

# Solar Contractor Bid Comparison Form

Use this form when soliciting installation bids for your new photovoltaic solar system.

## Find a contractor

- Contractors are your key to the most productive photovoltaic (PV) system for your home. Start by visiting [gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov](http://gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov) for a list of licensed contractors.
- Before soliciting a bid, verify that the contractor has an active A, B, C-10 or C-46 license through the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) at [cslb.ca.gov](http://cslb.ca.gov) or **1-800-321-2752**.
- Check references and get all details in writing.
- On the initial visit, ask contractors for their CSLB pocket license or ask sales representatives for their Home Improvement Salesperson registration card and be sure to verify the representative's identity by asking for photo identification.

## Choosing a bid

- Experts strongly recommend interviewing at least three potential solar contractors and compare their solar system bids before choosing one.
- Use this bid comparison form to compare the total electricity the system would produce versus the net cost of the system. However, take caution against automatically selecting the lowest bid.
- An unusually low bid may be a red flag the contractor is cutting corners. Visit [gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov](http://gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov) for average cost information to see if your bids are approximately within the average range.

## Signing a contract

- Before signing a contract, read the entire document carefully and make sure you fully understand everything, including costs, warranties and maintenance agreements.
- Require all quotes for the project are in writing. Do not accept verbal promises.
- The California State License Board recommends that in general you should never pay more than \$1,000 or 10% of the contract price, whichever is less. To learn about a limited exception to this guidance, please visit [cslb.ca.gov](http://cslb.ca.gov).



## Asking the right questions

- Do you have a valid contractor's license? May I see it?
- How long have you been installing solar systems?
- Have you installed solar systems in my area? Do you have references I can contact?
- What type of manufacturer or other training do you have for the type of system you will install?
- Do you offer a warranty for equipment and workmanship?

## For more information

To learn more about solar energy and available rebates, go to [pge.com/solar](http://pge.com/solar).

Visit California's one-stop shop for all solar rebates and installation information, including how to find a contractor, at [gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov](http://gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov).

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	Item number [See descriptions below]	Bid #1	Bid #2	Bid #3
System Description	1. Company Name			
	2. License Number			
	3. System size in DC kW			
	4. System size in CEC-AC kW			
System Cost	5. Base system cost			
	6. All Adders			
	7. Monitoring cost (if applicable)			
	8. Estimated permit fees			
	9. Total cost			
	10. Financial rebates, incentives and tax credits			
	11. Final Cost			
Other Factors	12. Percent of electricity covered			
	13. Contractor financing options (if applicable)			
	14. Warranty timeframe			

## Item descriptions

- Company name:** name of the solar contractor who gives you the bid.
- License number:** issued by the Contractor State License Board (CSLB). Confirm contractor information at [cslb.ca.gov](http://cslb.ca.gov) or 1-800-321-2752.
- System size in DC kW:** capacity rating of the system in direct current (DC) kilowatts (kW). DC kW, referred to as the nameplate rating, does not reflect actual power production since DC must be converted into alternating current (AC) to power your home. (It's not necessary to see a DC rating on your bid, although some contractors choose to include it.)
- System size in CEC-AC kW:** CEC-AC is the most common and accurate rating to determine system size. Based on California Energy Commission's rating of solar equipment in real conditions it must be included on your bid. If not, ask for it.
- Base system cost:** Some companies list a base system cost and then add charges to it. Others simply list total cost. Make sure you clearly understand how costs are listed and what they include.
- All Adders:** Adders are extra charges for items such as roof costs and trenching. Be clear on whether these are included in your bid, if applicable.
- Monitoring cost (if applicable):** Monitoring, which lets you view your system's electricity production online at an extra cost, may or may not be included in your bid.
- Estimated permit fees:** should not vary between contractors. Each city or county jurisdiction sets their own permit charges.
- Total cost:** Refers to the total price of the project including materials, labor, taxes and any additional charges you will agree to in the contract.
- Financial rebates, incentives and tax credits:** reflects deduction of financial rebates or incentives (local or state) and tax credits (state or federal), if applicable.
- Final cost (after rebates, tax credits):** refers to your out-of-pocket costs after rebates and credits have been deducted. Make sure the contractor passes these savings to you.
- Percent of electricity covered:** The system will cover a percentage of your monthly electricity needs. It is important to understand how much before awarding your project to a contractor.
- Contractor financing options (if applicable):** Some contractors offer financing methods, such as system leasing. If you are interested, inquire with the contractor before soliciting a bid.
- Warranty timeframe:** Average standard for PV is 20–25 years and inverter is 10 years.

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This form is intended to be informational only. The California investor-owned utilities and program administrators do not guarantee the quality or performance of any contractor and are not responsible for goods or services you select. Please see the most recent version of the CSI Program Handbook for the most up-to-date information at [gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov](http://gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov). The CSI Program is funded by California investor-owned utility customers and is administered by regional program administrators under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission.

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