Program Guide for Solar Electric Allies

Developed by Energy Trust of Oregon

Part 4: Standard Solar Incentives

Last updated November, 2019

4.1 *Applying for Installation Incentives*

Trade allies are expected to understand the Program's incentive application submission procedures, the required application paperwork, and the review and approval process to receive Standard Solar Program incentives. The basic steps of the application, review and approval process are shown in Figure 1.

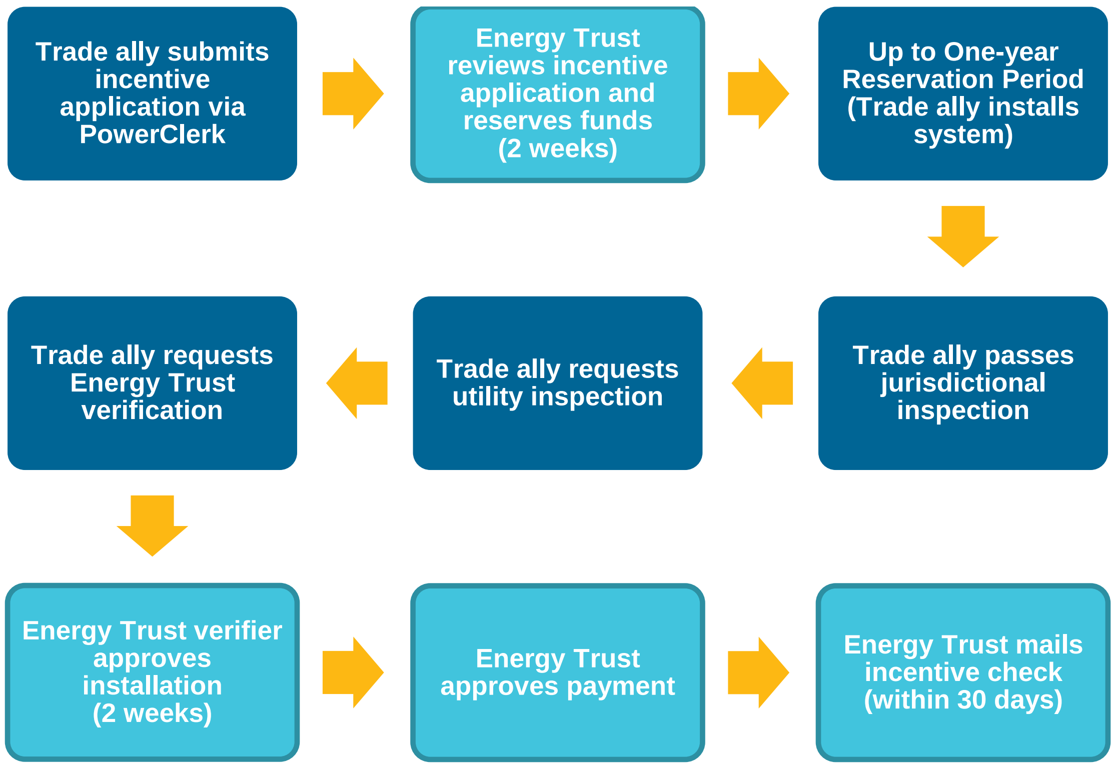

Figure 1. Typical solar electric application, review and verification process

4.1.1 **Applying for incentives on behalf of customers**

Incentive rates are subject to change. Incentive reservations for qualifying projects are subject to funding availability and processed on a first-come, first served basis.

Incentive applications are submitted by the trade ally using the PowerClerk® online project management and tracking system. Customers should not submit solar electric applications—with the exception of a municipal customer submitting for a preliminary incentive reservation (see ***Section 1.3.1*** of this guide).

Trade allies are required to participate in a mandatory PowerClerk® video training and will receive PowerClerk® logins for designated employees after signing a PowerClerk® user agreement. Information can be found on the website.

PowerClerk® allows trade allies to enter project information through a secure web environment. Based on the inputs, PowerClerk® will generate a pre-filled incentive application form that can then be printed, reviewed for accuracy, and signed by all parties in accordance with Program requirements.

A scanned copy of the signed incentive application and electronic versions of all other required documentation are then uploaded by the trade ally to the secure website.

A complete application package includes, at minimum, the following elements:

Incentive application form

Appropriate application form for the project type, filled out in its entirety and signed by all necessary parties. The incentive application is written agreement and should be submitted in its entirety, with <u>all</u> pages scanned in, as a single document.

Solar resource assessment

Energy Trust sun chart or a report from an approved solar resource assessment tool showing the performance impact of shading and non-ideal tilt and orientation. See ***Section 1.3.1*** for information on acceptable shade evaluation methods and sun charts.

Schematic diagram

Detailed system design drawing that accurately depicts all planned electrical components including the module/inverter manufacturer and entire model numbers, plus main service panel and utility connection. Include module series/parallel wiring, conductor and ground wire types and sizing, length of wire runs, conduit types and sizing, AC & DC breaker sizing and voltage drop calculations.

Layout diagram

Physical layout map that accurately depicts the locations of installed modules and inverter(s), location of all applicable electrical panels and meters, roof or installation site layout, pre-existing renewable energy systems, and the location where the lowest TSRF measurement was taken (see ***Section 1.3.1***)

Additional documentation to demonstrate project eligibility and compliance with Program requirements, as requested through PowerClerk® or by Program staff

4.1.2 Submitting applications on time

Complete applications will be reviewed in the order in which they are received and must include all required application documents and be signed by all necessary parties. Because incentive funds are not reserved until Energy Trust's review is complete and an incentive reservation letter has been issued, it is imperative that trade allies ensure that all required documents are submitted together in order to avoid delays in the application review process.

To apply for and reserve funding for any solar electric system installation, the incentive application package must be submitted to program staff <u>***BEFORE***</u> a trade ally begins installing the system. Systems installed prior to Energy Trust's receipt and approval of an incentive application will not be eligible for incentives. Unless Energy Trust issues an incentive reservation letter following its review of an incentive application, there is no commitment by Energy Trust to reserve funding for that project.

4.1.3 Energy Trust review and incentive reservation

Incentive applications must be submitted for review before a trade ally begins installing a system. The review process is intended to help protect the trade ally from purchasing equipment or doing other installation preparation work for a system or customer that may not meet Program requirements.

First, Program staff review the application for completeness and eligibility. Then a Verifier (see ***Section 4.3*** for additional information) performs a technical review. The Verifier will notify Energy Trust whether the system design, as submitted, appears to meet Program requirements.

Timing of review process

Energy Trust's application review process typically takes up to ten business days, but can take longer if the submitted incentive application is incomplete or includes incorrect information, or if there are concerns with Program eligibility or the system design.

Incomplete and incorrect applications

If a submitted incentive application is incomplete or requires design changes to meet eligibility requirements, the trade ally will be notified and asked to submit additional information. The trade ally has 30 days from the date of notification to submit the requested information via PowerClerk® or direct email to Program staff. If the requested information is not received within the 30-day period, Energy Trust may cancel the partial application and notify the trade ally and the customer. The trade ally is welcome to reapply for the customer later, but the incentive amount and project documentation will not be saved.

Notification of incentive reservation

Once Energy Trust completes its review of a qualifying application, an Incentive Reservation letter will be sent to the system owner and trade ally. After receipt of this letter, the trade ally may move forward with system installation.

The Incentive Reservation will reference the project site, system size, reserved incentive amount and the reservation period. In addition to the reservation letter, the trade ally will also receive notice of any comments on the system design from the Verifier, as well as the Verifier's contact information.

System design revisions during the reservation period

If the system owner and trade ally make any changes to the previously submitted system design information during the reservation period, the trade ally must revise the system components and cost through the PowerClerk® and upload all required accompanying design documentation. The final qualifying system design and approved incentive amount will be confirmed upon program verification.

Other revisions during the reservation period

Only system components and documentation can be revised directly through PowerClerk®. If you need to revise other application information—such as correcting the customer name, address or utility or reassigning the payee—please contact program staff directly to supply the updated information. Program staff will advise you on what documentation is required for the proposed revision, if any. Energy Trust incentive agreements and incentive reservations cannot be assigned without Energy Trust permission. If trade ally is informed that system owner or host information may be changing, trade ally must alert Energy Trust in order to discuss the incentive agreement obligations.

4.2 Installation Requirements

All installations performed by a trade ally must meet the Solar Electric Installation Requirements in effect at the time of incentive reservation in order to be eligible for Program incentives. To qualify for incentives, installations will be reviewed by Energy Trust to verify compliance with Program requirements. See ***Section 4.3*** below for more information on Energy Trust's installation verification processes.

Energy Trust typically reviews and revises its Solar Electric Installation Requirements document annually. Trade allies wishing to comment on current requirements or suggest changes are encouraged to participate in the Program's annual revision process.

4.2.1 **Timing of installation**

The incentive application package must be submitted to program staff ***BEFORE*** a trade ally begins installing the system. Systems installed prior to Energy Trust's receipt and approval of an incentive application will not be eligible for incentives.

Installation of a project may begin at any point after submitting the incentive application package. However, Energy Trust recommends that trade allies do not begin work until an incentive reservation has been made. Until Energy Trust issues an Incentive Reservation letter in response to a submitted application, there is no commitment by Energy Trust to reserve any incentive funding for that project, and work completed is at the trade ally's risk.

4.2.2 **Required actions prior to Energy Trust's installation verification**

Net-metering with the utility

Prior to Energy Trust's verification site visit, the trade ally and the system owner or host must initiate the net-metering process with the utility.

The system owner or host is responsible for executing the agreement for net-metering with their utility, but the trade ally is responsible for obtaining and verifying the relevant utility's current net metering requirements. While trade allies cannot complete the net-metering process for their customers, they can assist them with the process by informing them ahead of time that they will need to enter into an agreement, helping them understand the timeline in which it must be executed, and providing the appropriate contact information at their utility.

Pacific Power customer service number: (888) 221-7070

Portland General Electric customer service number: (800) 542-8818

Jurisdictional inspections

Trade allies must successfully pass any and all jurisdictional inspections required by the city or county where the project is located *before* the Energy Trust installation verification. Projects that cannot provide proof of passing their jurisdictional inspections at the time of Energy Trust site visit will not pass their Program verification and may be subject to verification fees (see ***Section 4.3.1*** *below*).

Contractor full system warranty

Trade allies must provide system owner with a written warranty that guarantees, at a minimum, that the system installation and equipment shall be free from all defects in workmanship and materials for at least two years from the date of final approved jurisdictional inspection. The warranty must cover all labor for repairs resulting from workmanship or equipment defects.

Customer education

Prior to verification by Energy Trust, trade allies must instruct the system owner in the operation and maintenance of the system, including how to identify if the system is operating normally, what to do in case of poor performance, routine maintenance activities and emergency shut down and start up procedures. Trade allies must provide a customer manual that complies with the ***Solar Electric Installation Requirements***.

4.3 Energy Trust Verification Process

Energy Trust contracts with a pool of independent, third-party Solar Verifiers to review designed and installed solar electric systems and to make recommendations as to whether or not a system is eligible to receive Program incentives.

Energy Trust's verification site visit is not a health and safety inspection, which is one reason why projects are required to pass their jurisdictional inspections first. Instead, the role of the Energy Trust Solar Verifier is to determine whether the system appears to meet Program requirements. Among other things, Energy Trust's Verifiers compare the system design to the system installed, help Energy Trust identify issues that might affect system performance or shorten the anticipated 20-year operating life, and confirm that the trade ally has provided the required customer manual.

4.3.1 **Mandatory verification**

Verifications are mandatory for all systems seeking Program incentives. Verifications can be completed by an Energy Trust Verifier during a site visit or an approved trade ally can complete a Remote Verification Commissioning Report and submit it to the Program for review using SiteCapture, a third-party software application.

Scheduling On-Site Verifications

Once a solar electric system is fully installed, the trade ally must request the Energy Trust verification through PowerClerk® and coordinate with the Verifier assigned to the project to schedule the site visit. Either the trade ally or their customer must be present during the Verifier's site visit. Energy Trust highly recommends that the trade ally be present at the site visit.

Site visit documentation

During a required Energy Trust site visit, the Verifier will document the Verification result using SiteCapture. After completing the site visit, the Verifier will provide review comments and indicate whether the installation has been verified or if corrections are required. Program staff will review the results and, if approved, issue an *Installation Verified* notice to the trade ally.

Required installation corrections

If the Verifier finds that the installation does not meet Program requirements, Energy Trust will notify the trade ally with a *Corrections Required* notice through PowerClerk®. The trade ally must make all the required corrections *within 30 days of notification*. If the corrections are not made within the 30 days, the trade ally will be placed in suspension status (see ***Section 2.3***). In addition, the system owner will be notified of the unresolved corrections and, at the Program's discretion, the incentive reservation may be terminated.

Once the corrections have been made, the trade ally must contact the assigned Verifier to schedule a new site visit. In certain circumstances, and at Energy Trust's discretion, verbal or photographic verification of the changes may be allowed in place of an additional site visit.

A Verifier may also find *minor corrections* to be fixed. Major vs. minor corrections can be found in ***Appendix C***. Minor corrections do not require that the system be inspected again. Instead, the trade ally must send updated photos to the verifier to confirm that a minor correction has been made. Payments can be made to the trade ally prior to the minor correction being made.

Repeat violations

If the violation(s) identified by the Verifier have been repeatedly identified on the trade ally's previous projects, the Program may, at its discretion, place the trade ally on Program suspension (see ***Section 2.6***). If the violation is particularly egregious or chronic, the trade ally may be subject to termination (see ***Section 2.7***).

4.3.2 **Remote-Verification**

Qualifying

If eligible, a trade ally may qualify for Remote-Verification status. Energy Trust will evaluate each trade ally's performance under the Program based upon verification results and adherence to Program requirements.

In order to be considered eligible for Remote-Verification, a trade ally must have completed and had verified at least ten solar electric installations. The last five of these projects must have been completed in the previous six-month period with no Program violations. Then, the trade ally may contact the Program to be considered for Remote-Verification approval. It is solely Energy Trust's decision to approve a trade ally for Remote-Verification.

Maintaining Remote Verification Eligibility

In order to maintain eligibility for Remote Verification, the trade ally must:

Complete a minimum of ten solar electric projects with Energy Trust per calendar year.

OR

Maintain at least an 80% pass rate on Energy Trust verifications.

A trade ally that does not meet these requirements will be immediately returned to mandatory verification status, and will be responsible for scheduling site visits for subsequent projects with the assigned Verifier. Remote Verification eligibility may be subsequently reinstated at Energy Trust's discretion.

Review and the Remote Verification process

Trade allies approved for Remote Verification are still required to submit incentive applications for Energy Trust's review and incentive reservation prior to beginning work on a project. However, they may complete a Remote Commissioning Report in SiteCapture and submit it to Energy Trust by uploading the document to PowerClerk® in lieu of scheduling an on-site verification. Energy Trust will remotely review the uploaded documentation to verify the project.

4.4 Payment of Incentives

Energy Trust will begin processing the incentive payment after: (i) Energy Trust receives notice from a Verifier that an installation meets all Program requirements, or (ii) after Energy Trust receives a signed ***Remote Verification Checklist*** from a trade ally on Remote-Verification status and the checklist has been approved by a verifier.

4.4.1 Timing

Incentive payments are approved weekly, and incentive checks are typically mailed within 30 days of Energy Trust's receipt and approval of all required verification documentation.

4.4.2 Incentive payee

Business and third-party owned projects

Incentive payments will be made to the payee indicated in the *Payee* section of the signed and submitted ***Form 220*** incentive agreement. The submitted application packet must include an Energy Trust ***Substitute W9*** or an IRS Form W9 for the designated payee; however, if Energy Trust has a current W9 for the payee already on file, then it is not necessary to resubmit a W9. A trade ally designated as the *Payee* may receive incentive payments for multiple projects in a single check. The individual project incentive amounts will be listed on the check stub.

Customer-owned residential projects

For customer-owned residential projects, the trade ally is always the designated payee. The trade ally is required to reduce the customer's project cost by an amount equivalent to the incentive. The trade ally may not charge the full project cost and reimburse the customer with the value of the incentive after the trade ally receives the incentive payment from Energy Trust.

If multiple projects are approved in the same week, a trade ally may receive incentive payments for all those projects in a single check. The individual project incentive amounts will be listed on the check stub.

4.4.3 Questions about status of incentive check

Energy Trust asks trade allies to wait the full 30 days before contacting the Program about the status of an incentive payment. If a trade ally discovers an overdue or missing incentive payment, they should contact Program staff to resolve the situation.