



# **Program Guide for Solar Electric Allies**

**Developed by Energy Trust of Oregon**

## **Part 2: Solar Trade Ally Performance and Expectations**

## **2.1 Trade Ally Enrollment and Onboarding**

To enroll as a Solar Electric Trade Ally, contractors must complete the online enrollment forms (1171A and 271A). These forms can be found on the Energy Trust [website](#).

New trade allies must follow the “Begin” link under “New Ally Enrollment”. This will direct applicants to a page where contractors can indicate which program they are interested in enrolling for. For this program, the applicable selection is “Solar Electric” under “Renewables”. The subsequent pages provide clear instructions for filling out the necessary enrollment forms.

Existing trade allies who wish to apply for the Solar Electric Program should contact Energy Trust to obtain their account number and enter it in the space provided and follow the instructions for the second option on the page.

The application process may take 10-20 minutes to complete. Energy Trust has specific insurance requirements for all Solar Electric Trade Allies and will require proof of insurance prior to processing an application. Once an application has been processed, Energy Trust will conduct a program interview with the applicant. During this interview Energy Trust will request a sample contract from the applicant. Upon successful completion of the interview, and submission and approval of all required paperwork, approval as an Energy Trust Solar Electric Trade Ally is granted.

## **2.2 Trade ally listing on Energy Trust website**

Energy Trust maintains a searchable database of all current trade allies for its various programs on its website. For Solar Electric Program trade allies, this list is broken into two categories:

- (1) A short list, *the default view for website users* that lists only trade allies that have successfully installed at least one project through the Program during the preceding year.
- (2) A long list that includes all approved trade allies.

To be added to the short list, a trade ally must successfully complete a project with the Program and then proactively contact Program staff to request that their listing be updated.

Program trade allies that do not wish to be listed on Energy Trust's website should notify Energy Trust.

### *Specialties*

Trade ally website listings may include one or more “Specialties.” These Specialties reflect the sector (commercial or residential) and technology of projects a Program trade ally completed in the past year.

The Program currently includes the following Specialties for Solar Electric Program trade allies:

- *Residential solar electric*
- *Small commercial solar electric (up to 50 kW)*
- *Large commercial solar electric (over 50 kW)*

To add Specialties to a website listing, a trade ally must successfully complete a project of that Specialty with Energy Trust and notify the Program staff to update the list.

To maintain Specialty listings, a trade ally must install at least one project of a given Specialty each year. Specialties that are not demonstrated annually will be removed from the trade ally's online listing.

#### *Professional certifications*

Although Energy Trust does not currently require any other professional certifications, Program trade allies are encouraged to obtain third-party certification, such as NABCEP ([www.nabcep.org](http://www.nabcep.org)). Energy Trust may include such certifications on trade ally website listings.

## **2.3 *Introductory Probationary Period***

New trade allies are required to go through a probationary period as part of the on-boarding process. Trade allies may not have more than 10 active applications during this period. This is due to the stringent design requirements Energy Trust Solar Electric Allies are expected to adhere to. It is very common for new trade allies to be asked to make changes to designs during this period. Active applications include projects marked with any of the following statuses in PowerClerk®: *Submitted, Resubmitted, Received, Design Rejected, Design Reviewed, Funds Reserved, Revised, Verification Requested, and Corrections Required*. Once a project reaches Installation Verified status, it is removed from the active queue.

When a trade ally has the maximum number of projects pending, Energy Trust will not accept a new project application from the trade ally until after a pending project has been completed and approved. Multiple projects at different sites for the same customer are counted as separate projects. Once a new trade ally has completed 10 projects with energy trust (through final verification), the probationary period will end.

In general, even after the probationary period, trade allies should only apply for an Energy Trust solar incentive when they are confident that a project will move forward in a timely manner. Since Program funding is limited, speculative reservations may trigger unwarranted incentive reductions. To reduce this risk Energy Trust places limitations on the number of active applications that a new trade ally has in the queue.

## **2.4 *Maintaining Trade Ally Status***

Program trade allies must meet annual participation requirements each year and maintain required professional certifications to maintain their status as trade allies.

In addition, Energy Trust maintains probation, suspension and termination policies designed to protect Energy Trust, its trade allies and its customers from losses due to poor work quality, diminished energy savings, health and safety issues and building durability risks. These policies protect against investing limited resources in unproductive projects or companies.

Energy Trust monitors the activities of trade allies on a regular basis to ensure they continually provide value to customers and to Energy Trust.

Energy trust maintains a star rating system to evaluate a trade ally's performance in the solar program. This star rating system measures Program Service, Quality Service, and Customer Service. A trade ally's rating determines their ability to participate in pilot programs, in addition to eligibility to receive business development assistance and direct customer leads provided by Energy Trust. More information on the Solar Trade Ally Rating System criteria can be found in **Appendix C**.

Energy Trust, in its sole discretion, may place a trade ally on disciplinary probation, suspend a contractor from the trade ally network, or terminate a contractor from the trade ally network at any time. Affected contractors may be given support and opportunities for improvement, and Energy Trust may return the contractor to active status, as outlined below. At Energy Trust's discretion, Energy Trust may require a contractor to pursue quality control process consultation at the trade ally's expense, prior to reinstatement as a trade ally.

### **2.4.1 Annual Program participation requirements**

To maintain eligibility as an actively enrolled solar trade ally, in addition to meeting all terms and conditions of the trade ally agreement with Energy Trust, trade allies must successfully apply for and obtain an Energy Trust incentive (as the trade ally contractor) for at least one solar electric system each calendar year.

## **2.5 *Disciplinary Probation***

If Energy Trust determines, in its sole discretion, that a solar trade ally is experiencing qualifying performance issues, then Energy Trust may place the trade ally on disciplinary probation. Energy Trust will notify trade allies in writing of the change in status. The notification will include an explanation for the status change and the steps the trade ally must take to correct problems that led to its disciplinary probation status. Failure to remediate performance issues may result in termination from Energy Trust's Trade Ally Network.

Energy Trust will place a trade ally on disciplinary probation if, among other things, work quality or customer service issues arise through multiple corrective actions or customer complaints. When a solar trade ally is placed on disciplinary probation, the

program may issue a cease-and-desist letter to hold itself out as an Energy Trust trade ally until corrective actions are implemented. The program may request that a responsible managing individual draft and sign a performance improvement plan and memorandum of understanding before accepting additional Energy Trust incentive applications. Energy Trust reserves the right to communicate health, safety, and customer service issues to system owners. Energy Trust reserves the right to withhold incentive payments until all work meets the appropriate specifications and/or customer concerns are alleviated.

Trade allies will be given seven days from the date on the notification to respond to a disciplinary probation letter, unless otherwise specified in the letter. Failure to respond may result in termination from Energy Trust's trade ally network.

Actions resulting in disciplinary probation may include but are not limited to:

- Failure to remediate corrective actions identified during Energy Trust site verifications within 30 days of written notice
- Failure to follow program requirements
- Abusive or vulgar behavior, physically or verbally, toward customers or Energy Trust staff
- Failure to attend required Energy Trust trainings
- Failure to resolve any reasonable participant complaint regarding work on projects qualifying for Energy Trust incentives
- Repeatedly giving participants inaccurate information on current Energy Trust requirements, including but not limited to, incentive levels and/or incentive eligibility
- Misrepresenting the solar trade ally company's relationship with Energy Trust such as:
  - Stating they are paid or employed by Energy Trust, if they are not
  - Stating they offer services on behalf of Energy Trust that they are not under agreement to deliver
  - Making inaccurate statements about Energy Trust's funding sources, incentive amounts, application deadlines or requirements.
- Misrepresenting Energy Trust's installation specifications as substandard or requirements as too burdensome when speaking with customers
- Unethical business or sales practices, including coercion and/or overly aggressive sales tactics

### **2.5.1 Effects of Disciplinary Probation**

During disciplinary probation, a solar trade ally will not appear in Energy Trust's "Find A Contractor" list. The trade ally will be subject to a higher level of scrutiny and subject to restrictions, which may include, without limitation:

- Removal from Energy Trust's solar bid referral tool (lead generation)
- Prohibition from submitting new incentive applications and return of new incentive applications to solar trade ally and customers
- Customer notification of solar trade ally's probationary status
- Suspension from access to business development funds and other Energy Trust resources
- Revocation of use of Energy Trust trade ally logo
- Development of, and adherence to, a written performance improvement plan and/or memorandum of understanding detailing requirements to maintain solar trade ally status.
  - Solar trade ally will be responsible for drafting the performance improvement plan according to the direction of and in cooperation with Energy Trust
  - Performance improvement plan will detail specific deliverables and timelines
- Attending additional training required, selected or provided by Energy Trust
  - Solar trade ally may be required to pay for additional trainings
- Reporting of probationary status to other organizations and utilities such as Enhabit, Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, Oregon Public Utility Commission, or the Oregon Construction Contractor's Board

If a contractor that Energy Trust places on disciplinary probation fails to remediate its performance issues, then Energy Trust may terminate the contractor from its trade ally network.

## 2.5.2 Duration of Disciplinary Probationary Period

The duration of disciplinary probationary periods will vary depending on the nature of the issues that result in probationary status. Solar trade ally project volume and time involved in the Program will be taken into consideration. The written notification of disciplinary probation status and/or the performance improvement plan will define the length of the probationary period for the solar trade ally to return to full active status. Examples of potential probationary periods are:

- 60 days from accumulating more than two unresolved customer complaints during a 12-month period
- 60 days in cases of demonstrated mis presentations of solar trade ally status, incentives or requirements
- 90 days and adherence to a written improvement plan in cases of demonstrated work quality issues

### 2.5.3 Reinstatement of Active Solar Trade Ally Status

Energy Trust may remove disciplinary probationary status and reinstate a contractor to active trade ally status at any time, in its sole discretion. Energy Trust will review disciplinary probationary solar trade allies for return to active status provided they satisfy requirements and/or timelines outlined in their disciplinary probation notification letter and/or performance improvement plan. Energy Trust will notify disciplinary probation solar trade allies of the decision in writing.

## 2.6 Suspension

Certain actions may result in suspension from participation as a trade ally in the Program. Energy Trust will notify a contractor in writing if it has been placed in Program suspension. The contractor will have 30 days from the notice date to resolve the situation to Energy Trust's satisfaction. Actions resulting in suspension may include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to correct violations identified during the verification process within a 30 day timeframe
- Failure to follow a required Program process
- Chronic installation corrections or repeated violations of installation or Program requirements
- Failure to attend any required Energy Trust trainings
- Allowing insurance, licenses or other required certifications to lapse
- Failure to resolve any reasonable Program participant complaint regarding the contractor's work as a trade ally under the Program
- Failure to accurately inform Program participants of current Program requirements, including but not limited to, incentive levels

#### *Effect of suspension*

During Program suspension, a trade ally may not submit any new incentive applications to Energy Trust, nor will Energy Trust issue any new incentive reservations for the trade ally's projects. In addition, the suspended trade ally (i) will be removed from the searchable trade ally database on the website, (ii) is no longer authorized to use Energy Trust's logo on any materials or to represent itself as a trade ally of Energy Trust's Solar Electric Program, and (iii) is not allowed to apply for any cooperative marketing activities. Energy Trust may also impose other restrictions on the trade ally's participation in the Program. If the violations pertain to a specific project, the system owner will be notified at the time of the Program trade ally's suspension.

Trade allies must resolve violations resulting in suspension within 30 days. Failure to do so may result in termination of Program trade ally status.

## **2.7 Termination**

In addition to any other termination provisions set forth in this Program Guide and in the trade ally agreement with Energy Trust, certain actions may result in Energy Trust immediately terminating a contractor as a Program trade ally. In the event of termination, the contractor will be notified by Energy Trust in writing. Actions resulting in immediate termination of trade ally status may include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to resolve any action resulting in suspension within 30 days
- Repeated Program violations
- Passing or attempting to pass any verification fee imposed on the trade ally by Energy Trust on to a customer
- Violation of license laws
- Misrepresentation of system components or installation characteristics at more than one site
- Failure to pass the full value of the Energy Trust incentive on to the customer in cases where the incentive payment is issued to the trade ally

### *Effect of termination*

Effective upon notice of termination, Energy Trust will not accept any new incentive applications, will not process any submitted incentive applications that have not yet received incentive reservations, and will remove the terminated contractor from the Program's trade ally database on Energy Trust's website. Energy Trust will provide funding for any incentive applications that received incentive reservations prior to the notification of termination, provided they comply with Program requirements.

Energy Trust may, in its sole discretion, allow a terminated contractor to re-apply for participation in the Program at a later date. Energy Trust may require additional documentation and proof from that contractor that it has taken appropriate measures to prevent further Program violations.