

Renewable Energy Projects: Guiding You Through the Process

FACT SHEET



BIOMASS



SOLAR



WIND

Contact Focus on EnergySM to learn about renewable energy options for your home, business or organization. Full program details, applications for awards and eligibility requirements are available from the Renewable Energy Information Center. Call 800.762.7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

Many people are interested in using renewable energy to meet their home or business energy needs, but sometimes the process is not clear and people don't know where to turn for help. Use the steps below as a guide to help you discover whether renewable energy can work for you.

1. LEARN ALL ABOUT IT.

It is important to be an educated consumer. Find out as much information as you need to feel comfortable with your energy decision. To learn more about renewable energy events and trainings in your area, visit the Focus on Energy Calendar at focusonenergy.com/calendar or call the Focus on Energy Information Center at 800.762.7077.

For hands-on learning, the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) offers workshops around the state. These workshops cover everything from tips on living with renewable energy to hands-on installation of actual systems. You can find the MREA course catalog at www.the-mrea.org, or by calling 715.592.6595 for a catalog.

2. GET A SITE ASSESSMENT.

The best way to find out whether you have a good location for renewable energy is to have a site assessment.

A site assessment will bring an expert to your site to evaluate and provide a basic analysis of your energy needs, evaluate renewable energy resource availability at your location, provide energy efficient suggestions and make recommendations on specific renewable energy systems that are right for you. A site assessment also provides information on the best place to locate a system and offers a general cost estimate—all summarized in a report.

Focus on Energy requires a site assessment when applying for a wind energy reward and site assessments are desirable for other projects. Visit focusonenergy.com/siteassessments or call 800.762.7077 to arrange a site assessment.

3. CALL AN INSTALLER; GET ESTIMATES.

Finding a reputable installer is as easy as visiting the Full Service Installer Lists online at



PHOTO COURTESY OF H&H SOLAR ENERGY SERVICES

This single-family home relies on solar electric energy to help supply power for the family's electric needs.

focusonenergy.com/fullserviceinstallers. These lists allow you to find a contractor near you and select full-service installers who provide a whole package of design, equipment, installation and maintenance services for renewable energy systems. A good contractor will also help you through steps 4 through 6 in the process.

It is best to get more than one installation estimate. An estimate should include the cost of hardware, shipping, installation, connection to the utility grid, travel and sales tax. Remember, the lowest price is not always the best value. A good contractor will also help you acquire permits, Focus on Energy co-funding and an approved utility interconnection by filling out the paperwork for you.

Many people may think about installing their own system. Unless you have applicable experience in all aspects of renewable energy system installations, hire a professional. Focus on Energy requires the use of a solar full-service installer and does not co-fund the installation of self-installed solar systems.

4. CHECK ZONING, UTILITY REQUIREMENTS, INSURANCE AND OTHER LEGALITIES.

Your renewable energy system installation will need to comply with the zoning and building codes of the county, city, village or town where the installation will be located. Permits may not be needed until you are ready to do the work. Most installers will get the permit for you.



focus on energySM
The power is within you.

If you choose to connect your renewable electric system to the utility grid, contact your electric utility for an interconnection application at the early stages of the project. Wisconsin utilities are required to connect a renewable electric generating installation to their utility systems. Except for rural electric cooperatives, Wisconsin utilities are also required to buy your excess electricity for the same price that you pay the utility for electricity if your system is less than 20 kilowatts.

It is also important to contact your insurance agent to be certain the proposed renewable energy system is covered by your homeowner's liability insurance policy.

Other legalities might include contacting your homeowners association or checking neighborhood covenants. A covenant that does not allow solar or wind renewable energy systems is against the law in Wisconsin, but there may be additional specifications for your area. State law prohibits restrictions on platted land that unduly restrict the construction and operation of solar and wind energy systems.

Focus on Energy can assist you in overcoming many issues that could arise.

5. SECURE FINANCING.

There are several places to turn for funding your renewable energy system. Many people do not realize that financing for a renewable energy home project might come from a home equity loan or from mortgage refinancing. A capital improvement loan may apply for commercial projects.

You can contact Focus on Energy to see whether your project qualifies for a Cash-Back Reward or grant to help offset project costs. Be sure to apply for any Focus on Energy incentives before purchasing equipment or signing a contract with an installer. In addition to these incentives, owners of Wisconsin ENERGY STAR® Homes and existing homes that have participated in the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program may be eligible for a \$500 bonus toward the cost of their solar electric or solar hot water system.

Wisconsin allows a property tax exemption for renewable energy equipment, so your renewable energy system will not affect your property tax bill. Additional funding may be available through federal tax incentives and your electric utility. For an updated list of incentives, visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency Energy Web site at: dsireusa.org.

6. LEARN HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR SYSTEM—SAFELY.

Ask your installer to give detailed, written instructions on how to maintain your system properly and safely. Keep an eye on metering systems and utility bills to be sure your system functions effectively and efficiently. You might also ask your installer how you can perform simple troubleshooting or maintenance, such as greasing moving parts on a wind turbine.

Be sure to learn basic safety requirements and procedures, like how to shut down the system in emergencies such as a flood or 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 start seeing money and energy savings on your utility bill. You also have a source of pride that produces energy without additional fuel costs, noise or air pollution, and you're doing your part to protect Wisconsin's environment.

HOW CAN FOCUS ON ENERGY HELP YOU?

Now that you know the process of choosing and installing a renewable energy system, there are many ways that Focus on Energy can help you. The Renewable Energy Program offers a variety of services to interested individuals and organizations. Our goals are to promote the use of renewable energy and support the development of Wisconsin's renewable energy businesses. We work with renewable energy experts and contractors throughout the state to provide you:

- General information about renewable energy system options, financial incentives, system costs and links to dealers and installers. In addition, we will assist you with information regarding relevant state regulations and utility requirements.
- Technical assistance to help you make the decisions necessary to install a renewable energy system or to help your organization determine the benefits of offering renewable energy products and services.
- Site assessments to determine the feasibility of installing a renewable energy system in a specific location.
- Education and training opportunities to help you learn more about renewable energy systems, including tours of demonstration sites and workshops.
- Financial assistance with your renewable energy projects.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

focusonenergy.com

Contact Focus on Energy to learn more about renewable energy choices. We have fact sheets and case studies featuring solar water heating, solar electricity, passive solar design, bioenergy and wind turbines for homes, farms and businesses. Renewable energy incentives are also available. Call 800.762.7077 for more information.