Participating Solar Contractors' business information shall be removed from the Active contractor list for a period of twelve months if Utilities determines two or more instances of any of the following have occurred in a six-month period:

- a. Contractor fails to follow or willfully neglects to fulfill the requirements outlined in this Guide or the current SEIA Solar Business Code
- b. When a Utilities inspection of installed systems reveals repeated failure to comply with technical specifications, applicable code or program requirements
- c. Contractor fails to correct problems or to implement a process to prevent future noncompliance
- d. When Utilities determines that, based upon customer feedback regarding Contractor's services or customer relations, Contractor has failed to provide the quality of customer service outlined in the Code of Ethics
- e. Repeated failure to submit Solar Rebate applications with complete accurate information and supplemental materials as required

The Program Manager reserves the right to suspend a Contractor for reasons he/she deems harmful to achieving Program goals.

In the event Utilities determines suspension as described herein is appropriate, Utilities will provide written notice to the Contractor by email and/or US Mail. Contractor may request an informal hearing with Program staff within ten (10) calendar days of issuance of any such notice. In the event of such an informal hearing, Utilities will issue a written notice of final determination whether to restore Contractor's participation immediately or otherwise prior to the expiration of the 12-month suspension.

Network Reinstatement

A suspended contractor may use the standard Agreement to apply for reinstatement to the Network at the conclusion of their suspension period. In addition, Utilities may require the following:

- Meeting in-person with an appropriate staff member
- Demonstration of proof of reparation or correction of problems that led to or caused the suspension
- Description of modifications to the training of personnel, business practice, or other organizational changes which would support the long-term success of the Contractor in the Network

- Referrals provided by five (5) recent customers during the suspension period as references for the Contractor's expertise and sound business practices that align with the Program requirements for the business functions they will conduct as a Participating Solar Contractor in Fort Collins

Network Materials

The SEIA Solar Business Code and disclosure documents are available from Utilities at <https://www.fcgov.com/utilities/solar-contractor-resources> and from SEIA at seia.org/initiatives/seia-solar-business-code and seia.org/research-resources/solar-transaction-disclosures. Contractors may use paper or electronic replicas of these documents. Custom electronic replicas of these documents not bearing the SEIA copyright must be approved by Utilities prior to use for the Program or customer proposals.