



CHOOSING A CONTRACTOR

Energy Trust of Oregon maintains a list of licensed and insured solar trade ally contractors on our website at www.energytrust.org. To receive a customized list of referrals to trade allies that work in your area, go to www.energytrust.org/solarbid. You must work with an approved solar trade ally to receive an Energy Trust incentive for your solar project. Trade allies are familiar with Energy Trust's standards and quality control requirements. However, we cannot endorse or guarantee their performance. It is your responsibility to interview and select your contractor carefully.

Questions to ask a potential solar contractor

Q. How much experience does your company have with solar installations?

A company or installer that has been in business a long time has demonstrated the ability to work with customers and compete effectively with other vendors.

Q. Will your company perform the installation?

Some solar companies use subcontractors to install some or all of a project. It is important to understand the subcontractor's level of experience with solar installations.

Q. Is your company certified?

In addition to being licensed to work in the state of Oregon, some contractors have taken the additional step of having their employees certified by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners, NABCEP. This voluntary, national certification requires contractors to pass a rigorous set of tests.

Q. What products does your company offer?

If you are looking for a particular style or brand of component, check to see that your contractor is able to meet your request. Some contractors may offer only one brand of inverter or solar panels, or may not have the training to install the product you want.

Q. Does your company provide financing?

Some contractors can help arrange financing for customers. Others may even offer financing directly or from an equipment manufacturer.

Q. What kind of warranty do you offer?

Energy Trust requires trade allies to provide a two-year system warranty that covers all labor for any repairs resulting from defects in equipment or contractor workmanship. An installer may offer longer warranties. Make sure your contractor agreement is explicit about what service to expect should something go wrong.

Q. How long will the project take?

A typical residential installation can be completed in one to two days. Installations on commercial buildings can take longer, depending on the size of the project. Ask your contractor for a schedule and estimated installation date.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[How to hire a solar panel installer](#)
Angie's List

[Guide to choosing the right solar installer](#)
SolarEnergy.net

[Solar Loans vs Solar Leases](#)
EnergySage

[A homeowner's guide to solar financing](#)
Clean Energy States Alliance

Perform a background check

All contractors in Oregon are required to have a Construction Contractors Board, CCB, license. Before you hire a contractor, ask for their CCB license number and review their history at www.oregon.gov/CCB. You can also request a reference list of past customers who installed similar installations to the one you are considering. Ask previous customers if they would hire the contractor again, what they would have done differently, and what are the contractor's limitations and strengths. Websites such as Angie's List, Yelp and even Facebook can also provide perspectives from past customers on a contractor's performance.

How do I choose among competing bids?

Ensure that all bids you receive include the same criteria. Each bid should clearly state the size of the system in watts, W, or kilowatts, kW, and include an estimate of the electricity the system will produce on an annual basis in kilowatt hours, kWh. Bids should include all costs associated with the project, including equipment, hardware, labor, incentive or utility paperwork, permitting and warranty.

When comparing two or more bids for systems of similar size, be sure that the contractors are using similar assumptions about the incentives and tax benefits for your project. If you see inconsistencies between the bids, ask for an explanation. We also recommend that you consult with your tax professional to understand how tax incentives may apply to you.

Project costs vary for many reasons, including differences in quality and price of proposed equipment, length of warranty, necessary structural or electrical upgrades, monitoring equipment or even the length of the wires that run from the solar panels.

Trust is also an important factor in selecting a contractor. You want to have confidence that the company will stand behind its installation for at least two years, and hopefully twenty.



To request a personalized referral to several local trade allies, visit www.energytrust.org/solarbid or call **1.866.368.7878**.