



PE6 Action: Unified Solar Permit

5 Points

A. Why is this action important?

The Unified Solar Permit is a standardized permit application designed to streamline the approval process for installing solar in the community. The standardized permit is expected to cut costs by creating a uniform permitting process in municipalities across New York State. As local governments adopt the permit, installers and communities alike will save time and resources permitting solar electric systems. An expedited process will allow these standard systems to pass quickly through the jurisdictional review process, freeing up time for all involved parties, decreasing the overall installation time for customers, and allowing non-standard systems the necessary time for detailed review.

By displacing energy from fossil fuel sources, the use of solar energy reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels transform solar radiation into electricity and are appropriate for many types of public facilities, including schools and public buildings. Solar hot water systems (also known as solar thermal systems) use roof-mounted solar collectors that rely on the sun's energy to produce hot water in buildings. When local governments streamline the approvals process for solar technologies, they increase the demand for renewable energy and set a positive example for residents and businesses in the community.

B. How to implement this action

This Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification action offers points for the successful completion of the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities high-impact action called Unified Solar Permit.

The focus of this action is on streamlining the approval process for solar installation. Municipalities demonstrate completion by submitting a copy of an executed local law, ordinance, or resolution adopting the New York State Unified Solar Permit and a copy of the Unified Solar Permit being used by the applying jurisdiction.

Please note that an updated version of the New York State Unified Solar Permit was released in October 2016. Points are only available for the new version of the permit.

For guidance on implementing this action, see the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Unified Solar Permit Toolkit which is available at www.nyserda.ny.gov/cec. Municipalities interested in this action can receive free technical assistance from the Clean Energy Communities Coordinators; contact cec@nyserda.ny.gov for more information.

C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

The time frame will be dependent on the size of the municipality and its legislative process. Project costs may include staff and consultant time, where applicable.

D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is applicable to all local governments that enforce the uniform code for private buildings. In New York State, this responsibility falls to cities, towns, and villages in most cases. The municipal legislative body will adopt a local law, ordinance or resolution adopting the New York State Unified Solar Permit. Municipal attorneys will be involved in reviewing legislative language. The code enforcement officer or staff from the building department may assist in implementation of the program.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Five CSC points are available for local governments that submit documentation showing completion of this Unified Solar Permit action and adoption of the most recent version of the Unified Solar Permit.

F. What to submit

Submit a dated copy of the approval from NYSERDA that indicates completion of the Clean Energy Communities Unified Solar Permit High Impact Action. Confirm adoption of the updated version of the Unified Solar Permit that was released in October 2016.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

G. Links to Additional Resources or Best Practices

- [NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program](#)
- [NY-Sun Solar Guidebook for Local Governments](#)

H. Recertification requirements

As part of recertification, applicants must submit evidence that the most recent version of the Unified Solar Permit is currently in use (e.g., in the form of an official municipal memo).