
Vermont Solar & Wind Partnership Program

Program Criteria



The Vermont Solar and Wind Partnership Program is an accreditation program for businesses that install commercial and residential renewable energy systems. The Partnership Program was originally established in 2003 by Renewable Energy Vermont (REV) to help educate the public about the benefits of hiring experienced, professional installers when purchasing renewable energy systems for homes and businesses. Participation in the program was initially voluntary and limited to REV members who had proven installation experience and a track record of professional conduct. In 2005, the Vermont Solar and Small Wind Incentive Program linked renewable energy incentives to the Partnership Program by ruling that incentive payments could only be given to customers of installers that were registered as solar or wind partners. Membership in the Partnership Program was expanded and is now available to all Vermont installers who meet program criteria.

Partnership Types

Partnership is divided by technology. Each technology type requires a separate application process. REV currently offers four different partnership types:

- Solar Photovoltaic (PV)
- Solar Thermal (ST)
- Wind
- Micro-hydro

Partnership Levels

There are currently two levels in the Solar & Wind Partnership Program:

Full Partnership

Businesses that qualify for Full Partnership are experienced installers committed to professional, high-quality installations. These businesses have demonstrated professional experience. Partners are listed on the REV website and in REV promotional materials.

Provisional Partnership

Businesses new to the solar- or small-wind installation industry are eligible for Provisional Partnership. Provisional partnership is designed to provide a pathway for businesses to become full partners. These businesses have only met minimum requirements and demonstrated a basic knowledge of the industry best practices. Therefore, Provisional Partners are not listed on the REV website or in REV promotional materials. As of July 2010, Provisional Partnerships are good for two years and businesses may not renew their provisional status. After two years, Provisional Partners are required to apply for Full Partnership. Businesses that fail to upgrade will be removed from the program.

Program Criteria

To become a solar or wind partner, companies must demonstrate basic skills in designing, selling and installing PV, ST, Micro-hydro and wind systems for customers. The criteria for entering the program and maintaining status varies depending upon an applicant business's professional experience. Applicant businesses with employees licensed in the trades (electrical or plumbing) are regarded differently than those businesses without licensed employees. Similarly, if an applicant business employs a NABCEP certified installer, that business is required to meet fewer criteria. The following criteria are provided to help you decide whether your business qualifies for Full Partnership or Provisional Partnership and to lead you through the application process.

Criteria for Becoming a Full Partner

To become a Full Partner, businesses must obtain and complete an application form for the appropriate technology type and submit supporting application materials to the Partnership Program Administrator at Renewable Energy Vermont. Applications are available online at www.REVermont.org. **Fee Note:** A non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required for all applications.

Full Partnership applicants must submit* the following information:

- I. A completed application form with basic contact information, businesses type (LLC, partnership, corporation, etc.), installer information. Note that Partnership status pertains to businesses, not individuals. The main contact completing and signing the form must be the person(s) directly involved in overseeing the siting, design, installation & commissioning of the systems.
- II. All businesses that enter the Partnership Program, whether provisional or full must certify that all installations will:
 1. Meet all State of Vermont requirements relating to project type.
 2. Be completed according to Vermont Public Service Board Technical Standards (for photovoltaic and wind systems) or according to state and local plumbing codes and regulations (for solar thermal systems).
 3. Use only UL-listed electrical components or SRCC-listed components (or their equivalents) if available.
 4. Include a written contract with the customer.
 5. Include at least a one-year warranty on labor.
 6. Include a utility-grade kWh meter that allows the customer to track system performance (for grid-tied PV and wind installations).
 7. Be completed under direct contract with the Partnership business. Vermont Partner Businesses are required to be significantly involved in the siting, design, installation and commissioning of all installations.
- III. Provide proof of insurance of at least \$1 million per incident, and a \$2 million aggregate.
- IV. Provide proof of just one of the following: (see applications for technology-specific requirements)
 - A. Provide three installation references** for (3) systems (at least 1kW each for PV and wind systems) that the applicant business has installed,¹ for paying customers within the past year².
 - B. Provide proof of NABCEP Certification (for PV and ST applications) and one installation reference** for (1) system (at least 1kW for PV and wind systems) that the applicant business has installed for a paying customer within the past year.

*Submitting Applications & Installation References

- Application forms must be signed and submitted via post mail to:
Renewable Energy Vermont
PO Box 1036, Montpelier, VT 05601
- All installation references and supporting material (system photos and project technical documentation) must be submitted in digital form electronically via email to the following address: partners@revermont.org. Alternatively, supporting materials may be copied on a recordable CD-ROM disc and mailed via post mail to the address listed above.

Requirements for installation references are explained on page 4 of this document.

¹ Applicants who have installed for another business and are starting out on their own are eligible to use installations completed through another business where the applicant was the principal installer. These applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

² Applicants that have installed more than three systems, but not in the past year, are eligible to apply and will be reviewed on case-by-case basis.

Criteria for Becoming a Provisional Partner

To become a Provisional Partner, businesses must obtain and complete an application form for the appropriate technology type and submit supporting application materials to the Partnership Program Administrator at Renewable Energy Vermont.

Applications are available online at www.REVermont.org. **Fee Note:** A non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required for all applications.

Provisional Partnership applicants must submit* the following information:

- I. A completed application form with basic contact information, businesses type (LLC, partnership, corporation, etc.), installer information. Note that Partnership status pertains to businesses, not individuals. The main contact completing and signing the form must be the person(s) directly involved in overseeing the siting, design, installation & commissioning of the systems.
- II. All businesses that enter the Partnership Program, whether provisional or full must certify that all installations will:
 1. Meet all State of Vermont requirements relating to project type.
 2. Be completed according to Vermont Public Service Board Technical Standards (for photovoltaic and wind systems) or according to state and local plumbing codes and regulations (for solar thermal systems).
 3. Use only UL-listed electrical components or SRCC-listed components (or their equivalents) if available.
 4. Include a written contract with the customer.
 5. Include at least a one-year warranty on labor.
 6. Include a utility-grade kWh meter that allows the customer to track system performance (for grid-tied PV and wind installations).
 7. Be completed under direct contract with the Partnership business. Vermont Partner Businesses are required to be significantly involved in the siting, design, installation and commissioning of all installations.
- III. Provide proof of insurance of at least \$1 million per incident, and a \$2 million aggregate.
- IV. Provide proof of just one of the following: (see applications for technology-specific requirements)
 - A. Provide one installation reference** for (1) system (at least 1kW for PV and wind systems) that the applicant business has installed,³ for a paying customer within the past year⁴.
 - B. Provide proof of completion of an Institute for Sustainable Power Quality (IS PQ) Accredited training program.
 - C. Provide proof of completion of a REV-approved training program. Course credit requirements vary depending on the experience level and licensure of the applicant business's employees. See page 4 for more information on courses.

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³ Applicants who have installed for another business and are starting out on their own are eligible to use installations completed through another business where the applicant was the principal installer. These applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

⁴ Applicants that have installed more than three systems, but not in the past year, are eligible to apply and will be reviewed on case-by-case basis.

What to Include in Installation References

When submitting proof of professional experience through installation references, applicants must provide the following information for each installation reference:

- a. A completed Project Technical Documentation Worksheet, including a one-line diagram and photos of the system components. Project Technical Documentation Worksheets can be downloaded at www.revermont.org/installers.php Note: Technical information is reviewed electronically, therefore we require that each worksheet must be submitted either via email to partners@revermont.org or copied onto a CD-ROM and mailed.
- b. A copy of the Certificate of Public Good, or the CPG number for any grid-tied system (if applicable).
- c. Where required, the name/license number of the licensed electrician that participated in the installation for PV and Wind Installations.
- d. On all Solar Thermal (ST) references, the name and license of the plumber used during the installation.

Installation References must meet the following criteria:

1. Match the technology type of Partnership applied for.
2. Have been completed under direct contract with the applicant. - or - Have been completed by a subcontractor under direct contract with the applicant. The applicant must have been substantially involved in the project and at minimum must have had a supervisory role in the project, including conducting the site visit and analysis, producing the system design, and being present for final system inspection and commissioning.
3. Have had the net metering application (if any) filed under the partnership applicant's business name.
4. Have had any incentive grants applied for by the applicant (i.e., not by another business or by a separate franchise of the business).

Using Coursework or Certification for Proof of Professional Experience

Applicants for both Full Partnership and Provisional Partnership may submit proof of training course work. Requirements vary depending on partnership level. In either case, the applicant must submit a copy of the certificate of completion for the course work or certification.

- Full Partners may submit proof of NABCEP certification. The full NABCEP certification is not to be confused with the entry level certificate of completion. If a Full Partnership applicant has an employee that is certified through NABCEP, then they are required to submit proof of only one completed installation in order to obtain Full Partnership status.
- Provisional Partners may submit proof of training coursework as a means of entering the program. In order to qualify the applicant for provisional status, the coursework must be either ISPQ accredited or REV approved. ISPQ or the Institute for Sustainable Power Quality is the accrediting body of the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC). Courses accredited with ISPQ meet rigorous standards for training. REV also approves training courses based on their content. Courses must be submitted for approval before the applicant begins the course work. For Solar Thermal (ST) and Photovoltaic (PV) Provisional applicants, REV approves courses depending on whether the applicant is licensed (electrical or plumbing) or not. The general credit requirements are as follows:
 - **Licensed (electricians/plumbers)** - 8 credit hours. Must cover industry fundamentals and best practices.
 - **Non-licensed professionals** - 32 credit hours. Course work must cover industry fundamentals, best practices, related code/laws and must have a hands-on component.

For details on how to submit a course for approval or to determine whether or not a course has been REV-approved, please contact the Partnership Program Administrator at (802) 229-0099.

Partnership Renewals

As of May 5, 2008, each independent business or franchise in a network must separately apply for renewal of Full Partnership. A business cannot apply for renewal for another independent business or franchise that uses the same business name.

Renewing Full Partnerships

To ensure that the Vermont Solar and Wind Partnership Program continues to provide Vermonters with the highest quality service in the renewable energy industry, the partnerships need to be renewed every two years. Partners that do not renew will be moved to provisional partner status.

To renew full partnerships, applicants must:

1. Complete and submit a renewal form for each type of partnership being renewed.
2. Submit three continuing education credits. The first two credit must be installation references that match the type of partnership being applied for (grid-tied for PV or wind, not off-grid). The third credit may be one other installation references (grid-tied or off-grid) or education credits consisting of REV-approved or ISPQ accredited courses or programs.
3. Submit payment of \$100 for each renewal application.

Please note:

- Partners with multiple partnerships need to submit three installation references, one for each partnership type if the partner is registered in PV, ST, and wind. Partners registered in two types need to submit two references for one type and one reference for the other.
- Partners with no installs in a partnership type in the past two years will be moved to provisional status for a period of one year.

Partnership Terms

To ensure that the Vermont Solar and Wind Partnership Program continues to provide Vermonters with the highest quality service in the renewable energy industry, Full Partnerships need to be renewed every two years. Partners that do not renew will be removed from the program.

Provisional Partnerships are good for two years. Businesses may not renew their Provisional Partnership status. After two years, Provisional Partners are required to apply for Full Partnership. Provisional Partners that fail to upgrade will be removed from the program. To upgrade to Full Partnership, a Provisional Partner must complete a Full Partnership Application for the appropriate technology with all required information.

Process for Revoking Partnership and Provisional Partnership Status:

Customers may file complaints against Full Partners or Provisional Partners by submitting complaints to the Partnership Committee. The committee reviews complaints and decides whether to revoke a partner's partnership status, move the partner to provisional partner status, issue a warning, request more information, or take no action. Possible reasons for revoking partnership status include:

- Poor system installations
- Failure to provide warranty service
- Lack of conformance to partnership requirements
- Failure to renew partnership status
- Non-conformance with codes and installation standards

The Partnership Committee and Technology Sub-committees

The Renewable Energy Vermont (REV) Solar and Wind Partnership Program is governed by The Partnership Committee which is comprised of five industry representatives appointed by the REV Board of Directors. Members of the committee are appointed every year by the REV Board and serve one year terms. The committee shall include at least one REV board member and at least one representative of the four partnership types. A simple majority (3 out of the 5) is required for the Partnership Committee to make decisions regarding the Partnership Program.

Applications are reviewed and voted on by (4) four⁵ Technology Subcommittees, one for each of the four Partnership types: wind, solar thermal, photovoltaics and micro-hydro. The Partnership Committee appoints members of the subcommittees. Each subcommittee must include at least one member of the Partnership Committee. Members of the subcommittees serve one-year terms.

The Partnership Committee also appoints an administrator (likely the REV director or other REV employee) to administer the program. The administrator reviews all incoming applications, calls the customer references listed, and forwards a summary of the application to the appropriate subcommittee for action. Once the administrator has determined that the application is complete and can be sent to a subcommittee, the committee has 30 days to provide a determination to the applicant.

Partnership Committee:

Dave Palumbo, Independent Power (chair)

Kirk Herander, VT Solar Engineering

Gary Winslow, EAPC Wind Energy Services

Will White, Alteris Renewables

Jim Grundy, Elemental Energy

Solar Thermal Subcommittee:

Ed Butler, Sunrise Solar Services

Jim Grundy, Elemental Energy

Kirk Herander, VT Solar Engineering

Doug Wells, The Solar Specialists

Will White, SolarWrights

PV Subcommittee

Jim Grundy, Elemental Energy

Kirk Herander, VT Solar Engineering

David Palumbo, Independent Power

Donald Schroeder, Master Electrician

Wind Subcommittee

Gary Winslow, EAPC Wind Energy Services

Alain Ratheau, Solar Applications

Douglas MacDonald, AllEarth Renewables

Dwayne Cormier, DC Energy Innovations

Micro-hydro Subcommittee

Hilton Dier, Renewable Energy Design

David Palumbo, Independent Power

Lori Barg, Community Hydro

⁵ While micro-hydro is technically the fourth technology type in the Partnership Program, current permitting restrictions have stalled installations and therefore the implementation of the micro-hydro partnership committee.