

How We Grade a Solar Proposal

The 11 scoring categories the AI evaluates -- plus what a perfect 10.0 looks like in each.

Every proposal you upload to Solar Bid Analyzer is scored across 11 categories on a 0.0 to 10.0 decimal scale (one decimal place -- no lazy whole numbers). Below is the full checklist of what gets graded, what we look for, and an example of what a perfect 10.0 looks like in each category. The same methodology is applied to every bid -- no hidden weights, no sponsored placements, no commission incentives.

11 graded categories

Decimal scoring 0.0 to 10.0

2026 federal-ITC math verification

Real-world examples for every score

1

Production Realism (productionRealism)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Projected annual kWh is cross-referenced against PVWatts averages for your state and peak sun hours. Bids more than 10% above expected production are flagged as optimistic; over 20% is a red flag. Snow loss, shade derate, tilt, and azimuth all factor in.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

A 9.6 kW DC system in Wisconsin (~4.2 peak sun hrs) projecting 11,800 kWh/yr -- within 3% of PVWatts modeled output. Tilt, azimuth, and a 0.86 system derate are clearly shown in the proposal, with snow and shading loss explicitly accounted for.

2

Equipment & Parts Quality (equipment)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Panel tier (BNEF Tier 1?), inverter type (microinverter vs string), racking quality, and a sanity check that panel count x wattage equals the advertised system kW DC. Microinverters score higher for shaded or complex roofs.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

Tier 1 panels (BNEF-listed) paired with current-generation microinverters and a name-brand flashed-mount racking system. Every model number is documented and the system-size arithmetic verifies exactly.

3

Warranty & O&M Plan (warranty)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Presence of a third-party warranty, whether labor on equipment failure is covered, whether roof leaks are covered, and total years. Manufacturer-only warranties are flagged -- they leave the homeowner paying labor on every replacement.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

A 25 to 30-year third-party warranty covering panels, inverters, replacement labor, AND roof mount leaks -- explicitly listed with the certificate number or activation instructions shown.

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Value / Price per Watt (value)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Net \$/W after incentives, with state-adjusted norms. Flagged at greater than \$3.50/W as high; less than \$2.00/W as suspiciously low. Any phantom residential federal credit on a 2026 cash/loan bid is auto-flagged (the 25D residential credit expired Dec 31, 2025).

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

A Wisconsin residential proposal at \$2.65/W net after the Focus on Energy rebate, with the gross to rebate to net math shown line-by-line and confirmed accurate. No phantom federal credit applied to a cash or loan bid.

5

Local Company (local)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

The contractor must be headquartered in your state to count as "local". "National" or "operates nationally" does NOT qualify. The AI uses an embedded installer-directory to verify HQ state.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

A Wisconsin customer's bid from a contractor headquartered in Wisconsin -- local crew, local accountability, knows We Energies / Alliant / Madison Gas & Electric interconnection rules first-hand.

6

Reputation (reputation)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Google rating, years in business (less than 3 years = flag), certifications (NABCEP), state solar association memberships, BBB rating, and veteran-owned status. New companies and chain installers using subcontractors are flagged.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

10+ years in business, 4.8+ Google rating with 200+ reviews, NABCEP-certified PV Installation Professional on staff (name + cert #), state solar-association member (e.g. RENEW Wisconsin), BBB A+, in-house crew -- all documented in the proposal.

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Soft Factors (softFactors)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Years of experience, NABCEP credential numbers, state solar association membership, awards, BBB, veteran-owned, and whether the install crew is in-house W-2 vs. subcontractors.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

NABCEP cert numbers and the lead foreman named in the proposal, RENEW Wisconsin + IREC membership, industry awards, and confirmation that the install crew is 100% W-2 in-house (no subs).

8

Installation Timeline (timeline)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Is the timeline realistic and broken down by phase? Vague timelines or unrealistic claims (e.g. "installed in a week" when permitting alone takes 4 to 6 weeks in most jurisdictions) are flagged.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

"Day 1-2 site survey + structural; Week 2 permit + utility application; Week 6-8 install (3 days on-site); Week 9 inspection + PTO" -- phased, realistic for the state and utility, with named milestones.

9

Down Payment (downPayment)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Deposit as a percent of total. Scoring scale: 3% of total or less, OR a flat fee of \$1,000 or less = 10.0; 3 to 7% = 8.5 to 9.5; 7 to 15% = 7.0 to 8.4 (typical industry deposit); 15 to 25% = 5.0 to 6.9; 25 to 30% = 3.0 to 4.9; greater than 30% = red flag. The scoring uses one decimal place so small differences between bids show up.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

A deposit of 2.5% of project price (or a flat fee of \$800 minimum) -- industry-best customer protection. Also: any installer with a \$0-until-install-milestone payment schedule.

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Storage / Battery (storage)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

Only scored when a battery is in the proposal (otherwise 0). Eleven sub-checks: current-gen hardware, system controller/combiner, whole-home vs partial backup, capacity sizing vs your goal, continuous + surge output, chemistry (LFP preferred), AC vs DC coupling and round-trip efficiency, warranty (years AND MWh throughput cap), generator integration, cost per usable kWh, and whether any state-specific battery incentive was missed.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

A current-generation hybrid inverter (Sol-Ark, EG4, or Enphase IQ Battery 10C + IQ Combiner 6) paired with 14 to 28 kWh of LFP storage, whole-home 200A pass-through, sized to match the customer's "multi-day backup" goal, 15-yr warranty with explicit MWh throughput cap, and cost per usable kWh in line with 2026 norms.

11

Overall (overall)

Scored 0.0 to 10.0 - one decimal place

What we check

A weighted synthesis of the 10 categories above. A 10.0 in one category alone will not pull a weak bid to 10.0 overall -- the overall score reflects the whole package: equipment, math, warranty, contractor, timeline, deposit, and storage if applicable.

PERFECT 10.0 EXAMPLE

A bid that scores 9.0+ in every category -- perfect math, current-gen equipment, premium third-party warranty, in-state contractor with named NABCEP crew, sub-7% deposit, realistic production projection, and (if battery) a preferred 2026 configuration sized correctly.

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Bonus Checks

Not separately scored -- these feed into the 11 categories above and surface as flags.

> Lease / PPA risk warnings

Explicit ownership, lien, escalator, buyout, and bankruptcy-risk disclosure for any lease or PPA bid.

> \$ / Watt sanity range

Anything outside \$2.00 to \$3.50/W net (state-adjusted) is flagged for review.

> Federal ITC math verification

Auto-red-flags any residential 25D tax credit shown on a 2026 cash or loan bid -- that credit expired Dec 31, 2025.

> Utility hosting capacity

Flags interconnection-queue / hosting-capacity risk for the customer's likely utility based on state and address.

> Mixed-scope alert

Surfaces apples-to-oranges comparisons (e.g. one bid includes a battery, another does not).

> Proposal completeness rating

Each bid gets its own excellent / good / adequate / lacking / poor rating with explanatory notes.

> Red & green flags lists

Surfaced separately per bid, each with a severity label (high / medium / low).

> Per-bid clarifying questions

3 to 5 specific questions you should ask THAT contractor, based on what is missing or vague in their proposal.

Why decimal scores matter

Two bids that are both "good but not great" should not both score 8 -- one might be 7.8 and the other 8.3. Solar Bid Analyzer uses the full 0.0 to 10.0 range with one decimal place so the differences that actually matter to you -- a slightly better warranty, a marginally faster timeline, a few hundred dollars in deposit -- show up in the score. The only whole numbers you will ever see are 10.0 (perfect) and 0.0 (not applicable, e.g. storage on a solar-only bid).