

Simple Steps to Solar: Where to Start

THINKING ABOUT GOING SOLAR? NOW IS THE TIME!

Powering your home, business, or school with solar comes with a variety of benefits. Solar pays you back over time through low or eliminated electricity bills for decades. A PV system is a cost-saving asset that increases the value of your property. Not to mention, your PV system makes a positive environmental impact. Did you know that electricity production is the #1 source of harmful greenhouse gases? It's a benefit of solar that doesn't show up when calculating savings and return on investment.



STEPS:

1. Make Energy Efficient Updates: Before adding solar to your home or business do an assessment of your property and make any energy efficient updates to appliances, windows, lighting etc. These updates will help limit the size of your array and cut down on the cost of your PV system by limiting your need for additional energy. Most Utilities have incentives for efficiency improvements, be sure to ask your utility. Once you choose a qualified solar installation company to go with, they will also perform a thorough assessment of your electrical "loads" and make recommendations for energy efficient upgrades.

2. Do Some Research on Your Solar Needs: Power from the sun can be used in a variety of applications, depending on your needs any one, or a combination might suite your site. Contact your Utility and ask for a years' worth of your energy usage/utility bills. Your chosen solar installer will help you identify the option(s) that are best for your site and goals.

Solar PV (photovoltaic) - this application is the most common and is used to generate electricity for your property.

- Grid-Tied and Off-Grid Systems (battery-based storage) can be considered
- Pair solar with Beneficial Electrification, for an all electric building powered by clean energy!
- If you have an Electric Vehicle, take your charging needs into consideration when going solar

Solar Thermal Hot Water System – this application reduces demand for fuels needed to heat your water.

Solar Thermal Hot Air System – this system is used to heat your building, and lower the cost and demand for fuels needed to heat buildings.

3. Site Assessment - Figuring out if your site has enough sunlight or sun hours to make solar possible is an important factor in going solar. Getting a solar site assessment of your property will help determine whether your site is suitable for solar, and where/what type of solar system is right for your site. Most installers provide Site Assessments free of charge! If your site isn't suitable for solar, don't fret more and more utilities are offering options to purchase renewable energy from them, or you can participate in community solar subscriptions.

- If you are interested in performing your own Solar Site Assessment, register for our PV 201—Solar Site Assessment course. MREA also rents Solar Pathfinders for a small fee.

midwestrenew.org/course-offerings

— FLIP FOR MORE —

4. **Know Your Local Rules-** Check with your local city/county about any ordinances in place that might impact your solar project. Examples of these ordinances are; setbacks and structural assessments for insurance. Your chosen qualified solar installation company will have a good handle on this process, but it's worth knowing in advance.
5. **Budget-** Financing your solar project is an important piece of the puzzle. MREA offers members access to the Clean Energy Credit Union, making it easier for our members to afford clean energy products and services. Incentives and grants are available for financing your project. MREA also hosts Solar Group Buy programs across the Midwest that help lower the cost of PV systems. Your Installer will help you navigate the financing process and calculate your ROI. Visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (DSIRE) to see incentives in your location: dsireusa.org.
6. **Install Solar-** Select a company, sign a contract, and install your system. It usually takes from two weeks to two months from the time you sign an agreement to the time a project is completed, depending on the type of solar technology and the incentive process. If installing PV, your contractor will facilitate an interconnection agreement with your utility that will allow you to track your production and get paid for excess production with net metering. See MREA Business Members that install solar: midwestrenew.org/business-member-directory and see our "Selecting a Solar Installer" handout.
7. **Solar is Contagious-** Installing solar often means your neighbors will too! You could be an inspiration for others. Don't be afraid to tell your solar story, and share it with neighbors, family, friends, colleagues, even local media outlets. Let them know about the process you went through. More solar = cleaner air, water, and a happier environment! (not to mention big savings on you energy bill!) Your installer may offer a referral bonus, so make sure to ask if they do. Showcase your site on the National Solar Tour: nationalsolartour.org



SEE MORE SOLAR RESOURCES AT:
midwestrenew.org/community-resources



The Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization. Founded in 1990, the MREA promotes renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable living through education and demonstration. To learn more, call 715-592-6595 or visit www.midwestrenew.org.