

# A Checklist for Building Owners Considering Solar Energy



Today, many owners are choosing solar to provide clean, reliable power for their buildings. Learn more about how to maximize this important investment.

As you explore installing solar panels on your building, you will find you have many choices to make. Using this checklist puts important information in your hands that you need to know before entering into a contract to install a solar system.

It offers questions, considerations, and protective measures that can help you get the answers you need to make informed decisions that can affect your bottom line—the safe and effective installation of a system that meets your expectations.



## 1 Energy efficiency and weatherization

**Investigate building energy use and consider potential efficiency upgrades before getting an estimate for a solar system.**

- Start with an energy audit to improve the efficiency of your building.
- Investing in energy efficiency and weatherization is an opportunity to improve building performance, reduce energy costs, and increase the return on your investment.
- Weatherizing your building will reduce the amount of electricity you need to produce with solar.
- Upgrade or replace heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, indoor lighting, water heating, and appliances, with energy-efficient options.
- Investigate tax credits, incentives, and rebates that can help offset the costs of upgrading or retrofitting your building.



## 2 Find out if solar is right for you

**Determine if your site is suitable for solar and get the most out of your investment. Getting your questions answered is a great start.**

- Is the roof shaded by trees or will trees grow to shade the roof later? A mostly southern-facing roof with minimal shading will provide the most electricity year round.
- What is the age of the roof? If a new roof is needed, consider replacing it as part of the solar project to eliminate the need to remove and re-install the system in the near future.
- Meet with multiple local contractors and compare solar installation offers.
- How will you finance your system? Will you lease or buy? Are there incentives available in your area?
- Is energy storage something you should consider for your building?



### 3 Working with your utility company

**Find out your utility's policies on integration and connection. Local contractors should be able to help answer these questions.**

- What utility fees are involved to connect to the electric grid, and to put power back on the grid?
- How long will it take for your utility to hook up your system once installed?
- How will your contributions to the grid be measured, and how can you access this information?
- Will your utility credit you for net excess power you generate?



### 5 Understanding contracts

**Review all contracts, costs, and financing terms. If something doesn't make sense, request changes or seek legal advice.**

- What are the ownership terms?
- Are there potential impacts on selling, modifying, or refinancing the property, including liens, filings, etc.?
- Is there a designation of the responsible party for the proper disposal of the product at the end of its life?
- Do performance calculations specify and include all relevant factors?
- If system monitoring will take place, find out what kind of data is being collected, who has ownership and access, and if the data will be available/sold to others.
- Have you received documentation for equipment and workmanship?



### 4 Ensuring a safe installation

**Everyone involved in the design, installation, and commissioning a PV system has a part to play in ensuring safety.**

- What safe work practices and procedures are in place and how will they be followed?
- What are the licensing, permitting, bonding, and insurance requirements from your state/local government?
- Does their worker training comply with best practices and industry standards?
- Does the installation team have qualified, experienced professionals with industry-recognized credentials in good standing?



### 6 Learn more about your options

**For more information and explanation, explore other resources [here](#) or use the links below to learn more.**

- [Going Solar FAQs](#) (CALSSA)
- [Top 10 Checklist for Creating Energy Efficient Commercial Buildings](#) (FSEC)
- [National Solar Licensing Database](#) (IREC)
- [Benefits of Adding Energy Storage](#) (ESS)
- [What Is Net Metering?](#) (SEIA)
- [Solar Energy in the United States](#) (DOE)
- [Energy Saver](#) (DOE)