Cities must adopt solar permitting platform; apply now for noncompetitive funding

*The California Energy Commission is accepting “quick and easy” applications for $20 million in noncompetitive grant funding to help local governments meet this new requirement.*

Last year, California lawmakers passed the [Solar Access Act (SB 379, Wiener)](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB379). This new law requires most cities and counties to adopt SolarAPP+, an automated online permitting platform for standard residential solar and storage systems.

Compliance deadlines depend on the size of the community, and some are exempt entirely. Cities and counties with *more* *than* 50,000 residents must adopt SolarAPP+ by Sept. 30, 2023. Cities and counties with 50,000 residents or *fewer* must adopt SolarAPP+ by Sept. 30, 2024.

Cities with fewer than 5,000 residents, counties with fewer than 150,000 residents, and all cities in those counties are exempt.

SolarAPP+ automates and standardizes building departments’ permitting processes for simple residential rooftop solar systems. The platform asks the contractor a series of questions to verify the solar system’s design is up to code, runs automated code compliance and plan check, and then — for compliant systems — automatically issues a permit so that installation can begin.

The platform was developed by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in collaboration with building safety and industry stakeholders. It is free for all permitting offices.

**Noncompetitive funding available until May 1, 2023**

The California Energy Commission is providing $20 million in grants through its [CalAPP program](https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/california-automated-permit-processing-program-calapp) to help cities and counties recover the cost of establishing an eligible automated, online solar permitting platform.

According to the Commission, “most of the funding will be used to reimburse staff or consultant time associated with implementing the software.” However, there are other secondary permitted uses, such as hardware, installation, and maintenance costs. Several helpful resources are available, including:

* [An overview of the CalAPP application process and helpful tips](https://energy.zoom.us/rec/play/vspQwoUalXeAp6CSoyl25RxcKVLk1wa1n1dteH64FLjhRkQfu9AUyHLZrQUEGumrgwCPvQY4yH3FK4uL.7XzFZKo95ikXvxUQ?startTime=1653509217000)
* [CalAPP fact sheet](https://www.energy.ca.gov/media/7386)
* [SolarAPP+ technical demonstration](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmXLvQevPEs)
* Solar Access Act fact sheet

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory has [additional resources](https://solarapp.nrel.gov/) on its SolarApp+ website. It is also holding live platform demonstrations on [Tuesdays](https://nrel.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJIsf-CgqjorGfnQwVFUXzBIAD1ipmNTpHc) and [Thursdays](https://nrel.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJItduCrrToqHhXc8G2yVJ73uJ_nO5skb4E), now through June 29.

The SolarAPP+ onboarding process can be [started online](http://solarapp.nrel.gov/register). For questions, email team@solar-app.org.

For information on the CalAPP grant program, please review the [program page](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.energy.ca.gov%2Fprograms-and-topics%2Fprograms%2Fcalifornia-automated-permit-processing-program-calapp&data=05%7C01%7CJeff.Cook%40nrel.gov%7Cd874dcd1c2ad4e95fdce08db0a5ed628%7Ca0f29d7e28cd4f5484427885aee7c080%7C0%7C0%7C638115175245508713%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0t2CdNeXhdr9AnsCFjmuZ9PcbdoYGRBHj2N0gT4Cfy0%3D&reserved=0). The [grant application form](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.energy.ca.gov%2Fsolicitations%2F2022-06%2Fgfo-21-402-california-automated-permit-processing-program&data=05%7C01%7CJeff.Cook%40nrel.gov%7Cd874dcd1c2ad4e95fdce08db0a5ed628%7Ca0f29d7e28cd4f5484427885aee7c080%7C0%7C0%7C638115175245508713%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=fDtcjDDir7%2BJotJdHg%2BWZMCkcXIJnGlO8VXncs0xjAE%3D&reserved=0) is easy to fill out and grants are noncompetitive. Funding will be awarded on a first come first serve basis. Applications are due May 1, 2023.