

## Guiding you through the process

As the cost of energy rises and our supplies of fossil fuels get smaller, more and more Wisconsinites are turning to renewable energy for their homes and businesses. Clean, green, renewable energy is a great—and increasingly affordable—way to protect against rising energy costs while strengthening Wisconsin's economy and doing something positive for the environment. But is renewable energy right for you, and if so, how can you get started?

Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's statewide program for energy efficiency and renewable energy, offers information, technical expertise, and financial incentives to help you research your options and make educated choices.

### WHY EFFICIENCY FIRST?

Before you purchase any renewable energy system, it's important to first maximize the energy efficiency of your home or business. The smaller your energy needs, the lower your monthly energy bills—and the less you'll need to spend on a renewable energy system that's capable of meeting your needs.

And now, home and business owners who invest in energy-efficiency upgrades prior to installing a solar electric, solar hot-water, or wind system may be eligible to receive enhanced financial incentives of up to double the standard Focus on Energy incentives. To learn more about these enhanced efficiency incentives, visit [focusonenergy.com/efficiencyfirst](http://focusonenergy.com/efficiencyfirst).

### GETTING STARTED WITH RENEWABLE ENERGY

Once you've improved the efficiency of your home or business, you're ready to take the next steps.

#### 1. Learn all about it.

As with any large purchase, research is important. Learn as much as you can about the renewable energy market, technologies, and your options until you are comfortable and confident about making decisions. Focus on Energy can help you in many ways. Focus provides resources, such as fact sheets and case studies as well as information



about training opportunities, workshops, and seminars. To find out more, call Focus on Energy at **800.762.7077** or visit [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com).

#### 2. Schedule a site assessment.

The best way to find out whether renewable energy is right for you is to schedule a site evaluation with a certified site assessor. A site assessment will bring a renewable energy expert to your property to evaluate and provide a basic analysis of your energy needs, suggest opportunities to increase energy efficiency, assess the availability of the renewable energy resource at your location, and recommend specific renewable energy design options. A site assessment also provides information about the optimal location of a system and offers a general cost estimate—all summarized in a report.

Focus on Energy requires a site assessment when applying for financial incentives for wind systems and recommends site assessments for other projects. Costs for site assessments vary depending on the type and complexity of the renewable energy system and typically range from \$300 to \$1,000. Visit [focusonenergy.com/siteassessments](http://focusonenergy.com/siteassessments) or call **800.762.7077** to learn more.

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### 3. Call an installer and obtain estimates.

Finding an installer is as easy as visiting the Focus on Energy search tool at [finditwithfocus.com](http://finditwithfocus.com). This tool enables you to find contractors in your area that provide a full range of design, equipment, installation, and maintenance services. A good contractor will also help you through steps 4 through 6 listed below. As with any major purchase, it is best to get estimates from more than one installer. Do not base your decision solely on price. Make sure to compare the equipment specified and the installer's level of experience. A good contractor will also help you acquire permits, Focus on Energy incentives, and file any other necessary paperwork for you.

It may be tempting to try to install your own system, but unless you have applicable experience in all aspects of renewable energy system installations, it's best to hire a professional.

### 4. Check zoning, permit and utility requirements, insurance, and other legalities.

Your renewable energy system installation must comply with the zoning codes of the county, city, village, or town in which the installation is located. While you must follow all applicable zoning building codes, some of these codes may not comply with Wisconsin's solar and wind access law. State statute 66.0401 prohibits local governments from placing any restriction on a resident's right to install or operate a solar or wind energy system unless the restriction serves to preserve or protect public health or safety, does not significantly increase the cost of the system or decrease its efficiency, or allows for an alternative system of comparable cost and efficiency.

Building, electrical, plumbing, and/or heating codes apply to renewable installations. Your local permitting authority must be contacted prior to starting your project to determine which permits are required. Don't forget to notify your insurance agent as well.

### 5. Secure financing.

You may fund your renewable energy system in several ways, including a home equity loan, mortgage refinance, or a capital improvement loan for commercial projects.

In addition, your project may qualify for financial incentives from Focus on Energy and your utility providers. These incentives can cover a significant portion of the project costs. Don't forget about Focus on Energy's enhanced

incentives for improving efficiency first! Refer to the Focus incentive application **before** any equipment is purchased, ordered, or installed; some projects require pre-approval from Focus.

Federal tax credits may be available as well. Visit [focusonenergy.com/taxincentives](http://focusonenergy.com/taxincentives) for resources or contact your tax professional for more details.

### 6. Install and learn how to safely maintain your system.

Ask your installer for detailed written instructions to help you maintain your system properly and safely. Keep an eye on metering systems and utility bills to make sure your system functions efficiently. You might also ask your installer how to perform simple troubleshooting and maintenance tasks.

Be sure to learn basic safety requirements and procedures such as how to shut down the system in emergencies such as floods and other situations that could damage the system and how to power up the system after it has been shut down.

### 7. Enjoy saving money and energy.

Congratulations! After your initial investment, you will notice a change in your energy bill as your system begins to save energy and money. You can also enjoy the sense of pride that comes from producing your own energy without adding to fuel costs, noise, or pollution, and from doing your part to protect our environment.

### LEARN MORE

Contact the experts at Focus on Energy to learn more about renewable energy and its benefits for your home or business. Call **800.762.7077** or visit [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com) to download a variety of fact sheets and case studies featuring solar electricity, solar hot water, passive solar design, bioenergy, and wind energy—and don't forget, Focus offers financial incentives to make all of these technologies more affordable.

### STAY CURRENT AND CONNECTED!

Join our online conversation at [focusonenergy.com/socialnetworks](http://focusonenergy.com/socialnetworks) to connect with people who share your interest in saving energy and money at home and work. Also, visit [focusonenergy.com/incentives](http://focusonenergy.com/incentives) for the latest incentives and requirements as Focus offers are subject to change.

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus information, resources, and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed, or to complete projects sooner than scheduled. Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment, and control the state's growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For more information, call **800.762.7077** or visit [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com).

