



# Going Solar and Selecting a Contractor

Installing solar at your home, businesses, farm or ranch, or school will save you money on your energy bills and increase your energy independence

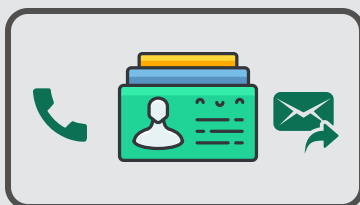
## Step 1: Gather information

Do some research online and talk to the Montana Energy Office at the Dept. of Environmental Quality and a renewable energy advocate like the Montana Renewable Energy Association (MREA). A few questions to consider:

- Do you have a location on your property in mind already? Roof? Ground? Does the location get sun?
- Do you want to stay connected to the grid, or go off-grid?
- What is your budget for the project?



MREA: [montanarenewables.org](http://montanarenewables.org)  
 Montana Energy Office: [deq.mt.gov/energy](http://deq.mt.gov/energy)



## Step 2: Contact local solar installers

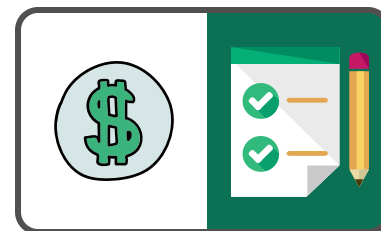
- Request bids from several installers to find the right fit and price for you
- Ask for an in-person site visit to assess structural issues, electrical connections, and shading
- Review historical energy usage to size the system properly
- Discuss your energy goals. Do you want to cover all of your energy use or just some?

## Step 3: Review costs and financing

- Does the cost meet your budget? Will you save as much as you were hoping on your energy bills?

- What tax credits are available to you? \*
- What loan or financing options are available? \*

\*There are several tax credits and financing options available for Montanans. See reverse side for more details

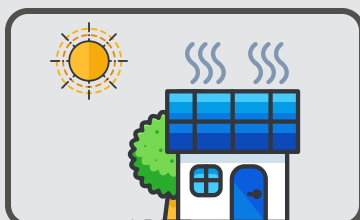


## Step 4: Sign a contract

Once you've made your decision to move forward, contact your installer and sign a contract. Then, work can begin!

## Step 5: Installation

The timeline will depend on things like weather and the installer's schedule, and inspection appointments. For net metering customers, expect additional time for the utility to install your net meter.



## Step 6: Start producing energy!

Congratulations! Every kWh you produce is saving you money and increasing your energy independence.

See reverse side for more details and information!



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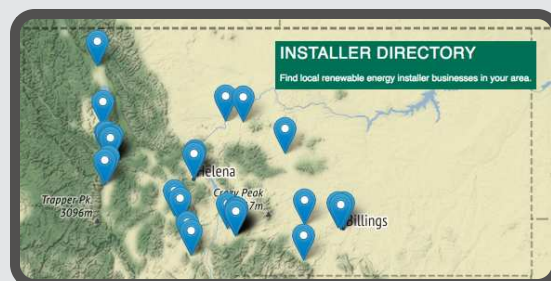
## Tips and Tricks: *Questions to ask an installer*

- What is the largest sized system I could install economically? This will help you understand your upper limit. It's important to note most energy providers have an annual "true-up" date for net metering customers, at which time any excess credits that you haven't used are forfeited to the utility. Oversizing your system may not be economical.
- What size system do you recommend if I want to cover 25/50/100% of my annual energy usage?  
*Installers are good at what they do! They know how these systems work and how they interact with your home. They can help understand the most effective system size to meet your needs.*
  - What if I want to integrate batteries? Can I do that later? Should I do that now?
  - How big should the system be if I want to charge an electric vehicle?
- Ask for references and check with other customers of this installer.
  - Did they communicate well? Were they helpful?
  - Did they answer all of your questions? Did they meet deadlines?
- Are they an MREA member? We love our members, and would love for you to support them! Plus, if you complete an installation with an MREA member business you can receive a free, one-year household membership with MREA! Ask your installer about it.

## Tips and Tricks: *Installer Qualifications*

Like in many states, there are no required certifications to become a solar installer in Montana. However, many installers have gone through training programs and have worked to obtain national certifications that show they are knowledgeable and experienced in these areas. This includes the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) certification. NABCEP is one of the most recognized certifications for installers. Find out if your installer has any certifications or what kind of trainings they have completed.

For grid-tied systems, it's important to note that the electrical work required to tie the system to the grid must be done by a licensed electrician. Most solar installers either have one on staff, or subcontract one to complete this part of the installation. You will also need an electrical permit. Be sure to ask your installer about permits. They will know the permitting requirements in your county.



### Looking for an installer?

MREA has an online directory with contact info and an interactive map. Visit:  
[montanarenewables.org/directory](https://montanarenewables.org/directory)



### What is this "net metering" thing?

Learn all about how it works at:  
[montanarenewables.org/netmetering](https://montanarenewables.org/netmetering)

## More on financing and incentives

### Information on Financing & Tax Incentives:

[montanarenewables.org/renewable-energy/financing-incentives/](https://montanarenewables.org/renewable-energy/financing-incentives/)

### Dept. of Environmental Quality's Alternative Energy Revolving Loan Program:

[deq.mt.gov/energy/Programs/AERLP](https://deq.mt.gov/energy/Programs/AERLP)

### Clearwater Credit Union's Solar Loans:

[clearwatercreditunion.org/home-loans/home-energy-loans](https://clearwatercreditunion.org/home-loans/home-energy-loans)