



Sustainable Development Fund Solar Photovoltaics Grant Program



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Solar PV Grant Program Tips on Choosing a PV Installer

The Choice is Yours

The decision of who you have install your solar PV system is probably the most important decision you will make with respect to PV. To qualify for the Sustainable Development Fund's Solar PV Grant Program, you must use a Participating Contractor, but the decision of which Participating Contractor to use is entirely yours. The contract for the installation of the system is between you and the installer. The SDF is not a party to your installation contract and is not responsible for correcting any problems that may occur. The role of the SDF is to help you understand PV and provide financial support.

In order for PV installers to be included on the SDF Solar PV Program Participating Contractors list, an installer must first submit a registration application which requires certain information about their business, insurance coverage, PV training/certification status and their PV installation experience, as well as agreeing to a code of conduct. Based on their response, the program administrator determines whether they meet the criteria to be on the Participating Contractors list. Contractors can also be removed from the list if not performing up to standards. It is important for you to always check the following SDF Solar PV Program website to see the current list of Participating Contractors:

http://www.trfund.com/sdf/solarpv/PV_Con_List.html

How to Choose a Participating Contractor

It is a good idea to interview two or more Participating Contractors before selecting one; however, it may be difficult to initially select a sample from the growing list of Participating Contractors. To help thin the list down, it may be useful to first check out contractor's - if they have any, and to email all of the contractors and initially weight them by their response.

During the interview stage, request written rough estimates and the PV system specifications (e.g., PV module type, size, quantity; type of inverter; if backup is desired - battery type, capacity, quantity), so you have information to compare across contractors.

After you select a Participating Contractor to install your PV system, they must prepare a lot of information for the *PV System Grant Application*. This includes conducting a solar audit, designing the system, selecting the hardware, preparing a wiring diagram, and estimating the performance of the PV system. It is reasonable the contractor may charge for these services (which may be included in the overall bid).

Attached are general questions for you to consider asking the Participating Contractor during the interview process. These have been categorized and numbered so you can keep track of responses from different contractors.

Questions to Ask the Contractor

A. Specific to Your Installation:

1. What is your approach to a project such as this?
2. How long will it take for the equipment to be ordered and delivered?
3. Will the equipment be delivered at this site or at your facility?
4. What happens if any of the equipment is damaged before it is actually installed?
5. How long will the installation process take?
6. When do you expect to begin and fully complete this project?
7. What would be your typical daily schedule?
8. How and when will I be contacted if no one is to show up on a particular day?
9. Who will be assigned as project supervisor for the job?
10. Who will be working on the project? Are they employees or subcontractors and are they all insured? Will a licensed electrician work on this installation?
11. Who cleans up after the job is finished?
12. Will we need any permits for this project? Who is going to obtain and pay for them?
13. Will the township require a structural review of the roof by an architect or professional engineer? Who will pay for this service?
14. Will you provide written guarantees on all materials and workmanship?
15. What happens if you change your mind?
16. What is the exact schedule of payments to be made? Besides materials and labor, does your estimate include sales tax, permit fees, structural analysis fees, interconnection fees, and shipping costs?
17. How soon can you respond to a service call if my PV system is not working properly? Would you be the one to repair the system?

B. About the Contractor's Company:

1. What is your street address? (if provided with only a post office box number)
2. Is your company a full service or specialty firm?
3. How long have you been in business?
4. How is your firm organized?
5. How many projects like mine have you completed in the past year? In the past three years?
6. May I have a list of references for those projects?
7. Have you or your employees been trained to install PV systems?
8. Does your company carry workers compensation and liability insurance? Do your subcontractors, if applicable, carry liability insurance? Can you show me a copy of your policy?
9. What percentage of your business is repeat or referral business?
10. Are you a member of a national trade association?

C. Summarizing Your Feelings about the Contractor:

1. Does the contractor appear to be knowledgeable?
2. Does the contractor appear to be someone who hears what your needs and wants are?
3. Does the contractor appear to have a genuine concern for your needs?
4. Can you communicate effectively with the contractor?